

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

WOW Air, where's my compensation for delay?

By CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT
King Features

I recently flew from Los Angeles to Reykjavik, Iceland, on WOW Air, a discount airline. WOW told me to arrive at 4:30 p.m., but the flight was delayed more than 14 hours.

The reason: The aircraft we were using had left Iceland late. WOW knew this, but still told me to get to the airport at 4:30.

I missed an entire day of my vacation by arriving in the middle of the night instead of at lunchtime. I paid for parking, a car rental and a hotel night that I didn't use.

I'd like WOW to refund the ticket and pay me \$670, the amount I'm owed under EU 261, the European consumer protection regulation. I've asked the airline, but it refuses to refund the ticket or pay any compensation. Can you help me?

— Rachael Lopez, Mission Viejo, Calif.

A: WOW should have advised you of the delay, which would have allowed you to avoid the hassle of returning home and then coming back to the airport the next day.

But that's not always possible. Maybe WOW was hopeful that a delay of the inbound aircraft could have been avoided, and advised you to get to LAX on time. I want to believe that WOW had the best of intentions.

Your request for a ticket refund isn't doable. That's because in the end, WOW transported you from LA to Reykjavik, thereby fulfilling its legal obligation under its ticket contract. In other words, it got you from point A to point B, as promised.

It just didn't do it when it promised, and that means it ran afoul of EU 261. Under that rule, you were entitled to real money for the delay — unless WOW could prove that there were “extraordinary” circumstances that led to the delay. And that, it could not.

The next time you have a lengthy delay, make sure you ask the airline immediately if it can authorize meal vouchers, hotel vouchers or phone cards.

Don't wait for it to offer you overnight accommodations, which seems to be what happened to you. Ask. Most airlines include provisions for food and accommodations in their contracts of carriage, which can be found online. I list the names, numbers

and email addresses of the WOW Air customer-service managers on my consumer-advocacy site: www.elliott.org/company-contacts/wow-air. After your first “no,” I would have appealed to one of these executives in writing.

I contacted WOW on your behalf. You also contacted the executives, and eventually the airline paid you the \$670 owed under EU 261.

Christopher Elliott is the ombudsman for National Geographic Traveler magazine and the author of “How to Be the World's Smartest Traveler.” You can read more travel tips on his blog, elliott.org, or email him at chris@elliott.org.

CELEBRITY TRAVELER
MIN JIN LEE

Author surprised by quiet Tokyo

By JAE-HA KIM
Tribune Content Agency

New York Times best-selling author Min Jin Lee spent four years in Japan doing research on her sweeping novel “Pachinko” (Grand Central Publishing, \$27), which was a National Book Award finalist. The time spent overseas provided valuable insight for the New Yorker, who “was based in Tokyo, but I traveled often to Kyoto and Osaka. I had to research Osaka extensively, because so much of ‘Pachinko’ was set there.”

An edited version of our conversation follows.

Q: Had you traveled to Japan prior to living there for a few years?

A: I'd never been to Japan before. I had thought that Tokyo would be like New York City, but it wasn't. I'd imagined that they'd be similar in their bustle and noise level, but in fact, Tokyo is a very calm metropolis.

The bright lights and hectic night-life images so often found in advertisements and Western media do not reflect everyday Japan. For example, the subways in Japan are much quieter than most American libraries.

Q: What's the most important thing you've learned from your travels?

A: Researching my book. I spent a lot of time in open markets in Asian countries, where I observed the lives of working-class women. Around the world, working-class women lack legal protections, social status,



ELENA SEIBERT PHOTO

access to capital, educational opportunities, safe housing, health care and affordable child care. The state of global feminism is very undeveloped and poor.

Q: What is your favorite vacation destination?

A: Martha's Vineyard. (Get) blueberry pie from Morning Glory Farms, ice cream at Mad Martha's and hot apple fritters at midnight from Back Door Donuts. My favorite bookstore is Bunch of Grapes. The beaches are nice too.

Q: What untapped destination should people know about?

A: Jeju is a stunning volcanic island off the coast of South Korea in the Korea Strait.

Q: What was the first trip you took as a child?

A: I was 8. My parents got a free trip to Orlando to check out some time-shares. My folks didn't buy anything, but Disney World with my sisters was awesome.

