

TIPPING

The custom of tipping varies widely between countries, but it is usually the standard of service that determines tips. Foreigners are often confused about the tipping culture in Vietnam. The practice of tipping was not common at all in Vietnam, until the waves of tourism brought with it many western influences, including the concept of tipping. Today, although tips are not expected, they are much appreciated. Tipping is especially common in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and certain other major cities. Most workers in Vietnam earn low wages, and tips are their only way of making extra money. Vietnam's official currency is the Vietnam dong, but US dollars are accepted at most places, and can also be used for tips.

RESTAURANTS

Many of the upscale hotels and eateries include a service charge in the bills, and this could be anywhere **between 5 and 10 percent**. However, this amount rarely reaches the service staff. If the management does send some of it their way, it's most likely to be a meagre amount. An extra tip of **VND 100,000/person** is customary when the service has been outstanding. This amount usually applies to higher priced services.

TOUR GUIDES

Tour guides do not get paid a lot and rely on tips to supplement their income. If you are going on a private tour, tip your tour guide around **3-5 dollars** per day per traveler. Also, be sure to tip your driver as well. One to two dollars should be sufficient. Also, you can buy small gifts for your tour guide or driver in lieu of tipping. Remember that Vietnamese workers are generally on much lower wages than yourself and therefore will rely upon the generosity of tourists.

HOTELS

When it comes to tipping at hotels, the level of service is the determining factor. If you're not particularly happy with the service, you are not obligated to leave a tip at all. But in other cases, leaving a couple of dollars for good housekeeping service is appropriate. You can also give the bellman **a dollar** for each bag he carries. If you have been satisfied with the overall service at the hotel, you can leave a small amount at the desk before you check out.

TAXIS

You are not required to tip taxi drivers in Vietnam, and so your driver will not be offended if you don't leave a tip. However, many foreigners do decide to round off the total amount and request the driver to keep the change, if they feel that the driver was particularly helpful or efficient.

SPAS

Spa services in Vietnam are not as expensive as they are in western countries. This actually makes it confusing for foreigners who don't know whether to tip or not in such situations. The common custom is to leave just a few dollars at the less expensive spas. The more upscale ones will most likely include the 5 to 10 percent service charge in their bills, which essentially covers your tip. But here too, if you feel your refreshing spa experience deserves a small reward, go ahead and leave an extra tip!

HAIRDRESSERS

Hairdressers in Vietnam don't receive too many tips, so when they do, it is appreciated. You can typically leave a tip of **10 to 15 percent** of the bill if you feel you received good, friendly service.