

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



GABBY JONES/WASHINGTON POST

## This Booking.com reservation is fake! Will the company pay up?

By Christopher Elliott  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

**Q.** I recently booked a room at a resort in Kauai through Booking.com. The online agency worked with a third party that handled the reservation, but it didn't come through. As a result, I didn't have a place to stay. A person at the resort said that the organization had done the same thing to another family just days before.

I've sent multiple messages to Booking.com, but it hasn't responded. I tried to resolve this by filing a credit card dispute, and my bank has refunded me temporarily. Still, I ended up incurring an additional \$1,955 in hotel expenses. I would like help with holding Booking.com accountable.

DALE CERNEY, *Seattle*

**A.** I'm sorry that your Booking.com reservation was a dud. I know what it's like to show up at a hotel without a reservation, and it's one of the worst feelings. You start to imagine yourself sleeping on a park bench. I'm glad you found a place to stay.

Booking.com says that the property, the Hanalei Bay Resort, was "unable to honor your reservation," but it doesn't say why. It looks like you did everything you could to make sure that you had a legitimate reservation. You used a reputable online agent, Booking.com. You even contacted your online agency before your arrival to verify the reservation, and it was confirmed. Bottom line: This shouldn't have happened.

Booking.com didn't initially respond to your request for help, according to the correspondence that you sent me. When it finally did, it claimed that this was the first time it had heard from you.

"We hope you've found an alternative accommodation without too much trouble," a representative told you in an email. "We have been in touch with your original accommodation, and if you've had any extra costs, please send us the invoice of your new accommodation after your stay, and we'll do our best to assist you."

You should get a full refund for the first hotel once your credit card dispute finalizes. But when you presented Booking.com with a bill for the price differential between the original reservation and the new one, it didn't immediately respond. And that's when you asked me to help you get your \$1,955 back.

You might have avoided a problem like this by booking directly with the resort. Although direct reservations can get lost, too, it's far less likely to happen than when you book through a third-party agency.

Beyond that, you can call to confirm your reservation directly with the hotel before you arrive. Unfortunately, everything seemed fine until you arrived, which is highly unusual. I publish a few helpful strategies for resolving your consumer dispute on my advocacy website, Elliott.org. You could have also appealed your case to one of the Booking.com managers. I list their names, numbers, and email addresses on my consumer advocacy site.

You reached out to me for help, and I contacted Booking.com on your behalf. The company reviewed your case. "Booking.com customer service has been in touch with Dale, who will be receiving a refund for the extra costs incurred," a representative told me.

*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

## Bruins COO Glen Thornborough

on skiing in Quebec, reading newspapers, and staying hydrated

**G**len Thornborough, the recently named president of TD Garden and chief operating officer of the Boston Bruins, has a busy few months ahead of him. Not only will TD Garden be hosting, for the first time, the Dunkin' Women's Beanpot Championship at the end of January — and the Dunkin' Men's Beanpot the first two Mondays in February — but in February, in conjunction with the Bruins centennial celebration, Boston Bruins Heritage Hall is scheduled to open. The permanent, interactive, and immersive 6,000-square-foot exhibit, located on TD Garden's second level, will celebrate the franchise's 100-year history. It will be for all ages, Thornborough said, and serve as a "monument of Bruins history." And as if work is not enough to keep him busy, the 51-year-old father of two — daughter Haidyn, 17, and son, Spencer, 15 — will be traveling with his son, who was just named to the 2024 US Youth Olympic Hockey team, to Korea in January. Thornborough, a 25-year veteran in the sports and entertainment industries, was chief revenue officer of TD Garden and the Bruins before his recent promotion. An avid traveler who was born and raised in Canada (in Glenboro, which he described as "a tiny farm town about 2½ hours west of Winnipeg"), Thornborough moved to Alaska for college to play hockey at the University of Alaska in Anchorage. He still visits Alaska and Canada frequently, and enjoys skiing in Mont-Treblant in Quebec. We caught up with Thornborough, who lives in Boxford with his two teenagers, to talk about all things travel.

**If you could travel anywhere right now, where would you go?** Costa Rica. I've been there three times, and the kids love it.

**Where was the first place you traveled to after COVID restrictions were lifted?** Hawaii with the kids. We had to get away.

**Do you prefer booking trips through a travel agent or on your own?** On my own. ... I think just because it's what I've always done. It's so easy now to book travel with options and to me, for some reason, it's efficient.

**Thoughts on an "unplugged" vacation?** There is no such thing.

**Do you use all of your vacation time or leave some on the table?** I work on my vacation time. My track record has been that my vacations usually interact with a business trip. I'm lucky to work in an industry where my work is other people's play.

**What has been your worst vacation experi-**



Glen Thornborough and his daughter, Haidyn, skiing in Zermatt, Switzerland, earlier this year.

**ence?** I opted to take one of those "Friends and Family" standby tickets from a friend who worked at an airline and ended up getting stuck in an airport for three days waiting to get a flight to Hawaii. Never again.