Q: If you've ever gone away for the holidays, which was the best trip?

A: When my family was

living in Tokyo, there was a year when we couldn't go back to the States for Thanksgiving, and we went to Seoul. Mandu is a highly satisfying substitute for turkey and trimmings.

Q: Where have you traveled to that most reminded you of home?

A: I could have sat for a week not saying a word, entirely content and at home, in La Sagrada Família in Barcelona.

Q: What would be your dream trip?

A: I'd rent a very, very large house in Tuscany for my extended family and all my friends. It'd be nice if others could cook and clean up for us, since this is a fantasy trip.

Q: What is your best and/or worst vacation memory?

A: Best: Making sandcastles at a beach in San Diego with my son. Worst/funniest: The time our suitcase flew out of the taxi trunk in Hong Kong and whatever remained of my husband's clothes had tire marks on them.

For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.



PHIL MARTY/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

AdventureSmith Explorations offers a journey that ventures down Greenland's coastline.

TIPS, TRIPS & DEALS

Shake up your cruise routine

By PHIL MARTY | Chicago Tribune

Cruisers who are tired of the Caribbean and Mediterranean and want to spice up their next water-based vacation should check out new offerings for 2018 from AdventureSmith Explorations. Destinations include Tasmania, Patagonia and remote areas of Indonesia. Or, to get really off the grid, there's a 17-day journey into the high Arctic to explore the Northwest Passage. The 132-passenger Ocean Adventurer is offering both northbound and southbound itineraries that venture into the northernmost reaches of Canada and down the coastline of Greenland. Outings on inflatable Zodiac boats will get passengers up close to glaciers and icebergs. Musk ox, walrus and seals are among the wildlife that cruisers likely will spot along the way. Shore expeditions may visit remote native hunting and fishing villages, and grave sites of early Arctic explorers. Prices start at \$9,695 per person for a triple cabin or \$12,595 for a double. There's also a charge of \$2,495 for one night's pre- and post-expedition hotel accommodation in Ottawa and internal flights. Air to get to Ottawa is extra. Read about AdventureSmith's new 2018 lineup at tinyurl.com/y8dta2m.

Boats and bikes

If you think the physical activity on a cruise should be more than the walk to the buffet, VBT Bicycling and Walking Vacations has the answer. The company has seven trips that combine sailing or river barging with bicycling. Several of the trips are in Holland, a biking mecca. Others explore the waterways and bike paths of Luxembourg, France, Germany and Belgium. All of the biking is rated easy, lasting between two and five hours a day. If that sounds too strenuous, most of the trips also offer e-bikes. Bookings can include airfare or be land-only. Info: tinyurl.com/y7aaxccg

Touring the delta

Pandaw Expeditions may not be well known to cruise fans in the U.S., but it's the longest-established river cruise company in Southeast Asia, with itineraries in Myanmar (formerly Burma), Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, China and India. New this year is the eight-day/seven-night Great Irrawaddy Delta cruise in Burma. Sailing round-trip from Yangon (formerly Rangoon), the 16-cabin RV Katha Pandaw will meander through a network of major and minor channels that radiate through the delta. Highlights include the potteries of Twante, the Mein Ma Hla Kyun Wildlife Reserve and its saltwater crocodiles, and shrines and markets in Bassein. There are two departures for this cruise, March 10 and 18, with pricing as low as \$2,095 per person, double occupancy. For the March 18 departure, the single-supplement is waived. If you prefer to book far ahead, there are dates listed for 2019 and 2020 at lower prices. Pandaw also waives the single supplement on other select cruises and dates. tinyurl.com/y7foowdk

Phil Marty is a freelance reporter.

OUT WITH THE COLD
In with the blue.

Elevate the everyday with a champagne check-in, Forbes Five-Star Eau Spa and no resort fee.

UP TO \$600 RESORT CREDIT*

*A 7-night minimum stay is required for a \$600 resort credit. Stay 5 nights and receive a \$400 resort credit. Based on availability for dates in March and April.

FOR RESERVATIONS CALL 855 462 0808
OR YOUR TRAVEL PROFESSIONAL.



EAU PALM BEACH
Resort & Spa

Stay. The water's perfect.



100 SOUTH OCEAN BLVD. MANALAPAN FL 33462 *EUAUMOMENTS EAU.PALMBEACH.COM