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Midtown Tourism Center Goes High Tech

By: Adam Balkin

The new multimedia NYC Information Center in Midtown features touchscreen walls and special thin pucks brimming with recommendations for tourism. NY1's Technology reporter Adam Balkin filed the following report.

A disc that resembles a coaster is the key for tourists to a more fulfilling visit to the Big Apple, at the new multimedia NYC Information Center in Midtown. Just place the disc on a computerized counter top, and it becomes a virtual guide to the city.

"People today anticipate some level of customization for their experience, so it's not so much going in and getting the same thing that everyone wants. They want their experience facilitated for exactly what they're interested in and that's what technology does particularly well," says co-designer Jake Barton of Local Projects.



"So the first thing you do is pick up a puck and drop it on the table and it spouts out a bunch of different categories," continues Barton. "You pick a category and then you can actually move the puck around the table itself and choose different locations. So if you want to eat, go to a Broadway show, go to a museum or opera, you pick that location and then finally you take all that information and you save your custom itinerary, your guidebook to New York City. And you can email it to yourself, print it out, send it to your cell phone, which allows you to move around the city and take all that information with you, or you can do a customized flyover of the city over at "Fly NYC."

For those who may be in a hurry and don't think they have time to play with the puck, there are touchscreen walls with frequently asked questions.

"We basically surveyed everyone who works here and asked what are the basic questions everyone asks over and over, and we created a quick seamless interface for getting answers to those questions," says Barton. "You can email yourself the information so again, portability is the idea."



As you might expect, anything you can do within these four walls, and then some, can also be done at the city's new tourism website, [NYCGO.com](http://www.nycgo.com).

"We figure that connection we hope will be the single best source for anything you hope to know or do in New York City," says George Fertitta, the CEO of NYC & Company. "No city in the world

has a visitor's center or information center like we do. We are the first to do something of this scope.”

Although developers of the center will not say if there are plans to build similar facilities elsewhere, but others like it may soon develop around the world once other cities they want one too.

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