

# Top tips on tipping around the world

Is 20% really standard when on holiday in the US? What should you give a taxi driver in Spain? Can you just round up a bill in France? Guardian correspondents around the world provide the inside track on what you do, and don't, have to pay. And yes, we're rather confused by Austria too ...

Patrick Collinson, Kim Willsher, Ashifa Kassam, Stephanie Kirchgaessner, Jon Swaine, Julia Kollewe, Maddy French and David Crouch

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## France

**Restaurants** At the bottom of a restaurant bill is the line “service 15% compris”. In practical terms it means that the price for a dish or drink on the menu includes tax and tips and there are no hidden surprises. However, most serving staff are on fixed contracts and salaries, so this goes to the owner. Most French people will leave an additional tip of around €2 if the service has been moderately good, more - around 15% - if it is exceptional. These tips should be left in cash on the table. They may be added to a pot for all the serving staff or pocketed by individual waiters.

**Bars** As in restaurants, the service is included in the price in cafes and bars. If you are at a table, or on a terrace, the prices will be slightly higher than at the bar (where the service is minimal) and the waiter will not expect, but will hope for, a small tip - usually a few coins - when he brings the change. In most bars customers are not expected to pay upfront - you order, you consume, you get a bill, you pay - but if you do pay upfront you are expected to stay at the bar and not go and sit down.

**Taxis** Again there is no obligation, but taxi drivers do expect you to at least round up to the next euro and, if they have helped you catch that train, add another euro or two.

**Hotels** This depends on the establishment. A good idea is around €1 per large bag. With the chambermaid it's traditional to leave €1 a night (€1.50 if you're feeling generous), but many people don't. The person delivering room service will hope for a couple of euros.

**Good to know** Waiters get a salary, which is usually just above the minimum wage. They rely on tips, and the cash supplements their often meagre fixed income. The word for “tip” in France is “pourboire” - literally “in order to drink”. If you have a pizza or a parcel delivered, the person doing so will be very happy with €1. Another form of tip for more long-term visitors to France are “étrennes”, the French equivalent of the Christmas box, which the concierge, firefighter, post delivery person and refuse collectors will ask for and expect.

A TripAdvisor survey in August 2014 found that 15% of French customers never tip, up

from 7% the previous year. More than a third said they leave less than in previous years.

***Kim Willsher, Paris***

## **Spain**

**Restaurants** Service charges are rarely included in the bill. Debit and credit cards are widely accepted, but it's good to keep a few euros change on hand if you're paying by card, as it's unlikely that you'll be able to add a tip through the machine.

In lower-end restaurants tipping is not expected, but you can round up the bill to the nearest euro. In middle- to high-end restaurants you can leave a few euros, up to a maximum if you were happy with the service. If a staff member goes out of their way to translate, or ensure your preferences are taken into account, it's worth tipping an extra euro or two. At Michelin-starred restaurants tipping can go as high as 10% to reflect what should be a higher level of service.

**Bars** Bartenders don't expect any kind of tip. If you're getting table service, it's worth rounding up the bill to the nearest euro.

**Taxis** No tip is expected, but rounding up to the nearest euro will suffice.

**Hotels** Tips aren't expected, but if you're in a high-end hotel and a porter helps you with your bag, they should be tipped about a euro per bag. A euro or two for the room cleaner is not expected, but always welcome.

**Good to know** People working in Spain's hospitality industry are generally full-time employees who are paid a salary. However, the economic crisis has introduced a degree of precariousness into the industry, meaning tipping is always appreciated.

***Ashifa Kassam, Madrid***

## **Italy**

**Restaurants** A tip should be left in cash, not on a credit card, and it is not expected but is seen as generous. Most Italians would leave a few euros on the table, but not more than 10% of the total. Before you leave a tip make sure there is no service charge on the bill, which does happen in some cases and is listed as "coperto", like a cover charge.

**Bars** Italians do not generally tip at bars, although service is available at some bars and pubs. There are plenty of coffee bars. Ones that cater to tourists might charge far more if you decide to take a seat, when they will bring the coffee to you after you order it, instead of standing at the bar.

**Taxis** Most Italians would round up the taxi charge, and it would be seen as generous for a long ride. But generally no tip is expected.

**Hotels** A bag carrier would expect a few euros if they carry your bags to their room. The same can be said for cleaning staff in your hotel room.

*Stephanie Kirchgaessner, Rome*

## **United States**

**Restaurants** A tip of about 20% is generally expected as standard, with more suggested for particularly good service. Some locals tend, instead, to simply double the price stated on the bill for local sales tax, which works out at about 18% of the total.

