

cruise tipping guide

Cruise Tipping Guide

Taking a cruise can be one of the most enjoyable and relaxing ways to travel. However, it also comes with its own set of etiquette, including tipping. Tipping on a cruise can be confusing for many travelers, as the guidelines may differ from those in restaurants or hotels. Understanding the ins and outs of cruise tipping can help you enjoy your vacation without any hiccups. This comprehensive cruise tipping guide will help you navigate through the nuances of gratuities at sea.

Understanding Cruise Line Policies

Each cruise line has its own policies regarding tipping. While some may include gratuities in the overall cruise fare, others may leave it to the discretion of the passengers. Here are some general points to consider:

1. Automatic Gratuities

Many cruise lines automatically add gratuities to your onboard account. This means that a set amount will be charged daily, usually for the service staff working in dining areas, housekeeping, and other guest services. Here are some examples of common automatic gratuity rates:

- Carnival Cruise Line: \$14.50 per person per day for standard cabins, \$16.50 for suites.
- Royal Caribbean: \$16 per person per day for standard cabins, \$18 for suites.
- Norwegian Cruise Line: \$15.50 per person per day for standard cabins, \$18 for suites.

If you prefer to manage your tips differently, most cruise lines allow you to adjust or remove these automatic gratuities before the end of your cruise.

2. Tipping for Additional Services

For additional services such as spa treatments, excursions, or specialty dining, gratuities may not be automatically included. Here are some guidelines:

- Spa Services: It's customary to tip 15-20% of the service cost.
- Excursions: If you have a tour guide, consider tipping \$5-\$10 per person, depending on the length and quality of the tour.

- Specialty Restaurants: Tipping is generally expected in specialty dining venues, where a gratuity of 15-20% is standard.

Who to Tip on a Cruise

Tipping is not just limited to your dining staff. Here's a breakdown of the various crew members you may want to consider tipping:

1. Dining Staff

Your primary dining staff, including waiters and assistant waiters, usually provide exceptional service. If gratuities are not included in your fare, consider tipping:

- Main Dining Room Waiter: \$3.50-\$5 per meal.
- Assistant Waiter: \$2-\$3 per meal.
- Buffet Staff: A couple of dollars for exceptional service.

2. Housekeeping Staff

Your stateroom attendant plays a crucial role in your comfort. A daily tip of \$2-\$5 per person is appropriate, depending on the level of service you receive.

3. Bar Staff

If you are enjoying drinks at the bar or your server brings drinks to your table, it's customary to tip \$1-\$2 per drink. In many cases, a service charge may be included in the drink price, so check your bill.

4. Room Service

For room service, it's polite to tip \$1-\$5 depending on the size of your order and the level of service. Some cruise lines may add a service charge, so verify before tipping.

5. Special Services

If you use additional services such as the concierge or personal butlers,

consider tipping around \$10-\$20, depending on the assistance they provide.

How to Tipping on a Cruise

Deciding how to tip can be as important as deciding how much to tip. Here are some methods you can use:

1. Cash Tips

While many cruise lines automatically charge gratuities to your onboard account, cash tips can be a meaningful way to express gratitude for exceptional service. Consider distributing cash tips at the end of your cruise directly to the staff who provided outstanding service.

2. Onboard Account Tips

As mentioned earlier, most cruise lines allow for automatic tipping through your onboard account. You can choose to adjust the amounts based on your experience or opt to tip directly in cash.

3. Tipping Cards

Some passengers choose to use tipping cards, which they can leave in their stateroom or hand directly to the staff. These cards can include a personal note of thanks along with a cash tip and can make the gesture more meaningful.

Understanding Cultural Differences

Cruising often involves visiting multiple countries, each with its own customs and practices regarding tipping. Here are a few cultural differences to keep in mind:

1. Caribbean and Mexico

In general, tipping in the Caribbean and Mexico is customary, with similar expectations to those in the United States. A tip of 15-20% is standard in restaurants and bars.

2. Europe

European tipping practices can vary. In many countries, service charges are included in the bill, but rounding up or leaving a small tip is still appreciated.

3. Asia

Tipping practices can differ significantly in Asia. In some countries, such as Japan, tipping can be considered rude. However, in places like Singapore and Thailand, leaving a small tip is welcomed.

Final Thoughts

Tipping on a cruise can be a nuanced affair, but understanding the guidelines will help you navigate it smoothly. Remember, the staff on board works hard to ensure you have a great experience, and gratuities are an important part of their income. Whether you choose to stick with automatic gratuities or prefer to tip in cash for exceptional service, your generosity goes a long way in creating a positive atmosphere on board.

Ultimately, the key is to tip based on the level of service you receive. If you had a fantastic experience, don't hesitate to show your appreciation through tipping. Enjoy your cruise and happy travels!

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the standard tipping guideline for cruise ship staff?

The standard tipping guideline is typically around \$15 to \$20 per person, per day, which is often automatically added to your onboard account.

Are gratuities included in the cruise fare?

In most cases, gratuities are not included in the cruise fare and will be added to your bill unless you opt to prepay them or remove them.

Who should I tip on a cruise?

You should tip the dining staff, bartenders, room stewards, and any other service personnel who provide you with assistance during your cruise.

Can I adjust the automatic gratuity on my cruise?

Yes, most cruise lines allow you to adjust or remove the automatic gratuity upon request at the guest services desk.

Is it customary to tip on shore excursions?

Yes, it is customary to tip tour guides and drivers on shore excursions, typically around 10-20% of the tour cost depending on the service.

What if I feel the service was poor?

If the service was poor, you can adjust the gratuity downwards or discuss your concerns with guest services.

Are tips expected in specialty restaurants on cruises?

Yes, tips are generally expected in specialty restaurants, and an additional gratuity of 15-20% is customary unless included in the cover charge.

Should I tip in cash or through my onboard account?

You can tip in cash directly to the staff or through your onboard account; both methods are appreciated, but cash is often preferred by crew members.

Do different cruise lines have different tipping policies?

Yes, different cruise lines can have varying tipping policies, so it's best to check the specific guidelines of your cruise line before traveling.

What is the tipping etiquette for spa services on a cruise?

For spa services, it is customary to tip around 15-20% of the service cost, usually paid in cash or added to your onboard account.

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