

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER



MUHAMMAD FAROOQ/AFP

Passengers of The Majestic Princess cruise ship prepare to depart for Melbourne.

Boarding denied on cruise because of positive COVID test

By Christopher Elliott
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Q. My husband and I booked a cruise of the British Isles with Princess this summer. Before we boarded in Southampton, a cruise line representative gave my husband a rapid COVID test because his PCR test (taken in the United States) had not yet been sent to his e-mail. My husband tested positive. Princess would not let us board.

We had purchased insurance for this cruise, and we have submitted the letter we received from Princess to the insurance company. But the insurance company requires a doctor's note or other documentation of the test and results in addition to the letter.

We have asked Princess for that documentation, but so far, it has been unresponsive. In my last call with Princess, I waited four hours, only to be given incorrect information and no verification from the ship's doctor.

Princess also promised to compensate us for meals and lodging while we waited for a flight home, but that has not happened either. Please help!

LINDA MARTIN, *Anacortes, Wash.*

A. Princess was correct to deny you boarding. But the way it handled your insurance claim and expenses was incorrect. The cruise line should have done what it promised — cover your expenses and help you file an insurance claim. So why didn't it? Well, we're still picking up the pieces from one of the busiest summer travel seasons in recent memory. Everyone wanted to go somewhere. As a result, there's a backlog of travel insurance claims and long hold times for customer service. Princess is hardly alone.

The cruise line has already refunded you \$1,051 for the shore excursions. But you were still out on your cruise fare and the extra expenses of having to quarantine in the United Kingdom.

I like the way you kept careful records of your expenses. You saved every receipt and then presented them to your travel insurance company. Nice work! Unfortunately, your insurance company needed a letter from Princess verifying your husband's COVID-positive status when you boarded.

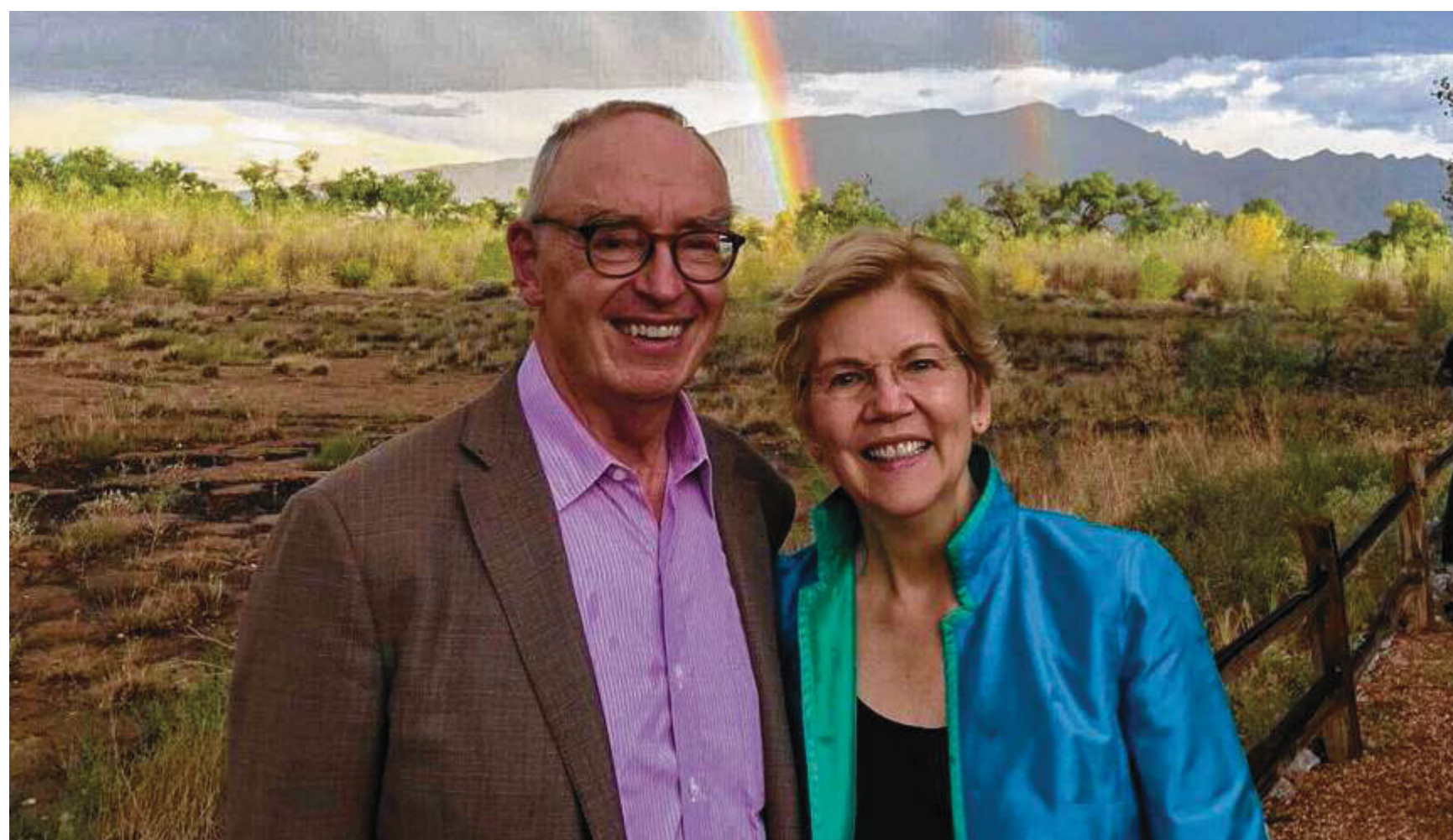
I guess it's come to this: If you're bumped from a cruise or tour because you're sick, you need an official test result. A doctor's letter would be even better. Don't wait until you get home to ask for the letter — get it right then and there. Otherwise, you may not be able to file a successful travel insurance claim.

