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Riverside, CA 92506-6266

August 6, 2002

KLM/NWA
Customer Relations
Mail Stop C6590
PO Box 11875
St. Paul, MN 55111-0875

Dear Sir or Madam,

We are writing with regard to the travel of Lívía Markóczy (ticket number **012 7283269045 2**) and of our three year old daughter, Tímea Goldberg (ticket number **012 7283269046 3**), on their return flight from Budapest (BUD) to Los Angeles (LAX), particular what happened to them at their stop-over in Amsterdam (AMS) on Saturday, July 27 expecting to connect to flight KLM 603. I have also made reference to this on the NWA website where this is “Customer Care Concerns” reference number **KMM4188971V44819L0KM**.

Here is an account that experience.

While Lívía and Tímea had a pleasant flight from Budapest to Amsterdam, things seemed odd even at Budapest when they were told that they could not be assigned seats for the AMS/LAX leg of the journey on KLM603 and would have to recheck-in in Amsterdam. At Amsterdam they were told that the flight had been overbooked and that they would be flying stand-by. They were offered no apology or compensation, and were told that mother and three year old daughter might be seated separately.

Later Lívía and Tímea were instructed to wait at another gate. And then after a while, yet another gate. Only after 3pm (more than an hour after the flight should have departed) were passengers actually informed that the flight had been cancelled. This announcement was the only time during the whole episode that any KLM/NWA person said, “sorry”.

Hours later (approximately 10AM Pacific Daylight Time) Jeffrey Goldberg checked the KLM/NWA website for flight information and was pleased to see that the flight was due in 10 minutes early (3:25 PM instead of 3:35). At the time that he checked the flight should have been in the air for many hours. So he made a needless drive from Riverside California to LAX (more on that below).

But back to Lívia and Tímea in Amsterdam. After it became clear that the flight was not going to take off, would-be passengers were instructed to collect their luggage and queue for hotel vouchers. Now consider the circumstances. The transfer lounge of Schiphol has no food sellers, and a single adult with a small child can't say to the child "you stay in line with our luggage while I go through Dutch immigration to try to find us some food." So, by this time they had not had any food for about 4 or 5 hours (beyond the initial wait for the scheduled departure). Again, because there was one adult and small child traveling, all they could do is follow instructions from announcements instead of exploring alternatives on their own. That is, they had no choice but to follow your instructions.

So they collected their baggage with thousands of other people (by then it became clear that a large number of flights were canceled), but there was no indication anywhere of which luggage bay carried luggage from which flight. Thus needlessly adding to the crowd and chaos of the whole situation. We should note that the situation was so crowded and people so angry that Tímea was panicked by the crowd. She insisted on being carried (while Lívia then had the checked luggage, the stroller and the carry-on luggage to deal with).

But back to the thread of events. So they waited in the queue in these circumstances for hotel booking vouchers. They waited for five hours thus, without food or water. When they reached the counter they were told "There are no hotel rooms left in Amsterdam." To which Lívia replied "What am I supposed to do?" The response was, "Don't you understand there are no hotel rooms left in Amsterdam." "So what do you expect me to do?" Which again was answered with "You have to understand that there are no rooms left." This sort of unhelpfulness characterized all our dealings with KLM/NWA during that Saturday. As you can imagine, waiting five hours in a queue (after having waited in queues for most of the day) only to be lied to about hotels wasn't something that we appreciate as quality customer care.

Fortunately someone approached Lívía and Tímea to let them know that you were lying and that they could book a hotel room on their own through a tourist office elsewhere in the airport. Likewise, they then learned that people who had ignoring your instructions and booked flights on their own were able to get reasonable flights out of Amsterdam. (Similarly, some airport staff, but never KLM staff, offered to share some food with Tímea who hadn't eaten in nearly 9 hours). Anyway, they were given a telephone number to call for KLM in Amsterdam and went to the hotel that they found for themselves. Because of having to travel with luggage and small child after extremely difficult circumstances dealing with you, they traveled to and from the airport by taxi.

They had been informed that some packets would be made available to them if they went to yet another gate. But after their experience they didn't feel like waiting in more endless queues for something that was likely to be either another lie or a disappointment.

Meanwhile back in California, Jeff found that the KLM official at LAX was remarkably unhelpful. While there was little she could do to resolve the problem, she volunteered no information whatsoever, and only after repeated questioning was did Jeff even get the information that there had been a strike. He had the impression that she was glad of the chaos caused. Lívía later reported a similar sense. Other airport officials were helpful and sympathetic to the plight of the passengers, but KLM/NWA staff were markedly rude and unhelpful. We suppose that KLM/NWA staff were engaging in a "work to rule" action in sympathy with the striking mechanics.

