

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



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Uber owes me \$100. Can you help me get it back?

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I have an account with Uber. Earlier this year, I added my granddaughter to my account so that she could have easy travel from the University of Washington in Seattle to my house in Mercer Island, Wash.

I added her successfully, but when she tried to access the account, Uber said that there was “not enough money” in the account for her to use the service. I was puzzled because Uber had my credit card on record. There was never a question of having money in the account, but I dutifully added \$100. However, Uber still denied their service to my granddaughter.

So I opened a Lyft account, which solved the problem. My granddaughter can now use that account for rides.

Meanwhile, I wanted the \$100 back from Uber. I have emailed and called the company repeatedly, but no joy. On the last call I made, a representative told me that the problem had to be handled by the accounts department and that they would call me back. No one has called back.

All I want is the \$100 returned to my credit card. Can you help?

ALEC NOWERS,
Mercer Island, Wash.

A. Uber should have allowed your granddaughter to use your account. Uber offers a family profile where you can add anyone as long as they’re at least 18 years old and have an Uber account. When your granddaughter tried to hail an Uber, it should have worked.

Why did an Uber representative recommend adding money to your account? Why not just help you add your credit card to your granddaughter’s profile? I asked Uber to clarify what happened to you, but it did not respond.

Uber’s customer service department is highly automated, and if I had to guess, I’d say that you were dealing with an AI chatbot instead of a real person. And if you’ve ever spent time talking to a chatbot before, you should know they are heavy on the “artificial” and light on the “intelligence.”

I like your solution, which was switching to Lyft. In a perfect world, you would switch to a competitor when a company gives you substandard service. But in a world where businesses are consolidating quickly — and that’s particularly true for airlines — your strategy is not always possible.

Here’s another thing you could have done: I publish the names, email addresses, and phone numbers of the Uber company executives on my consumer advocacy site, www.Elliott.org. You could have emailed one of them and hopefully resolved this problem quickly.

Why couldn’t Uber just send your credit back as cash? Well, this is because of the fact that it considers the credit a gift card, and gift card credits are not refundable, returnable, or redeemable for cash “except where required by law,” according to Uber. Under Washington State law, Uber doesn’t have to refund your gift card. (It should, but that’s a topic for another time.) So, once you give Uber your cash, it’s theirs.

But I contacted Uber on your behalf, and it refunded the \$100 credit.

Christopher Elliott is the founder of Elliott Advocacy (elliottadvocacy.org), a nonprofit organization that helps consumers solve their problems. Email him at chris@elliott.org or get help by contacting him at elliottadvocacy.org/help.

THE VIP LOUNGE

Brian Regan on swim-up bars and Germany’s coolness

Stand-up comedian and sometimes actor Brian Regan was born and raised in Miami, but he often gets mistaken for a Bostonian. “I think it’s the name,” he said in a recent phone call. “I like Boston ... I love playing Massachusetts, so I’ll take it.” Regan, who is performing at the Hanover Theatre in Worcester on Nov. 7, said he enjoys touring. “I always like writing [material for the shows] and it’s really cool to hop onstage and share my recent goofy thoughts with people who don’t mind laughing out loud and letting me know what they think.” Regan, 65, a father of two adult children, performs in close to 100 cities each year, is a regular on “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon,” (he was also a frequent guest on “The Late Show with David Letterman”) and has been a guest on two episodes of Jerry Seinfeld’s “Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee” on Netflix. “He’s a genius,” Regan said of Seinfeld. “And the fact that he likes what I do is the highest compliment.” On the acting front, Regan has a cameo in Chris Rock’s 2014 film “Top Five,” and has been on three seasons of the TV series “Loudermilk” on Amazon Prime. When asked about his current comedy tour, Regan said he has “never been good at tooting my own horn,” and referenced a radio station interview where he was asked to talk about his upcoming comedy show. “I said that I like to think I’m adequate,” he said. “So if you want to see some adequate comedy, I’m your guy.” We caught up with the “adequate” comedian, who lives in Las Vegas with his girlfriend and their 12- or 13-year-old rescue dog, Olive, to talk about all things travel.

If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go?

Germany. I want to drink beer out of one of those cool-looking beer steins while listening to one of those cool-sounding German bands while listening to people talk in their cool-sounding language.

Where was the first place you traveled to after COVID restrictions were lifted?

Italy. Had never been. It was amazing. They have better pizza than Pizza Hut.

Do you prefer booking trips through a travel agent or on your own?

My girlfriend books our vacation stuff. She’s better than a travel agent.

Thoughts on an “unplugged” vacation?

I like any place that has a pool with a swim-up bar. There’s something relaxing about being able to swim over to your bar stool to grab a cool drink.

Do you use all of your vacation time or leave some on the table?

Being home is a vacation. I love traveling, but there is nothing like not being in an airport.

What has been your worst vacation experience?

After a very nice vacation, we arrived at the airport to find our airline had moved the departure time up by one hour. We saw the plane just idling on the tarmac, teasing us for a few minutes, before it finally taxied away and back to our happy empty home.



Comedian Brian Regan in Rome.

Do you vacation to relax, to learn, or for the adventure of it all?

I prefer to relax on vacation. But I do like history too, so I enjoy seeing things like Mayan ruins and the Colosseum. People sure liked to kill each other a lot in the past.