**Do you vacation to relax, to learn, or for the adventure of it all?** Adventure and connections.

**What book do you plan on bringing with you to read on your next vacation?** I read a few newspapers every day; I prefer the hard copy. And I like to do the same on my travels, including reading the local paper. For the rest of the trip, I'm usually just reading my emails.

**If you could travel with one famous person/celebrity, who would it be?** I think Warren Buffett would be fascinating. I'd love to have a conversation with him. His simplicity and his intelligence

around commerce has literally paved the way.

**What is the best gift to give a traveler?** Noise-canceling headphones — and you can never have enough chargers.

**What is your go-to snack for a flight or a road trip?** Nut mix.

**What is the coolest souvenir you've picked up on a vacation?** An Ulu knife. It's native to Alaska and was used for hunting and skinning. We now use it for prepping a salad. I also picked up some Russian dolls in Moscow for my daughter.

**What is your favorite app/website for travel?** Google Travel.

**What has travel taught you?** It's really important to explore and see new perspectives.

**What is your best travel tip?** Hydrate.

JULIET PENNINGTON



## HERE

### NORDIC SKI NETWORK TOUTS AFFORDABLE FUN

Wax your cross-country skis and head to New Hampshire this winter to enjoy the White Mountain Nordic Association's extensive network of ski trails. Marking its 40th anniversary this season, the association's more than 400 kilometers of trails, located in and around the 788,000-acre White Mountain National Forest, can be found at six popular Nordic ski centers: Bear Notch Ski Touring, Bretton Woods Nordic Ski Center, Great Glen Trails, Jackson Ski Touring Foundation, Mt. Washington Valley Ski Touring and Snowshoe Center, and Purity Spring Resort XC and Snowshoe Preserve, all located within a half hour of North Conway.

Each center offers its own charm, along with services such as cross-country ski lessons, guided tours, ski and snowshoe rentals, fat bikes, and tubing. Skiers can even engage in skiing with their dogs on designated trails. Trails wind through classic New England villages, providing stunning views along the way, and offer opportunities to experience the region's inns and eateries, whether for breakfast,

lunch, dinner, or an apres-ski beverage. Best of all, cross-country skiing remains a sport with a reasonable price tag, with trail passes ranging from \$20-\$25 a day, including some areas that offer free tickets for kids up to a certain age. Some centers are affiliated with multiple lodging options, and trailside accommodations mid-week in January can be had for as little as \$99/night. <https://wmmnordic.com>

## THERE

### JUST SAY "OUI!" TO A CHAMPAGNE CRUISE

In this festive season, why not book a European Waterways hotel barge cruise that pays homage to our favorite bubbly beverage? Celebrating 50 years of inland waterways cruising, the company is introducing a new vessel, Kir Royale, which will cruise the Champagne region of France starting May 2024. This barge's provenance may surprise you. Once used as a beach landing craft during World War II, she was sunk, refloated, and eventually transformed into a luxury hotel with modern furnishings, three sun-decks, spa pool, upper observation deck with panoramic views, and four

spacious, air-conditioned en-suite cabins for up to eight passengers.

Cruising the River Marne and Canal latéral à la Marne from May through October, Kir Royale's guests will be treated to tours and tastings at some of the region's most prestigious champagne houses including Moët & Chandon, Frerejean Frères, and Maison Pannier. The six-night trip includes gourmet meals with wine, all shore excursions, open bar, and bicycles for exploring the countryside at stops along the route. The company also offers a variety of additional inland waterway cruises accommodating four to 20 passengers in France, as well as in Scotland, England, Ireland, Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, and Italy. Guests can enjoy 2024 cruises at 2023 prices when booked by May 31, 2024. Kir Royale Champagne Voyage rates from \$8,550. 800-394-8630, [www.europeanwaterways.com/fleet/kir-royale](http://www.europeanwaterways.com/fleet/kir-royale)

## EVERYWHERE

### THE ULTIMATE BEER ROUTE APP

If it's time to elevate your beer-tasting experience, you'll want to download BreweryDB, the new mobile app connected to the world's largest curated database of independent craft brews

and breweries. Created for beer fans to create their own brew adventures — and discover the unexpected — the innovative app allows users to find, filter, search, and route their way to breweries in their neighborhood and around the country, creating customized and curated brewery experiences that cater to each individual user's needs and interests.

Unique features of the app include enhanced Brewery Routes that enable users to navigate using real-time maps, directions and estimated travel times. Further tailor your explorations for locations that offer live music, outdoor seating, as well as those that are pet- and family-friendly. You can also create your own customized Boards (think: Pinterest for beer) that allow you to save favorite brews, locations, and routes throughout your beer journey. The information in the app is powered by MarketMyBrewery platform, offering a deep database of more than 13,000 breweries worldwide, including 125,000-plus beers, kombucha, and cider, as well as the taprooms where these craft brews are served. Available now for download on mobile devices in both the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store. Free. [www.brewerydb.com](http://www.brewerydb.com)

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