

## CITY BIKE SCHEMES — UPDATE FROM PARIS

### TELECOMMUNICATIONS

This weekend, Paris placed over 10,000 bikes in just 36 hours, launching an ambitious bike sharing system that is meant to ‘lead a revolution in the way Parisians move around the city’. Dubbed **Vélib’** (from *velo* + *liberté*), the program aims to help reduce pollution and keep the people of Paris physically fit. Customers can pick up a bicycle from one of 750 self-service points. If no bikes are available, renters are directed towards a well-stocked point nearby. After identifying themselves and providing credit or debit card details, users can take out a bike. A day pass costs EUR 1, allowing users as many rides as they like, provided each trip is less than 30 minutes. An additional half hour is EUR 1, with prices climbing for additional time used; the pricing model is aimed at encouraging quick turnover. Bikes can be returned at any service point. Once all 1,451 are in place (end of 2007), the nearest service point will never be far off — one every 300 metres, which means they’ll be 4.4 times as densely distributed as metro stations. The number of bicycles will also be doubled, bringing the total to 20,600. The sturdy grey bikes come with a metal basket on the handlebars and are heavier than standard bicycles, built to withstand heavy use. In line with the program’s green image, Vélib’ maintenance staff get around town on 130 electrically assisted bicycles. A barge with 12 stops along the Seine will pick up bikes in need of major repairs. Cleaning staff drive electric vehicles and use rain collected on the roofs of JCDecaux offices. Like a similar scheme in Lyon, where 10 percent of the city’s population has a subscription to the local sharing scheme, Vélib’ is operated by outdoor advertising giant **JCDecaux**, which is footing the bill in exchange for exclusive rights to 1,628 Paris billboards. For short journeys, shared bicycles are faster, cheaper and easier than public transport. With fuel prices still on the rise and increased concern about the environmental costs of driving, planners from other cities should head over to Paris to test Vélib’ in preparation for launching their own bicycle sharing program. And if you’re in outdoor advertising, take a cue from JCDecaux’s model! (For more examples, see our [previous coverage](#) of urban bicycle schemes.) Images: **Vélib’** on [Flickr](#) Spotted by L.C.

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Website: [velib.paris.fr](http://velib.paris.fr)