I think a polite, written appeal to one of the Princess executives I publish on my advocacy site (www.elliott.org/company-contacts/princess-cruise-lines) would have helped. I also publish a free guide to cruising (found at www.elliott.org/ultimate-consumer-guides-smart-travelers/the-ultimate-guide-to-taking-a-cruise-now), which includes a section on how to resolve any cruise problem.

I contacted Princess on your behalf. A representative called you and agreed to reimburse you for the cost of meals, lodging, a transfer, and an additional \$500 to cover the amount that the insurance would not cover. It also furnished you with the necessary documentation for your insurance. Princess will pay you \$2,954, and after you file your insurance claim, you will get \$3,700 back.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Elliott's latest book is "How to Be the World's Smartest Traveler" (National Geographic). Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.

THE VIP LOUNGE



Senator Elizabeth Warren and her husband, Bruce Mann, in New Mexico.

'Life is more fun with a dog'

and other travel truths from Elizabeth Warren

While California is her go-to travel destination — since that is where her three grandchildren live — Senator Elizabeth Warren joked during a recent phone call from Washington, D.C., that the extent of her travel these days is “on and off the floor of the Senate.” Warren, 73, a former law school professor who has represented Massachusetts as a US senator since 2013, said she is looking forward to visiting family in Los Angeles over the holidays. The Oklahoma native and mother of two said her wish for everyone this season is “to be with the people they love. That's the best way to celebrate any holiday.” We caught up with the lawmaker, who lives in Cambridge with her husband, Bruce Mann, and their dog, Bailey, to talk about all things travel.

Favorite vacation destination? California. Bruce and I take every chance we get to visit our three grandchildren on the West Coast. If we just have a weekend, we love getting out to the Berkshires. Our Berkshires weekends always include a stop at Jacob's Pillow.

Favorite food or drink while vacationing? Boba tea. I had it with my granddaughter for the first time and now I love it when I'm on the road.

Where would you like to travel to but haven't? Joshua Tree [National Park in Southern California]. It's magnificent and I'm concerned that with climate change it is under terrible threat. I want to see it and keep fighting for it.

One item you can't leave home without when traveling? My ear buds. I love listening to audiobooks when I get out and walk. I just finished “The Great Alone” (a historical fiction novel by Kristin Hannah) about Alaska. It's just fabulous and made me want to go there. And just before that, “Mine!: How the Hidden Rules of Ownership Control Our Lives” [by Michael Heller and James Salzman], which is about property law but is surprisingly entertaining.

Aisle or window? Aisle. I always work on the plane — easier to pull out your laptop when you have space on one side.

Favorite childhood travel memory? One of my favorite memories was a family reunion down in Austin, Texas, at my Aunt Alice and Uncle Claude's house. It was especially sweet to spend time with their three girls because I didn't have a sister. We went swimming in the ice-cold water of Barton Springs, stayed up late, and put on talent shows in the backyard.

Guilty pleasure when traveling? Hand lotion and lip gloss. Partway through a long flight, it's like a mini spa day, but in the middle seat of row 28.

Best travel tip? Always bring snacks. I learned this from long days on the road. My go-to is belVita cookies. They have two advantages: They work for car sickness and they really stave off hunger. Have a couple of belVitas and you're good to go for another couple of hours. Also, bring the dog when you can. Life is more fun with a dog.

