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Moscow Lifehack: What's the Deal With Tipping?

By The Moscow Times

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What's the deal with tipping?

Tipping abroad can be a bit of a minefield. The process is often confusing, awkward and uncomfortable — even when you know the rules by which you're playing. Add to that Russian currency, different service standards, complicated math problems after a long night of beers with friends and even a tipping professional can be a little flummoxed.

To be clear, yes, in Russia there is now a tipping culture, and if you round up your bill after receiving a service of some kind and leave without the change you won't be seen as offering a bribe. Unless it's to a government worker of course.

In restaurants, gratuity is rarely added automatically to the bill — it is, after all, a point of personal preference. Note that you are usually unable to add the tip manually when you pay by card, so bring cash. A standard tip at a restaurant is between 10-15 percent, while for coffee and cake or other small amounts feel free to simply round up the check.

With taxis, due to the plethora of apps that connect directly to your bank account or PayPal, tipping culture has somewhat diminished. But if you do book a cab, are paying in cash and feel like you've had good service, 10 percent will be appreciated. Also note that when paying that cab drivers rarely want your change. They'll either round the amount down or up to the nearest 50 or 100. Other services like haircuts, manicures, massages and concierge should also receive a tip.

And last but not least — while tipping may seem an obligation masquerading as a choice, you should never tip if you don't want to, and there is no legal requirement either.

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