

TIPPING / *What Canadians consider standard practice is looked upon quite differently elsewhere in the world. Even in places where the extra sum is not obligatory, however, it's rarely unwelcome*

A traveller's guide to gratuities

BY ANGELA BIANCHI
Special to The Globe and Mail

HERE'S a tip. If in doubt leave a tip, even though many restaurants and hotels around the world don't encourage the practice.

What has become an automatic gesture for North American diners isn't considered obligatory in most countries.

"There's a movement in Spain to eliminate tipping," says Margarita Ramon, spokeswoman for the National Tourist Office of Spain in Canada.

Some Spanish restaurants have placed signs at their doors telling patrons not to tip waiters because "we pay our staff sufficiently."

"The Spanish go out more often than North Americans, and in the course of one night can visit six bars or restaurants," Ms. Ramon says. "It would be too expensive to tip everyone. When we do tip, the amount is considerably smaller than in Canada. It's not based on the amount of the bill," Ms. Ramon says. "We tip according to the service."

In Israel, tipping is not a tradition and therefore not expected in most establishments, but in general a tip is welcome.

"Tipping is new to our country," says Yehuda Shen, former director of the Israel Government Tourist Office in Toronto.

"The practice started 20 years ago when tourists starting coming to Israel."

As in Canada, tipping in Israel ranges from 10 to 15 per cent at restaurants. Taxi drivers don't expect a tip.

IN Denmark the tip is already worked into the price of the service, so leaving some spare change on the table is a bonus, says Helen Bergstrom, manager of the Danish Tourist Board in Toronto.

"Tourists say prices are high in Denmark, but that's because a flat 15-per-cent tip is included, even for our taxi drivers and in our room rates. Tips are declared as income in our country.

"A lot of tourists don't realize this and tip anyway, and this spoils some people. Foreigners have to remember that they don't need to tip. Danes don't do it. It's awkward for them."

Slipping a couple of dollars into someone's pocket generally brings about better service in some Mediter-

ranean countries, although this unspoken practice can appear as a bribe to some.

Personal experience has shown that a few dollars generally makes slipping through customs a bit easier, especially if you're connecting into a secondary airport. Tipping, before a service is completed, makes for faster taxi trips and speeds up bellhops.

The French, once considered big tippers, are tipping for less service these days, says Françoise Ducret from the French Government Tourist Office in Toronto.

"We use judgment and moderation when tipping," she says, "and we've done away with some customs, like tipping a theatre usher."

Waiters' tips are included in the bill as a 15-per-cent service charge; chamber maids don't get tipped and neither do bartenders, unless they do more than serve a drink. Porters at the airports in France, and at railway stations have set fees, and issue receipts. So they don't get tipped.

Rafael Garcia, director of the Cuban Tourist Board in Canada, says tipping is relatively new in Cuba, so no one gets offended if it's eliminated, so long as the bill gets paid.

In Asia, tipping is not customary,

and offering money as a means of gratitude can actually be offensive, says Mary Findlay, information officer at the Japan National Tourist Organization.

"Tipping is a Western practice and many people in Japan don't expect it, so it's best not to insist they take the money," Ms. Findlay says.

IF someone's done a special favour, they'd prefer receiving a Canadian souvenir over money. They don't understand why they should be tipped for just doing their job."

In Singapore tipping is discouraged because most bills include the service charge. In fact some restaurants write "no tipping please" on the bottom of the bill.

Tipping is not officially allowed in China, but it does go on, just not in public view," says C. G. Kong from China Tours International Inc. in Vancouver.

"Some guides and drivers will accept money, under the table, but some get offended and decline," he says. "The Chinese government has posted signs in hotel lobbies and tour buses informing travellers not to tip."