

Visit report 7/10/2016: New York Wheel

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Our last Excursion during our week In New York was the New York Wheel. This giant wheel will be constructed on Staten Island, south of Manhattan. The trip to Staten Island was wonderful, a magnificent overview of the skyline of Manhattan and a close-up view of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.

Richard Marin, CEO of the New York Wheel, gave us a presentation about the construction of the wheel and the organization behind it. Good to know: In the beginning Governors Island was preferred as a location for then New York Wheel. Unfortunately, the city of New York wanted the wheel at Staten Island. The previous land use of the 8 acres' ground was a parking lot. The idea of building a wheel in a capital of the world is not new: Las Vegas (high Roller), London (London Eye) and many more cities have also Ferris wheels as a tourist attraction. From an investment aspect these wheels are a money making business. The London Eye, for instance, costed \$80 million to build but the cash flow per year is around \$100 million.

The design phase of the 630-foot-high Wheel lasted for two years. When designing the highest Ferris wheel in the world, engineers cope with huge engineering and physical problems. Also the relatively small construction is a problem, therefore materials are stored on a deposit area in Brooklyn and brought to the wheel when they are needed. After the two years design phase, eighth months were needed for approving and permits of the New York Wheel.

The construction consortium is build op of several American and Dutch Companies: Mammoet is the main contractor and heavy lifting operator, Phillips is involved with all the lighting and VDL constructs the cabins for the New York Wheel. Although the project went over budget and time several times, trust in the Dutch companies is high. Besides the giant wheel also a building will be built with a shopping and dining area, as well a parking garage for 950 cars. On top of this building a giant green roof will be constructed. This roof can be turned into a park where up to 5000 people can enjoy a concert.

Foundation the 10.000 ton New York Wheel is a real issue. The wheel was replaced once according to bad underground on the northern part of the construction area. Foundation of the wheel is done with 96 big caissons, these caissons are needed for the uplift force of the wheel during heavy winds. The caissons are placed on bedrock, because of the use of caissons on bedrock the foundation can cope with lateral uplift and downwards forces.

The wheel will have 36 of cabins which can carry up to 40 people at once. All cabins look the same but they are trying to sell the interior as promotion material to several companies. The total number of passengers expected is around 3.5 million. This is enough to operate beyond the break-even point which lies around 2 million passengers a year. For transporting customers from Manhattan to Staten Island the New York Wheel will start its own ferry line. Another way of going to the New York wheel is by the Staten Island ferry.

In the end the excursion was very interesting, in the end we walked along the construction site of the project. The result of the project will be that the tallest Ferris wheel is located in New York City, with the most magnificent view over Manhattan, the Harbour and Staten Island.