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Seattle might not be getting a public bike-share program anytime soon, but a Queen Anne hotel is getting ready to offer its own version to guests, free of charge. The brand-new Maxwell Hotel is located on Roy St. in lower Queen Anne, directly north of Seattle Center. The hotel's owners worked with local cyclist and blogger DL Byron of Bike Hugger to procure eight Torker T-300 commuter bikes (with front baskets, of course), along with helmets and locks, for their guests to use.

The Maxwell's sister hotel, the Watertown in the U District, already offers bikes to guests (though Bike Hugger was not involved) and has found them to be extremely popular.

"We want to promote Seattle's bike-friendliness and promote a healthy lifestyle," said Maxwell Hotel manager Lai Chin.

With only eight bikes planned for the stable, cycling is obviously going to be more of a niche at the hotel than a primary form of transportation. Still, the Maxwell deserves credit for offering their guests a free, clean, healthy option for exploring the city.

The Torker T-300 is on the lower end of the company's commuter offerings, but it should be plenty of bike for hotel guests. The three-speed internally-gear hub will offer a wide-enough gear range for the flat roads and bike paths the bikes will mostly see; coaster braking is intuitive to most people; and rear racks and front baskets offer the requisite cargo-carrying capacity every good city bike needs.

Speaking from experience (I live a few blocks away from the hotel), the Maxwell is in a prime biking location for bicycling. Pike Place Market, the waterfront, and Pioneer Square are all readily accessible by safe, relatively flat routes from lower Queen Anne, and a short, flat jaunt up Westlake Ave connects you to Fremont and, more importantly, the Burke-Gilman Trail.

The bike program hasn't rolled out quite yet (the hotel just opened three weeks ago), but with any luck I'll be seeing lots of blue Torker 3-speeds rolling through my neighborhood this summer.

By Josh Cohen 4/13/2010