



NYC Bike Share

By Gabrielle Walters

On a recent visit to New York City I had an opportunity to try out their new bike share program, Citi Bikes. The privately-owned public program was launched on May 27, 2013. It is the largest such program in the United States consisting of 330 stations and 4,300 bikes. In the first five months approximately 5 million miles of riding have been logged with thousands of daily rides and no fatalities!

The bike itself is a heavy framed cobalt blue cruiser with the Citi Bike logo printed on it. It is equipped with three gears, chain guards, fenders, bell, kickstand, quick release seat post for easy adjustment, front basket with a heavy duty bungee cord (perfect for briefcase!), headlight and flashing red rear lights. Instructions regarding problems, use and safety are printed on the handlebars.



So how does the program work? You pay \$100 a year by credit card to receive a "key" which fits neatly on your key ring. A phone app is available for locating docking stations and finding the best bike route to your location. You then simply go to the nearest docking station to check out a bike, and it is yours to use for the next 45 minutes. If you exceed the time a charge will be added to your credit card, but if you want, you can dock the bike and check out a new one and you get another 45 minutes. When encountering a mechanical issue there is a way to



indicate it on the bike and a number to call. Users have developed a system of turning the seat backward when they dock it to let people know the bike needs repair. Along with all this the city has created many new bike lanes and implemented cycling-specific traffic lights.



The number one problem people report is trouble finding an available bike and/or a spot to dock the bike when they are done - riders have had to travel around until they are able to find a 'dock', causing a time crunch. As part of my journey on Citi Bikes I commuted into Manhattan from Brooklyn with my brother who had to be on time for a Monday morning meeting at his office. We

could not find an open docking spot right away. We finally found one...only one...so he took it, ran to work, and left me to my adventure.

I spent a full day traveling from Brooklyn to Manhattan, all over Manhattan, and back to Brooklyn all on Citi Bikes! It was an awesome way to see the city and enjoy the sights. There was definitely a learning curve but it was totally worth it.

While the kinks are being worked out there are plans to put 4,000 more bikes on the road and expand the locations for docking stations making it even more convenient. Hey, if they can do it in NYC, why not Chico!