

The complaint

Mr H and Mrs H complains Great Lakes Insurance SE have unfairly declined their travel insurance claim.

All references to Great Lakes also include its appointed agents.

What happened

The details of this complaint are well known to both parties, so I won't repeat them again here. Instead, I'll focus on giving my reasons for my decision.

What I've decided – and why

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

Having done so, I agree with the conclusions reached by the investigator for these reasons:

- Mr H and Mrs H were due to board a flight at 8:40am to Manchester, so they could take a connecting flight to their final destination in Prague – at 12:30pm.
- I've looked into the particular circumstances of the flights Mr H and Mrs H were intending to take. If they took the later flight from their home airport to Manchester, it would have arrived at the same time as the connecting flight was taking off. So Mr H and Mrs H would never have made the connecting flight.
- I recognise the exclusion strictly allows Great Lakes to decline the claim. It says Mr H and Mrs H must allow for a 12-hour delay for a claim to be accepted. But our service will also consider whether applying that term would produce a fair and reasonable outcome.
- If Mr H and Mrs H took the next available flight to Manchester, the delay to get to their final destination would have been over 12 hours as there were no further flights from Manchester to Prague that day. So, it would've only meant Mr H and Mrs H would've been left in Manchester as opposed to their home airport. And so, I can understand why they chose not to travel.
- Because of that, I don't think it treats the consumer fairly and reasonably to rely on the exclusion in these circumstances.
- Great Lakes says the policy specifies it covers international flights. And as the initial flight to Manchester was domestic, it was not covered as Mr and Mrs H chose not to continue their trip.
- I can see the section of the policy does specify that it covers international flights, but it also says a policyholder can abandon their trip if they experience a delay of 12 hours or more. And as I've already set out above, If Mr H and Mrs H continued their journey to Manchester, they wouldn't have been able to reach their final, international, destination in less than 12 hours.

So, for these reasons, I uphold this complaint.

Putting things right

To put things right Great Lakes should accept the claim and pay 8% simple interest from the date the claim was submitted to the day it makes payment to Mr H and Mrs H.

My final decision

My final decision is that I uphold Mr H and Mrs H's complaint.

To put things right I direct Great Lakes Insurance SE to do as I've set out above.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr H and Mrs H to accept or reject my decision before 29 November 2023.

Michael Baronti
Ombudsman