

# Global Etiquette & Tipping In Restaurants

Covering tipping is a daunting subject that varies around the world. If you do the wrong thing, it is far from appreciated—but what is wrong and what is right is a challenge.

Alison J. Stein wrote, “The word ‘tip’ started to be commonly used for a gratuity around the 1700s in England, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, although Cornell University professor Michael Lind found evidence of a craftsman asking a customer for ‘tinkgeld’

or ‘drink money’ in German, for apprentice dating back to 1509, so the practice emerged before its current name.”

In general, Americans tip more than most and do not pay attention to local customs. That is a mistake. Both my husband Norm and I tip well, but we pay attention to what the customs are where we are traveling. I know some of this was covered in my column on “Gifting,” but general tipping is somewhat different. What set me off was Marriott announcing they were going to be putting

envelopes in rooms for the housekeeping staff for people to know to leave tips. We do, but I will tell you that guests from Australia, UK, Switzerland, Japan, and many other countries will not. They are not being cheap, but in their countries the workers are doing their job at a livable wage.

In this article, we are going to focus on restaurants; otherwise it would be pages and pages.

Even throughout the US, tipping is not standard. In New York, it is

usually 20%+, based on the quality of service. Other states, it is 15 to 20%. Buffets are generally 10 to 12%. The tip makes up a good portion of the wait staffs’ income. In small establishments where the bill is not astronomical, we try to leave the tip in cash. If service has been horrible, leave less, but when and if I do that, I write a note on the back of the check as to why. In some more expensive restaurants in larger cities, there are so many lines for tips it seems just too much. I do not want to tip the maître d’ who seated me, server, assistant server, bus boy,



PHOTOS BY MARALYN D. HILL

# Gratuities And Restaurants

By Maralyn D. Hill

sommelier and wine server, etc. When we get a check like that, we draw an > between all the lines and they can split it up. I've no desire to have my experience add 40% to my bill.

In **Canada**, tipping is usually between 15 to 20 %. Like the US, if the party size is larger than six or eight, it may already be tacked on the bill. Be sure to check.

**Mexico** and the **Caribbean**—in general, the going rate is 15%. However, be sure to read the bill, as some upscale resorts add in 15 to 17%.

**Central and South America** are mixed. While visiting **Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay**, it is common to tip between 10 and 15%, depending on service. In addition, you are sometimes charged \$2 to \$4 for utensils. This shocked me at high-end hotels. For **Costa Rica, Brazil** and **Peru**, 10% is automatically added to your bill. It is quite common to add a few extra coins for especially good service.

Throughout Latin America, you frequently have to hunt the waiter down to ask for a check. They are used to slow dining and do not want to be intrusive.

Whereas it seems like prices are higher in **Europe**, they really are not, as tips usually supplement salaries and are therefore a more discretionary bonus. **France** factors in a service charge (compris) into the check by law, which equals 15%, yet it's common to leave a few more euros that equal about 5%. **Italy** is the same in factoring in a service charge (servizio) and 5% is the norm.

For the **UK**, it is not expected to tip at pubs, but is at restaurants. Check to see if your bill reflects this, as many add this charge, which is about 10%.

In **Switzerland**, the price on the menu is the price you pay. No tax or additional gratuity, you know upfront the cost.

In **Germany**, be sure to hand the tip directly to the server, otherwise it is considered disrespectful. Usually, the tip is around 10% to 15%. Germany is second only to France in Michelin star restaurants and that service would generally be 15%.

For **Eastern Europe**, it is always important to have local currency, even if paying by credit card. A cash tip of 10% is always welcome.

In **Asia**, it varies a great deal by country. For **Thailand, Singapore** and **China**, tips never used to be expected. However, now some hotel restaurants include a 10% gratuity in the bill. In **Hong Kong**, feel free to leave an addition 5%, but not at noodle shops or dim sum parlors. For **India**, it varies throughout the country and is included in the bill, so no additional amount is expected. **Japan**, please don't tip, as it is considered an insult. In **South Korea**, please don't tip at restaurants, as the reaction is similar to Japan.

**Australia, New Zealand** and the **South Pacific** are different. In **Australia**, some Aussie friends have told me not to tip at all, that the Americans are ruining things. Yet, other friends said they tip 5 to 10% for exceptional service, but it does have to be exceptional. The same is true for **New Zealand**. Service help

are paid a good salary.

For **Fiji**, tips are not expected or included. If you do leave something, it should be token and not high. However, in **French Polynesia**, 10% is included in restaurant bills.

When traveling to **Africa** and the **Middle East**, whether it is **Morocco, Israel, United Arab Emirates** or **South Africa**, check to see if a service charge is included. If not, 10% is appropriate.

**Cruise Lines** are another story. Years ago, they were all inclusive. Now, policies vary by each line and many, if not most, charge between \$10 to \$15 per day added to your stateroom account, as well as 15% to your bar bill. Specialty restaurants have the tip factored into the surcharge. Extremely high-end cruise lines are still generally all inclusive, thank goodness.

When service is exceptional, I often tip more. If service is not good,

I do not feel obligated to tip the expected amount. If it is somewhere where a tip is automatically included, I will be sure to advise, usually in writing, what was wrong on the back of the check. I've waited tables, my children have, I know the importance of tips, but I also know and appreciate good service.

If I've overlooked a country or area, it was not intentional. This is based on what I've experienced along with my friends, as well as what I've read. For this article, I re-read my Dos and Taboos, but knew it was too old. So I researched about thirty articles online to tie into my own experience. Not much has changed except how fast rates have gone up in the US, cruise line policies, and more countries adopting US tipping practices at a lesser percentage.

Please let us know your experience. I'd also like to know if there are any etiquette topics you would like covered in future columns. Just send to [LuxebeatMag@gmail.com](mailto:LuxebeatMag@gmail.com) Subject: Letter to the Editor.

