

India Tipping Guide

Who expects a tip in India, roughly how much is appropriate, and the etiquette of handing it over — so you're neither stingy nor overpaying.

WHY THIS GUIDE

Tipping in India isn't as codified as in the US, which leaves a lot of visitors either over-tipping out of anxiety or under-tipping out of confusion. Norms also shift depending on whether a service charge is already on the bill. This guide breaks tipping down by who you're tipping and what's typical for each.

WHO YOU'LL TIP

Tipping is customary, not legally mandatory, for these roles.

- Private drivers and tour guides — the most consistently tipped roles on a luxury or guided itinerary
- Hotel staff: porters, housekeeping, and concierge for specific help arranged on your behalf
- Restaurant waitstaff, where a service charge isn't already included on the bill
- Spa and salon staff after a treatment
- Trekking guides, porters, and cooks on multi-day treks — often expected at the end of the trek as a group amount

HOW MUCH, BY SERVICE

These are general ranges, not fixed rules — adjust for service quality and trip length.

- Guides and private drivers: roughly ₹200–500 per day is a reasonable range, more for exceptional, multi-day service
- Restaurant waitstaff: 5–10% of the bill where service isn't already added
- Hotel porters: a small per-bag tip is customary, similar to international norms
- Housekeeping: a modest daily amount left in the room is appreciated, especially for longer stays
- Spa staff: roughly 10% of the treatment cost is a reasonable benchmark

These are general ranges drawn from common practice, not fixed rates — adjust based on group size, trip length, and service quality.

HOW TO HAND IT OVER

The manner of tipping matters as much as the amount in many settings.

- Use your right hand, or both hands together, when handing over cash — avoid the left hand alone
- Cash is still the most reliable and appreciated form of tip, especially for drivers and guides
- For group services like trekking crews, a single combined tip handed to the lead guide to distribute is often preferred over tipping each person separately
- A discreet handover — a folded note rather than an open exchange — is generally appreciated for hotel staff

Carry a stock of smaller denomination notes specifically for tipping, since change isn't always readily available