JULIET PENNINGTON



HERE

HISTORIC MANSION EMBRACES MODERN ERA

Anyone who has stayed at Newport's historic downtown mansion The Vanderbilt, Auberge Resorts Collection, is sure to be impressed by the debut of its 21 redesigned guestrooms and suites, the final chapter in the resort's sweeping top-to-bottom renovations. Those who haven't been there before are in for a treat. The updated accommodations — the Guild Room, Manor Suite, Mansion Loft Suite, Parlour Suite, Alfred Suite, and Elise One Bed/Two Bed Suites — feature custom hand-drawn wallpaper, refreshed and vintage furnishings such as custom beds and desks, Scalamandre fabrics, commissioned artworks, and a thoughtful selection of books. The hotel's new look includes modernized public spaces, a reconceptualized signature restaurant, and updated menus at three additional dining venues. For some Gilded Age fun, step into the Parlour's Hidden Bar for an add-on, absinthe-tasting experience. Rates from \$479. 833-242-8850, aubegereresorts.com/vanderbilt

FESTIVE PARTY PACKAGE

Still looking for a festive Boston-based holiday season staycation? Consider heading to Kenmore Square and booking the Hotel Commonwealth's Ready, Set, Party Package. The deal includes overnight accommodations in a luxe guest room, DryBar amenity bag with signature products, bottle of sparkling wine, and a \$50 dining credit to on-property restaurants, the new Pescador or Blue Ribbon Sushi. Or head out to enjoy Boston's entertainment scene, right outside the hotel's door, including the new MGM Music Hall and Landsdowne Street clubs. The package has no end date, meaning you can extend your celebrations into the new year and beyond. Rates from \$229. 617-532-5019, www.hotelcommonwealth.com/offer/dine-and-unwind

THERE

NEW HOTEL CONCEPT ARRIVES IN WILLIAMSBURG

Looking for an affordable, homey, and hipster-ish place to stay in the New York City area? Check out Brooklyn's Penny Williamsburg, a hybrid of hotel and housing for graduate students in

partnership with Bard College. Each of the 118 guest rooms has hardwood floors, seating/dining area, art books curated by indie bookstore The Strand, kitchenette with sink, mini fridge/freezer, microwave, and electric pour-over coffee kettle with fresh-ground Devoción coffee (delivered in-room each morning), custom branded bath products, and Parachute cloud robes. Amenities also include unlimited complimentary filtered water, bikes to borrow, and in-room yoga/exercise supplies. Coming soon: rooftop bar and restaurant with custom built-in DJ kiosk and space for live music, performances, and cultural events. An in-room and public space art program is a collaboration with two local, nonprofit community arts organizations. Rates from \$200. 929-594-2020, www.penny-hotel.com

CATSKILLS BOUTIQUE HOTEL DEBUTS

For a cozy winter getaway, consider a trip to the Catskills and the Hotel Lilien. Located in the colorful village of Tannersville, the 18-room boutique hotel is a fully renovated and redesigned property from the 1890s, with stunning wood-paneled library decorated with Victorian antiques. Each accommodation is different, sporting wood-paneled or bright white walls, and outfitted with Brookline sheets and comfy Wright mattresses. For skiers, Hunter Mountain's slopes are four minutes away. For shoppers, Tannersville's mom-and-pop shops and restaurants are steps away. On-site activities include billiards, board games, indoor wood-burning stove, outdoor fire pit, DJ every other Saturday night, and outdoor pool in warmer months. A full-service Gear Bar helps guests tackle all seasons, from snow shoes to hiking boots. A Sled Menu provides tips for enjoying nostalgic fun on local hills. Full-service cocktail bar and lounge serve locally-sourced libations, and savory and sweet bar bites. Complimentary modern conti-

mental breakfast plate includes warm croissants, coffee, and assorted teas. Rates from \$200 weekdays; \$275 weekends. 925-597-3204, www.hotellilien.com

EVERYWHERE

PORTABLE BACK AND NECK CARE

Let's face it: Travel can literally be a pain in the neck. The new CranioCradle offers a simple solution to relieve the stress from your travels, be it by car, train, or plane. Designed to feel like therapeutic hands under the body, this lightweight and portable device aims to relax muscles to relieve aches, pains, headaches, and more, while providing deep relaxation. To use, simply place under the head, neck, and back and along the spine while laying down or sitting in a chair. The CranioCradle encourages joints to decompress and tense muscles to gently release. Available in two sizes: the Original for light pressure, and the deep pressure Sport DT for athletes and plus-sized. \$49.95. 888-380-6747, www.cranioicradle.com

RIP IT UP

High-performance, sustainably made snowboard company Jones is debuting new winter collections for men and women. For example, the men's Tweaker is a freestyle-focused true twin shape that is perfect for freestyle and all-mountain ripping in any terrain. A True Camber profile offers an evenly balanced board feel while unique double radius nose and tail profile maximize the running length to offer float. The board's Classic Core makes the flex softer between the feet for maneuverability, and stiffer in the tips for stop-ability. \$529.95. Women can check out the redesigned Airheart 2.0, a directional twin built for all-mountain riders who like to carve turns and catch air. \$599.95. www.jonessnowboards.com

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