Escape

INSIDE EASYJET'S COURSE FOR NERVOUS FLYERS

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Dear Reader

IS THE UK on a slippery slope to a U.S.-style tipping culture? My local coffee shop now asks whether I would like to tip between 5 per cent and 20 per cent on an iPad when ordering a £3.80 takeaway oat flat white each morning.

I hit 'no tip' awkwardly and hope the customer behind me doesn't judge too harshly.

As a former waitress, I know how crucial tips can be for both survival and morale. But when the service is little more than 'what can I get you?' and a straight face, I struggle to hand over my hard-earned cash.

Tipping on holiday is always painfully awkward. Will the brilliant tour guide in Spain take offence if hand over a few notes? Should I tip the U.S. hotel doorman or bellboy after every interaction? Will the hugely knowledgeable waitress actually see this money?

Psychologists say 'tipping anxiety' is becoming an increasing issue. America is, of course, the

most extreme for us Britons — and it's the guesswork that seems to produce sweaty palms and embarrassing encounters. But we seem to be following suit here in the UK.

I've had awful meals with terrible service in London but never once refused to pay the 'discretionary 12.5 per cent' added onto the bill.

At a hotel spa in Scotland recently, I was asked to sign a form and complete the 'gratuity' box after a (very average) £110 massage. I bitterly scribbled '10 per cent' before walking out.

It's the illusion of choice that's troubling; duty masquerading as an option.

I'm all for leaving a generous tip to a good waiter or waitress, but this changing culture shifts the burden of paying workers from the employer to the customer.

And that leaves a bitter taste in my mouth.

Harriet Sime

DEPUTY TRAVEL EDITOR

Tom Parker Bowles's BEST FISH AND CHIPS IN BRITAIN

WHELANS LYTHAM

Whelans has been frying up fish and chips since 1937. The fish is sustainably caught and where possible local too. Haddock is the staple, clad in the lightest of batters, and their homemade fishcakes are top-notch.

Golden: Delicious fried haddock at a Devon harbour

From Bournemouth to Blackpool, Whitby to Wales, our food critic has scoured the country to select his top 37 chippies serving our national dish

by TOM PARKER BOWLES

FOOD WRITER WHO'S DINED IN MORE THAN 5,000 RESTAURANTS

FISH and chips. Not so much a dish as a national obsession, an integral part of British heritage that is both deeply democratic and eternally sustaining.

This heavenly combination of sea and soil got us through the war years (fish and chips were never rationed) and continues to provide crisp, deep-fried delight.

Who can resist the eternal thrill of that warm paper-wrapped packet, scented with vinegar and heady anticipation, ready to be ripped open and devoured, knife and fork very much optional?

And while everything tastes better with the sea breeze fluttering through one's hair, a beach or port is not essential. Good fish and chips transcend mere location.

It's also a deeply personal thing. This list doesn't promise to be definitive. Of course it's not, and no doubt I've missed out your favourite chippy. For that, I'm sorry.

Properly done, fish and chips make up one of the world's great dishes. And the chippy its temple, its altar, its place of worship. While the roots may be foreign — fried fish from Eastern European immigrants, chips a combination of Irish potato and French technique — it's a dish we've made very much our own. God bless the chippy, and all who eat in her.

Here are my favourite fish and chip takeaways across Britain, featuring every type of chippy.

NORTH WEST