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Mideast's first robotic car park opens

By [Soren Billing](#) on Wednesday, August 12, 2009

The first automated, multi-storey car park in the Middle East opened its doors to the public in Dubai on Wednesday, as part of the completion of phase one of the Ibn Battuta Gate project.

The new technology allows drivers to find a parking space without having to drive through a garage.

Instead, the car is left at an entry station and picked up by a computerised lift that places it inside the building on a shelving system.

Using the high-tech facility will be free of charge until the end of Ramadan, after which fees will be "in line with the market rate", said Andrew Chambers, managing director of Asteco Development Management.

"This robotic car park will be especially convenient for the office tenants, parking or retrieval can be completed in less than 160 seconds," he said.

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The new robotic car park has a capacity of 765 vehicles and is able to handle 250 cars per hours, which makes it faster than any other parking system in the world, according to its technology licensor, Robotic Systems.

The Ibn Battuta Gate development includes 40,000 sq m of office space and residential apartments managed by Asteco Property Management, and a five star hotel that is to be managed by Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts.

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The new car park will primarily cater to the development's tenants, office workers and hotel guests, but extra capacity means it will also be open to the public.

The growing number of high rise buildings in Dubai means the amount of parking space available in the city has become increasingly limited.

Robotic parking typically utilises double the amount of the space offered by a regular car park, but the technology used also makes it more expensive to build.

Robotic Systems is currently developing another automated car park in the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) with a capacity of 1,200 cars. The project is currently between 70 and 80 percent complete and will open in the second quarter of next year, according to the company's general manager, Sami K. Issa.

"As more and more vehicles in the UAE and the Middle East share a limited volume of available space, the need for a solution has become acute. In our view, it is not simply more space but more intelligent use of space which will solve the parking problems of today and tomorrow," he said.

Parking outside the Ibn Battuta shopping mall is currently free of charge but owner Nakheel Retail is expected to introduce parking fees on September 9 to prevent metro users from leaving their cars there.

"Ibn Battuta Mall anticipates increased patronage as a direct result of the new Metro line and station," the company told Arabian Business in June this year.

"Parking at the mall will continue to be managed in such a way as to ensure that all shoppers and visitors are provided with convenient and accessible car parking facilities. We are also looking at ways in which to best accommodate the needs of Metro patrons who may wish to utilise the Mall's parking facilities."

Two of the city's most popular shopping centres, Deira City and Mall of the Emirates, have already announced a parking system that allows shoppers to park free of charge during the first three hours of their visit on weekdays, and during the first four hours at the weekend.

In addition to the car park, phase one of the Ibn Battuta Gate includes the project's office space.

Phase two, which includes residential apartments and a hotel, is expected to be complete within the next four months.

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