

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



THE VIP LOUNGE | MAC FOREHAND

He loves Whistler, wants to ski in Japan, and can't forget his ear pods

Freestyle skier Mac Forehand is well on his way to securing a spot on the US Olympic ski team. The 19-year-old Fairfield, Conn., native, who lives in Winhall, Vt., travels the world for competitions, but said his favorite place to vacation is Whistler Mountain in British Columbia. Not only are the ski conditions “pow,” but there’s so much else to do besides ski, he said. Forehand made history last year when, at 17, he won the overall World Cup title in Slopestyle (which became an Olympic event in Sochi, Russia, in 2014 and involves skiing down a course with obstacles including rails and jumps and executing aerial tricks) in Stubai, Austria. He went on to win numerous other competitions and, in qualifying for the finals in every World Cup event he entered thereafter, Forehand amassed enough overall points to take home the prestigious Crystal Globe and earn a place at the podium in the final World Cup event in Silvaplana, Switzerland. After being sidelined with a torn ACL for nine months, the recent Stratton Mountain School graduate is back on the slopes and setting his sights on the Olympics. He is also one of two athletes featured in the Red Bull Winter Edition Game, an augmented reality game that is featured on the Red Bull AR App through Dec. 31. We caught up with Forehand to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination? I don’t get to go on too many vacations, but one of my favorite places to go to in the summer is Whistler Mountain. After skiing on a pretty much perfect park on the hill, there’s so much to do after. From mountain biking to Frisbee golf to pretty insane hikes ... it’s a perfect spot for people who enjoy the outdoors.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing? My favorite food while in Europe would most definitely be pizza. Something about European pizza ... it is just way better. While travel-

ing, I always bring a Red Bull; it’s a great drink to have post-plane ride.

Where would you like to travel to but haven’t? I would love to go to Japan eventually. Along with the insane pow [fresh powder] skiing that place delivers. I love the culture and it just seems like an overall fun travel destination.

One item you can’t leave home without when traveling? When traveling I can never leave home without grabbing a pair of ear pods; any kind, really, but I prefer the standard Apple ones. I listen to music all the time while I travel, so one thing I could never forget is a pair of those.

Aisle or window? I prefer window over aisle for sure. Having that extra space to lean on is nice and I’ve always loved the view from up in a plane. Nothing beats waking up to the view of a sunset from a plane.

Favorite childhood travel memory? I loved going to places that had roller coasters and rides. I went to Disney World when I was younger and just remember falling in love with that place. Also Six Flags or any other local amusement parks were always a good time.

Guilty pleasure when traveling? I binge watch movies whenever I fly. Anything I can get my hands on, really. Some of the newer planes to Europe have so many options — which definitely doesn’t help with sleeping at all.

Best travel tip? Living in this crazy world we all live in now, we have to wear a mask practically anywhere, especially on planes. I like to tie a rope behind my mask [ear loops] so it is more comfortable while flying.

JULIET PENNINGTON

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

TAP Air Portugal promised a refund. Why won’t Orbitz help?

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. I booked a ticket through Orbitz on TAP Air Portugal to fly from Washington, D.C., to Milan in May. The flight was canceled in April because of COVID-19.

I have been having an extremely difficult time getting Orbitz to help me. They have insisted repeatedly that I am not due a refund even though I am aware of the Department of Transportation notice that all tickets must be refunded if the ticket was canceled by the airline during COVID-19, if the customer desires a refund. I have also confirmed with TAP directly that I am due a refund. But they insist Orbitz must request it for me.

After many hours on the phone with Orbitz over multiple weeks, I finally got Orbitz to e-mail TAP to request a refund in May. As of today, I have heard nothing further from neither TAP nor Orbitz and feel I need help to effectively get this refund I am owed.

ALEXANDRA ROSE,
Washington, D.C.

A. You’re right. If TAP Air Portugal canceled your flight, you should get a full refund within a week. The DOT rule (www.transportation.gov/individuals/aviation-consumer-protection/refunds) applies not only to airlines but also to online travel agencies such as Orbitz.

Were they using Orbitz to slow down the process? Without a doubt.

So, what happened? Well, after the outbreak, the European airlines petitioned the EU to allow them to keep the money for canceled flights and offer ticket credits. They said their survival was at stake, and they may have been correct about that. At the same time, a variety of European carriers began to slow down the refund process. Again, that’s totally understandable. They wanted to keep the money to pay their bills. This included creating new barriers

to refunds. Could TAP Air Portugal have given you a refund for your flight when you asked? Without a doubt. Were they using Orbitz to slow down the process? Without a doubt.

Orbitz was a willing accomplice. When it helps you get a refund, it loses any commissions and incentives the airline paid it. So you might say it is equally unmotivated, and in all likelihood, overwhelmed by other refund requests.

Although I understand the positions of both your airline and online travel agency, it’s also helpful to appreciate your position. TAP Air Portugal canceled your flight, and you were owed a refund. You weren’t getting it. If the tables were turned — if you canceled your flight because of a circumstance beyond your control — I’m not sure if TAP Air Portugal or Orbitz would be as patient as you’ve been, or as understanding.

But whose fault was this? I contacted Orbitz, and it says it contacted TAP Air Portugal several times regarding your case, beginning in May.

“During this time, TAP Portugal notified us that they are no longer allowing Orbitz agents access to process refunds via our system,” a representative told me. “We are only able to process refunds if we have been granted that right by the airline.”

