

Cab Gab
by Abe Mittleman

Rest Room Secrets

Despite all the cries from taxi drivers and promises from several city administrations past and present, the problem of not having available rest rooms in Manhattan still exists and in some ways it has gotten worse. In today's news the TLC claims that they will add to their useless service enhancement screens advise as to available rest rooms.

Those drivers who have been around for a while remember a number of locations we could count on when desperate. Many of these old locations are gone. Still there are some locations that if we are aware of we can use them. But, the real problem is not necessarily finding a restroom but being able to park legally while using one.

Many of the restrooms we had available in the past are now gone. Here are some examples:

The gas station on 59th and 11th avenue, filthy as it was, provided us with urinals.

Even if we held our noses it was still usable. Now it's gone. A high rise condominium has taken its place.

The Market Diner on 43rd and 11th avenue was closed for a few years. It was very good because you could park on the premises. Well, it's been remodeled and reopened. The only problem is they filled in the parking spots with flower pots, how dumb! Parking is now impossible at this location. So, not only can we not use the facilities, we can't spend any money there. Taxi drivers would spend plenty of cash there. Just the available parking spaces hooked us into eating there.

The Munson Diner on 49th street and 11th avenue was towed to Liberty, NY a few years ago. I've actually been in there. It's been rebuilt some. But believe it or not it's still the same dump with the same awful food. In any case, 100 miles to drive there is just a bit too far. So, that's over.

The Cheyenne Diner on 33rd and 9th avenue now is closed and has a wire fence around

it. It will be moved to Alabama. That's a little too far to drive to when you have to go. An adjacent taxi stand with room for 6 taxis is still there.

Then there was the Gas station on Lafayette and Houston. That was good because you could park there off the street and use the rest room. But a while ago they decided not to allow us to use this facility any more. Perhaps because some of us were pigs and would sometimes turn this clean facility into a disgusting pig pen.

So, where do you go when you're your desperate in Manhattan traffic? Certainly we don't get any help from the current administration. But, when the going gets tough you got to go somewhere.

I'll tell you some of the places I know I can count on. Perhaps you know more. If you'd like to share some of your secrets please email me at minipressnyc@aol.com, or write the Mini Press at 250 W 57th Street, NY, NY 10107

Upper East Side:

The Mansion Diner on 86th and York has a taxi stand with room for 3-4 taxis. They are nice and never have denied taxi drivers use of the facilities.

Except for Sunday when metered parking is free and the legal spaces are hogged up by cars that park for the entire day without moving, you can usually find a metered space on 86th and First avenue. The diner on the SW corner doesn't object to us using the facilities. Across the street on the north side of 86th street is a fast food chicken place that also doesn't object.

There is a taxi stand on 77th street just west of First avenue next to the Green Kitchen Restaurant. Before they remodeled and sold the place to new owners a couple of years ago there was no problem. I haven't tested the attitude of the owners to see if they are still willing to let us use the rest rooms. But, the rest room is still inside.

If you can find an available metered parking spot on 1st

avenue near 69th street there is a McDonalds on the north east corner of 69th and 1st avenue. Just walk downstairs. The doors are open for us.

The corner of 78th and Lexington has a taxi stand on all four corners. Starbucks will not object to using the rest room. Problem is there is only one for both men and women. Only one person at a time can use it. You will have to get on line. There is a diner just up the street on Lexington avenue. I've used this one when I couldn't wait. But, I've gotten a few dirty looks.

East Side below 42nd street:

There are two public restrooms that I am aware of. One is on 42nd street in a little park on the right side just before the FDR drive. The other is in another little park close to the SW corner of 36th street and first avenue. The only problem is legal parking. If you're quick you can run in before you get a ticket. Of course we shouldn't have to risk this.

There is a taxi stand on the NW corner of First avenue

and 29th street with room for two taxis. A diner is adjacent to the taxi stand. I had been using this location for many years. During the day it should not be a problem. But a few years ago the night manager started locking the doors to the facilities. When I asked if I could have the key he called me a jew so and so. I have not gone in there since. I had spent thousands of dollars in this diner over the years. Now I spend my money elsewhere. Still the taxi stand is there and you can try your luck. NYU hospital is across the street on 32nd street. Hospitals are usually good for rest rooms.

On Houston Street and Avenue A is a bar called "Nice Guy Eddies". For some reason there are usually metered spaces available on Houston street. Eddie must really be what the title of his business describes him as. I have never had a problem here.

Now here is a secret I have been keeping for a while. The Gas station on Houston and Lafayette that no longer allows us to use the rest room is still good for something.

You can pull in and park for a few minutes while using the bar just behind it. But you have to walk in on the Crosby Street side. You will be undetected while going down the stairs to a very clean rest room. If you keep it clean no one will ever object.

If you can find a parking space near 28th and Lexington the Indian restaurant on the NE corner of 28th and Lexington is friendly and available. Finding an available parking space is sometimes difficult.

Upper West Side:

Parking on the Upper West Side is very difficult. I'm not aware of many available facilities where you can park. But late at night when parking becomes easier the bar next door to Grays Papaya on 72nd and Amsterdam is good. The sign says customers only. But when they are busy as they usually are you will go unnoticed. The rest room is very clean.

Another good rest room is on the corner of 100th and Broadway at the Metro

Diner. The food is very good in this diner. Unfortunately parking is not easy.

There is a McDonalds on 91st and Columbus. You can often find a parking meter nearby. The rest room is upstairs and available.

West side below 42nd street:

On 28th street and 10th avenue there is adequate parking for many taxis either in one of the taxi stands or on a parking meter. Unfortunately there isn't much choices. Evan repair shop has a rest room. An Indian restaurant on 10th avenue between 28th street and 27th street has a rest room. But you will have to wait to use it.

So far the taxi stand next to the Cheyenne Diner is still there. The diner may be gone but the Chinese take out restaurant next to the diner has a rest room in the rear and can be used with no problem. We hope the taxi stand remains after a building that is planned for this location is built. But, I have a feeling it won't.

I don't pretend that these locations solve the problem in Manhattan. I'm also sure that there are other locations I'm not aware of. For this reason I'm asking you to email us your secrets. Let's share them.

minnifleetnyc@aol.com, or write the Mini Press at 250 W 57th Street, NY, NY 10107

I believe that parking is the biggest obstacle to the problem. If there was more easily available parking we would at least have a fighting chance to find other friendly locations. How the TLC plans to address this problem with more advanced service enhancements is a mystery. If we can't park legally no facility is good.