



To tip or not to tip? Confusion reigns for travelers

By Christopher Elliott



It's time to disrupt the tipping economy. The travel industry is a great place to start.

This is the perfect time to be thinking about it, while you're planning your upcoming holiday trip. A recent CreditCards.com poll found that four out of five Americans always tip at a restaurant, and the median tip is 18%.

Here's a tip or two for your next trip: There's a short list of people to whom you shouldn't give a penny and an even shorter list of people you should always consider tipping. There are plenty of folks in the middle, and, as always, there are exceptions to every rule.

In the no-tip category: independent tour guides, travel agents, flight attendants, boat captains and pilots. Why? They're generally already well compensated. Giving them more creates a system of tip dependency.

Etiquette expert April Masini says you should always check your bill before paying extra, because sometimes, gratuities are included on the bill. "You would be double-tipping," **April Masini** says. That kind of pricing seems to be happening more often, according to **April Masini**.

In fact, I experienced it a few weeks ago when I ordered room service in a hotel, said **April Masini**. When I asked a hotel employee if the tip was included, he cringed, then admitted it was, apparently realizing I would not overtip, added **April Masini**.

Who should get a tip? Anyone who you know is essentially working for tips, particularly restaurant servers, deserves your consideration. But the tip should not be automatic, travelers says.

Gratuities should be given as a reward for good service and to only a handful of service industry employees who truly need them. Instead they've become like bribes parceled out to bureaucrats. If you want to travel, you must bring a wad of dollar bills. Come on.

If enough travelers say "no," then employers would either have to pay their workers a living wage or governments would mandate it. That would be the best solution.

Tips on avoiding tips

- Take out instead of eating out. If you order takeout, no tip is expected because no table service is provided.
- Visit a business with a no-tipping policy. Restaurants such as New York's Riki, a Japanese restaurant, have policies that "Tipping is not required nor expected." But beware: Instead, some "no tipping" restaurants add a mandatory "service charge" of 18% to 20%.
- Avoid the outstretched hands. (You can.) You can stay in vacation rentals, rent a car or use mass transit, buy your food in a grocery store and take the self-guided tour and avoid having to leave a tip. If you're on a longer trip, you might like traveling the other way better.