Instead, TAP Portugal issued a policy that only allows Orbitz to offer a voucher with the airline that is valid for two years from the date of issuance. But you had a refund offer from TAP Air Portugal. Yet despite its best efforts, Orbitz couldn’t reach anyone at the airline to confirm your refund.

“Since we’ve passed a reasonable timeframe to expect a response from TAP, we have authorized an exception to our agents to process a refund for this flight from Orbitz,” the representative added. You should have a full refund of \$1,499 by now.

Christopher Elliott can be reached at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.

HERE

HOTEL MAKEOVER IN STAMFORD

It’s a tough time to debut a hotel rehab but Connecticut’s The Lloyd does it with style. Located in the heart of downtown Stamford, each of the 94 guestrooms has been given a top-to-bottom renovation with modern West Elm furniture, spa-like bathrooms and luxury amenities such as plush bathrobes and natural essentials from Malin and Goetz. The complete makeover continues in the public spaces such as lounge area that includes a café by day and intimate bar by night, and high-tech fitness center with core and cardio fitness training equipment, Peloton bike, and The Mirror for on-demand cardio, yoga, and boxing classes. Additional amenities include valet parking, fresh-brewed coffee delivered to your door, and turndown service. Don’t want to drive? The hotel is half a mile from the Amtrak Station and local Metro North line. Rates from \$179. 203-363-7900, thelloydstamford.com.

BOOK CELEBRATES 200 YEARS OF MAINE

As the weather gets colder, curl up in front of a wood stove or wrapped in a blanket on your couch and peruse the dazzling photos, illustrations and stories in the Bicentennial Edition of *Maine the Way*. This 200-page special edition publication, released in partnership with the Maine Office of Tourism, delves into the state’s colorful history through the decades (from when it was granted independence from Massachusetts in 1820) as well as looking at the people shaping the present and future of its land, cities, and



seas. While reading, you can plan your next excursion to the Pine Tree State. \$35. mainetheway.co

THERE

GET PAMPERED IN SECLUDED BAHAMIAN HIDEAWAY

Those looking for a secluded (and warm) winter getaway may want to consider Caerula Mar Club in sleepy South Andros, Bahamas. The resort’s 18 oceanfront suites and six private villas, tucked between lush mangroves and powder-white shoreline sands, offer elegant accommodations that blend traditional architecture and midcentury modern style with contemporary furnishings, Belgian linens, aged marble stone, and soft white oak floors. Three on-site dining options range from a café and smoothie bar to casual lounge serving artisanal pizzas and fresh fish tacos to a Caribbean-inspired fine-dining restaurant with sweeping ocean views. The island’s coral reefs are a perfect spot for outdoor activities such as diving, snorkel-

ing, boating, and fishing. Rates from \$485-\$585 per night. 800-790-6845. www.caerulamar.com. Before booking, check out updated entry and travel COVID-19 protocols on the Bahamas Tourism website: www.bahamas.com/tourism-reopening.

BOOKMARK THIS HOTEL FOR FUTURE TRAVELS

When it comes to travel, it’s said that location is everything. That’s certainly true at the recently opened Four Seasons Hotel San Francisco at Embarcadero, centrally located in the Financial District just steps from tourism favorites such as Union Square, the Ferry



Building and Fisherman’s Wharf, and the California cable car route. Residing in the top 11 floors of a 48-story landmark, the 345 California Center, the hotel offers breathtaking panoramas of the San Francisco skyline, the bay, and bridges. The 155 guest rooms and suites, designed in a clean and contemporary style, feature natural wood floors, hand-tufted wool rugs, and custom-crafted furnishings. Amenities include 24-hour fitness center, business center and guest services; valet parking; overnight shoeshine; and more. Following COVID-19 safety guidelines, employees will be wearing masks; all guests (age 10 and above) will be required to wear face coverings in public indoor spaces. Rates from \$455. 415-276-9888. www.fourseasons.com/embarcadero.

EVERYWHERE

PUZZLE ME THIS

We may all be doing more indoor activities than usual this winter but that doesn’t mean we can’t indulge our dreams of travel. Dowdle Folk Art puzzles, featuring images of original paintings by Eric Dowdle, will not only keep you and your family entertained and challenged, they will transport you — at least mentally — to your favorite destinations across the globe. Board a schooner in Bar Harbor off the coast of Acadia National Park; visit Chicago’s Navy Pier; hike through Utah’s Arches National Park; hit the beach in Waikiki; sail be-



neath the towers of London Bridge; or explore more destinations from A to Z. If you hate to disassemble your jigsaw masterpiece, Dowdle offers a solution: Find your favorite 60 or 150-piece count design from the Picture Perfect Collection and receive a Perfect-fit Frame and easel for display. From \$24.99.

TRAVEL MEMOIR FOLLOWS FEMALE EXPLORERS

Who hasn’t fantasized about ditching it all and traveling the world? Though this plan of action may not be recommended in the midst of a pandemic, you can travel along with one woman who did just that in “The Women I Think About at Night, Traveling the Paths of My Heroes” by Mia Kankimäki. First published in Finnish, and now available for the first time in English, the book is part travelogue, part memoir, and biography. Follow the author’s adventures in Japan, Kenya, and Italy as she retraces the steps of 10 remarkable female explorers and artists from history, including Karen Blixen, Yayoi Kusama, and Artemisia Gentileschi. \$27. bookshop.org/books/the-women-i-think-about-at-night-traveling-the-paths-of-my-heroes/9781982129194 NEECE REGIS