Waiters and waitresses depend on tips for much of their pay. As such it is generally assumed that all tips go direct to the server. Cash makes this simpler, but American restaurants also make it easier to tip by card. You may add a tip when signing the receipt after your card has been swiped.

**Bars** Bartenders expect a dollar per drink if they serve you at the bar. For table service something more like 20% of the bill is expected.

**Taxis** Taxi drivers are not well paid and do expect tips. Again, 20% is generally seen as standard - as reflected by this being the smallest suggested tip listed on screen when paying by card.

**Hotels** About \$1-\$2 per bag is expected among hotel staff, while roughly \$5 per night spent is often left for the housekeeping staff.

**Good to know** Generally it's worth keeping in mind that in America workers in "tipped" jobs, such as waiters and bar staff, have a significantly lower minimum wage than others - not usually more than \$2 an hour. So a standard tip is viewed by their bosses as simply part of their wage rather than a bonus for especially good service.

*Jon Swaine, New York*

## **Ireland**

**Restaurants** Very much like the UK: 10% generally, more if service is exceptionally good. Again like the UK, sometimes service is included in the bill (especially for large parties) and sometimes not. Don't feel obliged to make a further payment if they have already added it on. One neat saving, though, is free tap water - nearly all restaurants, except the very fanciest, put it on tables as standard.

**Bars** Tipping for bar service is rare. However, many pubs allow you to order from your seat and the drinks are brought to you (Guinness can take a long time to pour). If so, the standard tip is €1-€2 (for the round, not each individual drink).

**Taxis** A bit of a mish-mash. It is not automatically expected, and most people do little more than round up the fare. If you do want to, 10% should be enough.

**Hotels** A euro or two for taking bags to your room. Most hotel guests simply leave small change for the housekeeping staff.

**Good to know** Irish workers, including waiters and waitresses, used to enjoy some of the highest minimum wage levels in the world, but there has been no increase since 2007 when

it was set at €8.65 an hour. That now works out at just £6.07 an hour, significantly below the UK rate of £6.70, so they welcome tips.

*Patrick Collinson, Dublin*

## **Germany**

**Restaurants** Service (“bedienung” in German) and VAT are always included in your restaurant bill and waiters don’t live on tips, but it is customary to leave a gratuity unless the service was poor.

As knigge.de, the German etiquette bible puts it: “Man sollte, muss aber nicht” (“You should tip, although you are not obliged to”).

You pay the waiter or waitress who served you - and who usually carries a big money pouch - at the table. As a rule you give a 5%-10% tip (or “trinkgeld”, which translates as “drinking money”). As bills are usually settled in cash, you simply round up - for example, if your meal costs €23 you round up to €25 (tell the waiter “25” when you hand over the cash).

For bigger bills, round up to the nearest five or zero (eg, €50 if the bill is €46). If you have the exact amount you give it to the waiter and tell them “stimmt so” (“We are even”) so they know they can keep the change.

**Bars** Again, for smaller bills, round up to the next euro or add another euro; for bigger bills, a bit more. If you are sitting at the bar you always run a tab and pay at the end (rather than by glass), so that’s when you include a gratuity if you want to.

**Taxis** You don’t have to tip drivers, but you are expected to round up to the next euro or 50 cents. Give an extra euro or two if they have been helpful.

**Hotels** In more upmarket hotels it is customary to tip €2 per bag, and €2-€5 for room service.

**Good to know** You don’t leave change on the table - you give a tip to the waiter by rounding up your bill. The waiter usually asks whether you want to pay separately or together (“getrennt oder alles zusammen?”) - it is far more common to pay individually than in the UK, which means you add your own tip to your bill. Many restaurants do not accept credit cards so check before you order.

*Julia Kollwe, Bonn/London*

## **Austria**

**Restaurants** In less touristy areas service is often not included, and it is expected that customers either round up or add around 10% to their bill. This usually goes direct to the waiter/waitress who has their own change purse or, in some cases, it goes into a shared pot. It is always advisable to carry cash as quite a few places (again outside the tourist areas) still don’t accept cards, or only do so reluctantly.

**Bars** Bartenders often expect a tip. If they serve at the table, which is usually the case, then

they would expect at least a “rounded up tip”. Often they expect a similar tip even if they’ve served you at the bar. On principle, I don’t tip in these situations because I think it’s ridiculous – but I’ve found that approach does not make you any friends!

**Taxis** It is common to leave a taxi driver a tip, especially if it’s easy to round up. If not, around 10% is fine, although I don’t think drivers would get upset if they don’t receive one.

