



Peter Greenberg

## Tipping in Foreign Countries

In some places, gratuities are frowned upon — and even against the law.

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Q: Peter, I heard that they don't tip in other countries and that some places even get mad at you if you do. Is this true?

—Ted Strobach, Erie, Pa.

A: Ted, the rules on tipping are different for each country, and believe it or not, a gesture that you consider to be a reward for excellent service could be taken as an insult in some places.

Nobody really tips quite like Americans. We generally tip 15 percent to 20 percent in restaurants and 10 percent to 15 percent for taxis, which is much more than most other countries. So even if it's a custom to tip where you're visiting, they likely expect much less than what you're used to giving.

In Europe, the Middle East and Africa, many hotels and restaurants add a service charge to the bill, so an additional tip is unnecessary. But if you wanted to throw a little extra something their way for top-notch service, they certainly wouldn't consider it an insult.

It's in Asia and the Pacific where things get complicated. In Singapore, tipping is not only frowned upon, it's outlawed at Changi Airport. Tipping is not common in Korea and Japan, but the staff in upscale restaurants and hotels will probably expect some gratuity.

The best bet, no matter where you are, is to observe the locals and see what they do. If you're still not sure, check with your concierge. Just keep in mind that you may have to grease his palms a bit for the service.

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