

ABC. UBER WAYO. TRANSCRIPT

This is a massive shift for the biggest ride-sharing company in the world. Uber is using cars from Waymo. You're going to see that in this piece - it's a self-driving Robo taxi service that's been operating for several years in Phoenix, and that's where GMA got an exclusive first look.

For an app synonymous with drivers asking for five-star ratings, this Uber ride feels very different.

"Well, one thing's for sure, it's a very quiet ride, 'cause there's nobody in here!"

GMA got an exclusive first look at the latest Uber offering - completely autonomous, driving itself through the streets of Phoenix, Arizona, with an empty driver's seat. But it seems to be observing all of the traffic laws. It clearly has all of those cameras watching what's happening all around it, but how did we get here?

Our journey began at the Desert Botanical Garden.

"So we're going to request this Uber right now. Okay, you match with a nearby autonomous vehicle, and it's asking me to confirm. It's giving me 30 seconds."

Just like any other Uber, we wait a few minutes, and a Waymo car pulls up. Uber is using their technology.

"You see right there, it says my initials, GB. Okay, so we unlocked the car, and these handles popped out."

We're inside the car now, but it will not start until you buckle up and hit that button that says "Start ride."

"All right, here we go - start ride."

It's a little strange, and, I gotta be honest, a little unnerving because you aren't used to seeing that driver's seat empty and the steering wheel moving on its own, but I quickly get used to it, and so will many other Uber riders in Phoenix starting today.

The obvious question here is: is it safe? That's what a lot of people are going to be asking before they get in a car without a driver and see the steering wheel moving on its own.

"We understand some people will have questions. There are always questions with new technology, but ultimately, we believe that Waymo is a partner leading the way on safety, that autonomous drivers, over the long term, will bring a lot of safety leadership to this industry."

Waymo says improving safety on the roads is the whole reason it exists.

"Particularly when you're in situations with vulnerable road users like pedestrians or cyclists, the Waymo driver takes extra care to navigate in those complex situations."

Uber says these rides will not cost any more. Now, we should mention that federal regulators show autonomous vehicles across all companies had nearly 200 accidents so far this year. However, that's out of more than 6 million total car accidents. The majority had no injuries and only minor damage.

VOCABULARY

autonomous (adjective) - able to work or make decisions by itself, without needing help.

buckle (verb/noun) - (verb) to bend or collapse under pressure; (noun) a metal fastener on a belt or strap.

observe (verb) - to watch or notice something carefully.

pedestrians (noun) - people who are walking, especially near roads.

popped (verb) - made a small, quick bursting sound or moved suddenly.

regulators (noun) - people or groups that make sure rules are followed.

shift (verb/noun) - (verb) to move or change position; (noun) a period of work time.

unlocked (verb) - opened something that was locked, like a door.

unnerving (adjective) - making someone feel nervous or worried.

vulnerable (adjective) - easy to hurt or in danger.