

Tipping in the United States

There are few social customs in the US more confusing to travellers than tipping. To most Americans, gratuities are normal, like adding sales tax at the register. To foreign visitors, though, the very idea can induce anxiety or panic.

The truth is, federal minimum wage for adults in the US is just \$7.25 an hour. In industries where tipping is routine, employers are legally allowed to pay wages as low as \$2.13 an hour. So while travellers may stage a quiet rebellion, refusing to tip, the bereaved party is never going to be the restaurant owners (who earn their profit through the itemised bill), but the poor waiters.

First rule: After clearing immigration get your hands on a stack of “singles” (\$1 bills). You’re going to need them.

Getting around

In theory, tips should only go to people who are helpful; the more helpful, the more bountiful their reward. In reality, tips are par for the course, and to “stiff” somebody is tantamount to slapping them in the face.

If a airport porter helps you with your bags, give them \$1-2 per bag. If they meet you at the gate with a wheelchair, give them \$3-5.

For most travellers, the first real test comes with transports away from the airport. If you’re lucky enough to have a hotel worker collect you from Arrivals, give them \$10-15 for the effort. If you take a taxi, a little more thought will be required. Many taxis now have seat-back displays that offer “default tipping” amounts at the end of a journey: in New York, 20, 25, and 30 per cent. You should only really tip 30 per cent if the taxi turns out to be the Batmobile, getting you to your destination in record time.

Hotels

If you arrive at the hotel and somebody opens the door for you, that’s on the house. If they carry your bags, that is not on the house. Give them \$2-3 a bag.

If the hotel has a concierge, their friendliness isn’t contingent on your generosity. But if they perform a service for you – book a trip, hire a car, charter a private jet to the Bahamas – acknowledge this effort with \$10-20 at the end of your stay, presented with a handshake.

One case where tipping can have a direct impact on the quality of service you receive is housekeeping. Each morning, leave \$2-5 on your pillow with a thank you note. This ensures different cleaners get their due, and it also means cleaners will be extra diligent for the rest of your stay. If you think this is a little rich, keep in mind that these people are picking up your dirty towels, so spare change for a cup of coffee is the least you can do.

One point of confusion with hotel tipping is the in-room dining. Some hotels include a default tip on their dining bills; some include a “service charge,” which goes to the hotel, and should not be treated as a tip. If there’s no obvious tip included on the bill, slip the server 15-20 per cent when they knock on your door.

Dining and drinking

Nobody can force you to tip in a restaurant, though they can try to counteract your miserliness by stating on the menu that tips are automatically added to the final charge. This is increasingly common in areas catering to large numbers of foreign travellers; it’s also pretty standard when your table has more than six people.

If tips have been added by the time you come to hand over your card, no further gratuity is needed. If no tip has been included, you might need to leave some money on the table. How much exactly depends on what kind of table it is.

If it is a fast food table, no tip. If it is a table at a restaurant ranging from modest diner to upmarket eatery, 15-20 per cent for the waiter is standard (err on the high side in major cities like New York and San Francisco). If you leave less than 15 per cent, staff will assume you weren't happy with their service. If you leave two pennies on top of the bill – a code – they will know you were very unhappy, and feel bad even as they silently loathe you for being a Scrooge. It is almost never okay to withhold a tip; if you're considering doing that, you should also be considering complaining to the manager.

If it is a very fancy restaurant, perhaps one with Michelin stars, prepare to hand over 25 per cent of the bill (before tax) to the waiter, who will divide it up among his or her support staff. You should also tip the sommelier if they suggest wine, and perhaps the maitre'd, if they gave you a fabulous table.

Always, without exception, tip a bartender a dollar for every drink; bigger tips can mean stronger second cocktails.

As for coffee shops, despite the increasing prevalence of tip jars, and “suggested tips” when paying with a card, this is cheekiness and should only be taken seriously if the barista goes out of their way, like the man who once drew Darth Vader in my cappuccino crema.

Everything else

This guide covers the most common situations a traveller will have to contend with in the US, though the list is not exhaustive. For example, do you tip a massage therapist? Yes, 10-20 per cent. A hairdresser? Same. Tour guide or hiking leader? 15-20 per cent of the total charge, depending on their performance. That Elvis impersonator who officiated your wedding in a Las Vegas chapel? Same.

Tip anyone, in fact, that provides you with a service: 15 per cent is a good default to keep in mind. Just remember, nobody is affronted by the offer of a gratuity, so you shouldn't feel bashful about giving one.

Source:

<http://www.traveller.com.au/a-guide-to-tipping-in-the-us-when-do-i-tip-and-how-much-39x1t>

Tipping in Ireland

There is not a strong tipping culture in Ireland but many locals and visitors tend to tip for certain services, in particular restaurants, taxis and personal services (e.g. hairdressing). A rough general guide follows. If you want to tip and are in doubt about how much, think 10%. All tips are at your discretion!