**Hotels** Tips are not expected, but a couple of euros would suffice if you want.

**Good to know** It can be a bit confusing. It is usual for customers to pay individually for their drinks and food. Each person is expected to give their own tip to the waiter, but they should not leave it on the table. Instead, when the waiter says the amount the customer should specify how much they will pay, including the tip. So if it is €23, the customer might hand €30 and say “25”.

This often catches tourists out. If you don’t do it that way the waiter might stand at the table pointedly rummaging around in their wallet for several minutes “looking” for your change. Easier to just hand over a rounded up amount and say “danke”, which implies you don’t want any change. To really impress, customers could also say “stimmt so” – another way of saying “keep the change”.

### ***Maddy French, Vienna***

## **Sweden**

**Restaurants** Service is almost always included, and you can safely assume it is unless expressly told otherwise. That shouldn’t stop you paying a tip if the service is particularly good, or if you really hit it off with the waiter, for example. The money goes to the waiting staff and is usually shared equally at the end of the evening. 10% is generous.

**Bars** Often bar staff come to your table and expect you to order there, not at the bar, or if you get to the bar then they will bring you your drinks. But there is certainly no need to tip them for this. If staff prompt you to tip, something is amiss – or perhaps you are in a swanky city bar where moneyed young Swedes are keen to flaunt their cash.

**Taxis** Taxi drivers do not expect to be tipped. Rides are metered – and not cheap – so you just pay what it says on the dashboard. Card payment is universally accepted. If paying cash, it is a courtesy to round up the amount.

**Hotels** Hotel staff are likely to look bewildered if you offer them a tip for carrying your bags. They do not expect to have to tug their forelocks to earn their crust, and there is usually a clear career structure in hotels, which is how staff aspire to get on after they notch up the requisite training and qualifications.

**Good to know** Service has not generally been itemised on restaurant bills since 1993, after unions representing restaurant staff signed an agreement with employers to regulate salaries across the industry. So your waiter is not on a minimum wage (Sweden does not even have one), has probably undergone formal and sometimes prolonged training at a

specialist vocational college, has a sense of pride in his or her work, and faith in the future. Therefore they do not want a tip, let alone expect it - with the implication that their living is dependent on your caprice, rather than on the right to receive a living wage.

It's not quite Barcelona in 1936, but rather a legacy of the country's idealistic, egalitarian past and its surviving consensus approach to industrial relations.

### ***David Crouch, Gothenburg***

#### **Brazil**

**Restaurants** A 10% service charge is included. Extra tips are not expected but definitely appreciated, and mostly done only if the service is excellent. If you want to tip extra, do so in cash so it goes straight to the waiter. The tips are usually pooled and sometimes also divided with the kitchen and cleaning staff as well. Legally, it is not mandatory to pay the service charge but it is very rare to request that it be deducted - even when the service is bad. Most waiters earn a minimum wage (R\$907,20 which is around £183 a month in Rio) plus tips.

**Bars** Same as above as most bars function like restaurants and also serve food. In closed bars with music, bartenders often won't handle money at all and tipping is rare.

**Taxis** Tips are uncommon. It's normal to round the value in order to avoid dealing with coins. Don't expect exact change. If the taxi is R\$13.75, paying R\$14 is the norm but R\$15 is still acceptable. If 5-10 cents above, round down.

**Hotels** A tip of R\$5 or R\$10 (£1-£2) is normal for the cleaner and for the person who carries your bag to your room, if the service is good.

### ***Shanna Hanbury, Rio de Janeiro***

#### **A tourist's guide to Britain**

**Restaurants** It's pot luck if the restaurant includes a service charge on the bill. Always check, and don't be tempted to leave a penny extra if the charge has already been added. If not, most people feel 10% is OK, but there is a trend towards 12.5%. Please resist. Splitting a bill is difficult enough without having to work out what 12.5% is. Best to leave cash if possible - tips on cards probably just go to the boss.

**Bars** We never tip. You will occasionally see your change put on a tray, the idea being that you leave it there. Ignore this and pocket the money immediately unless you really fancy the bartender. In some "hip" bars the loo attendant will try to spray you with eau de toilette and expect £1 in return. Not a single customer of the bar likes this, but they inexplicably persist with offering this "service". Do what the Brits do - walk out awkwardly, mumbling that you have no money on you.

**Hotels** Grip your luggage to avoid a flunkey carrying it a few yards and wanting payment. If you are caught, £1 per bag is enough. And unless you are American no one will expect you to leave money for the chambermaid. We are horribly mean on that front, but still expect a

chocolate on our pillow.

**Taxis** If you jump in a cab at Heathrow, the bill will be so shocking you will have nothing left for your holiday. Rounding up is the norm, but 10% if you're on expenses and need a receipt. **Patrick Collinson**

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