What book do you plan on bringing with you to read on your next vacation?

Nothing. Well, I always have a book on me, but I rarely open it.

If you could travel with one famous person/celebrity, who would it be?

I wouldn’t want to travel with a famous person. When I’m off, I like to lay low.

What is the best gift to give a traveler?

A round-trip ticket on a private jet. If they can’t afford that, then maybe a nice neck pillow.

What is your go-to snack for a flight or a road trip?

I’m not a big snacker. I like to go from meal to big meal to ridiculously huge meal.

What is the coolest souvenir you’ve picked up on a vacation?

A hat from the Masters. I’ve watched that tournament since I was a kid. To be able to walk around and see all those holes in real life was pretty cool.

What is your favorite app/website for travel?

Hmm, my crossword puzzle app. Good way to see how smart I am. I’ve learned when I pick puzzles labeled “easy,” I find out I am very smart.

What has travel taught you?

That people are nice everywhere. Except for Massachusetts. I picked that location completely at random.

What is your best travel tip?

Sit in the middle seat on a long flight. It’s a great way to get to know people.

JULIET PENNINGTON



HERE

ELEGANT WHITE MOUNTAIN RETREAT

A myriad of fall and winter outdoor adventures await in New Hampshire’s White Mountains, such as hiking and mountain biking trails, alpine and cross-country skiing, ice skating, snowshoeing, sleigh rides, and more. When you’re ready to relax, The Wentworth in the heart of Jackson is ready to pamper you. The historic inn recently completed a \$4 million dollar hotel-wide renovation, unveiling 61 reimagined guest rooms and suites, elevated interior and exterior public spaces, and two dining venues which include a full-service restaurant and modern tavern with a specialty menu of bourbons and whiskeys.

Built in 1869 by Joshua Trickey as a wedding gift to his daughter, the property operated as a country inn named Thorn Mountain House. Today, it’s easy to imagine you’re stepping into the elegance of the past. The remastered grand lobby sports new furnis-

ings in dark leathers and textured shades of gray, green, and brown, complementing original features such as stained-glass windows, antique phone booth, and a grand fireplace. Guest rooms and suites have been remastered with well-appointed furniture, plush carpets, and floral drapery. Expansive, remodeled Spa Suites feature a private outdoor hot tub to be enjoyed during all four seasons.

In winter, guests will find on-property ice skating and snowshoes, access to nearby downhill skiing facilities, and cross-country skiing trails at the neighboring Jackson Ski Touring Foundation. In warmer months, amenities include a heated pool, clay tennis court, volleyball, croquet, badminton, and more. Mountain and electric bike rentals are available. The property also offers a fitness area and spa services and is located steps away from the Wentworth Golf Club. Week-end rates from \$319; midweek rates from \$159 per night. 800-637-0013, www.thewentworth.com

THERE

FAMILY MEMORIES IN D.C.

With seemingly endless sightseeing opportunities, our nation’s capital is a prime destination for families who want to visit the city’s iconic monuments, memorials, and museums (including the free Smithsonian museums!), as well as imposing federal buildings such as the Capitol, White House, and Supreme Court. With this in mind, the InterContinental Washington D.C. - The Wharf, is offering a Make Family Memories Package. Located on the edge of the Potomac River, with stunning waterfront views, the hotel offers easy accessibility to the city’s top attractions.

As part of the Make Family Memories Package, the hotel’s guest relations team will arrange for you to receive up to four tickets to the National Museum of African American History & Culture or the National Air and Space Museum; welcome family board game and in-room amenities; optional discount on a second room (25 percent off); a Kodak camera to create memories together; and overnight valet parking. Additional hotel amenities include a fitness facility and a full-service spa. As part of the newly revitalized Wharf development, the location is at the heart of a dynamic mile-long neighborhood of restaurants, shops, water activities, and the nation’s oldest continuously operating open-air fish market, a popular revitalized and restored attraction for locals and visitors alike. If you happen to be in town on Dec. 2, don’t miss the District’s Holiday Boat Parade — with more than 60 brightly lit and decorated boats — cruising along the Washington Channel. Must book the package at least two days in advance; available for all rooms; no end date for the offer. Package rate from \$474 for a



Queen Classic room. 202-800-0844, <https://wharfintercontinentaldc.com>

EVERYWHERE

TRAVEL ART KIT FOR LITTLE CREATORS

The next flight or road trip with your little one just got a whole lot easier with Art on the Go!, a fun kid’s color and stick activity pad in a travel format by iHeartArt. Designed for young artists ages 3 to 5, the kit includes eight chunky crayons, stencil, two sticker sheets, 24 activity pages, and 26 blank drawing pages in an all-in-one take-along book. Activities include coloring, drawing, tracing, and stenciling. Charming artwork is available in three sets: Nature Friends (owls, squirrels, friendly trees, bears, and other woodland creatures); Safari Collage (monkeys, giraffes, elephants, and other wild animals); and Going Dotty Ocean (whales, sea lions, sharks, starfish, and other sea creatures). Cleanup is easy with snap-close crayon storage and a folder in the back to store completed artwork. Warning: Kids may get so engrossed in artmaking, you might never hear, “Are we there yet?” again! \$14.99. <https://brightstripes.co/products/iheartart-jr-art-on-the-go-nature>

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