Restaurants with table service: Tip 10%-12.5% of the bill, based on the quality of service. If you receive exceptional service you can tip higher. WARNING. Some restaurants already add a 'Service Charge' on to the bill (usually 12.5%). This will be printed somewhere near the end of the bill or you can ask your server if there is a service charge/gratuity. Most Hotel restaurants include a service charge. If this Service Charge is added there is no need to tip as this charge is essentially 'the tip'. If the service is terrible and a service charge has been added you can sometimes dispute it. No tip is expected for the over the counter service and in fast food establishments.

Some restaurants now add an automatic service charge to parties over a certain size usually 6 and up. Why this is done is a mystery and has never been fully explained.

It is also worth keeping in mind that often serving staff, both bar and floor, do not receive tips which are added to either credit cards (or in hotels those which are added to room charge) it is always best to ask in advance, to ensure your tip is received by staff and not the establishment.

Bartenders: No tip expected. (If you are part of a large group who have had a number of drinks and exceptional service from the staff you might consider a tip of €1 to €2 euros). And while barmen do not expect tips, lounge staff (floor serving staff) do and €1 or €2 for a large round is considered acceptable.

Hotel housekeeping/maid service: Tip at your discretion- €1 - €2 per night.

Concierge: No tip expected unless they provide exceptional service and you feel they deserve one.

Hotel porter: €1 - €2 per bag if it is brought to your room in a friendly and courteous manner, generally not over €5. Most hotels do not provide this service anyway unless you ask and many hotels may not even provide this service.

Bed and breakfast proprietors/staff: The majority of bed and breakfasts in Ireland are small family undertakings and it is not expected that guests tip for either food service or housekeeping. In larger bed and breakfasts and guest houses where staff are employed, it is acceptable to tip staff but it is certainly not expected nor required.

Taxi Driver: No tip expected nowadays round up to the nearest Euro. Tip 5% to 10% of the fare if the driver has been particularly helpful informative and courteous. Ranges are usually €1 to €10 Euros

Hairdresser/manicurist: Ladies Hairdresser 10% of the bill, Gents barbers €1 to €2 euro or 10% of the bill

Source: <http://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g186591-s606/Ireland:Tipping.And.Etiquette.html>

Tipping in the Czech Republic

Tipping in the Czech Republic is commonly expected of foreign visitors. Foreign visitors are expected to tip at least 10%. (N.B. This practice holds true mainly in Prague and leading tourist "meccas" such as Cesky Krumlov, not in the general countryside, where foreigners are not expected to do anything more than locals.)

Locals rarely leave a substantial tip in pubs or low-mid range restaurants, often leaving a few Crowns from the change rounding up to the nearest 10. This practice is changing as the economy grows and 5-10% tip is quite usual in better restaurants. Service here is unlike many other places in the world. Service staff is often sullen to dour (particularly in pubs and cheaper restaurants). Judge not by smile-quotients (Czech people are not used to smile at you at all times as e.g. Americans do), but by whether the order was taken promptly, the correct food was delivered, the bill was added up correctly and the food was good. Czech waiters do not routinely ask whether you enjoyed your meal or if everything was to your liking, however it is becoming quite usual in average-good restaurants. Sometimes, if tourists try to indicate they really enjoyed their meal or a particular dish, they are met with absolutely blank ("Little Orphan Annie") stares, as this practice is a bit foreign to a lot of Czechs.

In many traditional places, you'll see the waiter jot down your order on little paper slips which he leaves on your table. Don't mess around with it because many times it's the only record of what you ordered.

When asking for the bill, the waiter will usually wait by your side until you pay, especially if you ask to pay separately (quite common, see below).

Credit cards are somewhat new to the majority of the country, with the exception of Prague and other major cities, and tipping by credit card is considered undesirable, as many establishments will take some, if not all, of a credit card based tip "for the house" rather than passing it along to the server (actually, not many restaurants offer tipping by credit card). If you are paying by a credit card, give the server a tip when he returns your paying slip, or if paying by cash just round up the bill as you are paying. You can also leave money on the table although rounding up when paying is much more common - **just tell the waiter the total amount he should give you change for.**

BEWARE: As of 2006, some restaurants in Prague have begun putting little disclaimers stating "*Service is not included*" at the bottom of the guest check. **THIS IS UNTRUE!** By Czech law, service IS included, but a TIP is not included. Hoping to confuse unknowing tourists and guilt you into leaving (by local standards, obscenely large) tips is what this newest con is all about. Stick to the guidelines posted above. And never, ever reward bad, rude, sullen or sneery service! Doing so makes it harder for everyone and does nothing to help people here learn that tips are a reward, not a right!

WHEN PAYING IN CASH: Be sure to **count your change** when paying in cash, especially when using a larger bill. Most Czech people do not give the right amount -- they are always short.. About 80% of tourists who pay do not count them, so this has become a bit of a norm for these people. Some would give you change in 20's and 10's, 2's and 1's, making it difficult for the unfamiliar tourist to count.

Source: <http://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g274684-s606/Czech-Republic:Tipping.And.Etiquette.html>