Anyway, once Jeff returned to Riverside after his needless trip to LAX, he made a number of phone calls to KLM/NWA. These resulted in being told 8000 people had been stuck in Amsterdam, so that their wouldn't be hotels. (Surely the city of Amsterdam has more then enough hotel rooms). But he was told that Lívía and Tímea had an unconfirmed booking with UA out of Amsterdam for Monday afternoon. Jeff informed the KLM person that the next time he managed to talk to Lívía he would advise her that if she is not happy with the KLM arrangements she should get home however she can and seek reimbursement later. At that point the KLM clerk "found" seats on a Lufthansa flight via Frankfurt for Monday morning. Jeff made it very clear over the telephone that he was not in a position to decide whether the morning or afternoon flight was better, and that they should leave the choice

up to Livia if she ever manages to get through. (The telephone number she'd been given were never answered.) The KLM official said that the booking would be "cross-booked" so that she will have the choice. This was repeated twice. Well, on Sunday in Amsterdam after a whole day of queuing at the airport (with all the luggage and a small child) Livia was informed of the Lufthansa booking only. So we were lied to again. (She may have chosen the Lufthansa flight anyway, but still we were lied to yet another time).

Anyway, they did get home on Monday afternoon on the Lufthansa flight.

Here is a list of receipted expenses:

Phone card	€10.00
Saturday Hotel & booking deposit	€101.00
Sunday Hotel	€65.72
Sunday Hotel booking deposit	€12.82
Taxi 28-07-2002	€45.00
Taxi 27-07-2002	€48.00
Taxi (rcpt no 735995)	€38.00
Taxi 29-07-2002	€52.00
Lunch 28-07-2002	€13.15
Dinner 27-07-2002	€13.70
Money changing fee 28-07	€3.40
Money changing fee 27-07	€3.40
<hr/> Total receipted expenses	<hr/> €406.19

Unreceipted expenses include pay phone calls (before purchase of phone card) approximately €5; other meals, approximately €20; Jeff's unnecessary trip to LAX (counted from the closer Anaheim instead of Riverside, as he was there anyway), 70 miles at \$.25 per mile, \$17.50. None of this accounts for our time lost.

Again to repeat, the behavior of KLM/NWA people throughout gave us the strong impression that all employees were on some sort of "work to rule" strike in sympathy with the striking mechanics. We can only imagine that KLM/NWA people were attempting to make the effects of the strike as unpleasant as possible. In future, we will certainly avoid KLM/NWA when possible. And when choosing airlines, we will, to the extent feasible, attempt to avoid those airlines which are heavily unionized. What we also find remarkable is that you somehow managed to avoid any press coverage of the

strike and its consequences. Will shareholders be informed of the strike?

We would also like to note that if what we experienced is consistent with “industry standard practice” then the failures of the airline industry are clearly of its own making, and should not be blamed on either a weakened economy or terrorist threats. Mistreatment of customers by an industry will put us off air travel. We are a family of frequent flyers (The trip described is the third round-trip flight since October 2001, and Livia has yet another [domestic] flight on August 9.) It is this experience with you which makes us more reluctant to fly in the future.

Here is what we would like from you

1. Full reimbursement for “receipted” expenses detailed above. We would like payment in US Dollars. We would also like you to consider reimbursement for the non-receipted items.
2. An apology. A clear and unambiguous apology. During this whole episode not one KLM person expressed anything resembling regret or sympathy for what was happening to us.
3. We would like an understanding of how someone with pre-paid tickets can be put on stand-by. In particular, we’d like to know whether that is done selectively where business travellers travelling economy class are less subject to such unfair treatment, since annoying business travellers is more costly than annoying others. And answer of “industry standard practice” will not be sufficient for explaining such behavior.
4. Answers to a few questions:
 - (a) Was there indeed a “work to rule” action by other KLM/NWA employees during the mechanics strike or was what we experienced what we should expect from KLM people under difficult circumstances?
 - (b) Any statistics on numbers of travellers stranded and for how long during this episode. Particularly interesting would be information which may confirm or refute our suspicion that those who ignored the announcements and instructions from KLM/NWA got off much better.
 - (c) How come you never issued a press release about the strike.

5. Any additional information/compensation you feel may be appropriate.

A copy of this letter will be made available from <http://www.goldmark.org/recommend/against/klmnwa/>

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Goldberg

Livia Markóczy