



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Mike

Favorite Kid-Friendly Activities in Chicago

Chicago, 4 Days

Table of contents:

- Guide Description 2
- Itinerary Overview 3
- Daily Itineraries 5
- Chicago Snapshot 17

Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Guide written by Joy Bartolini and Madeline Jhawar of Italy Beyond the Obvious.

Chicago is a favorite American city for many and a blast for kids of all ages. There are best-in-class museums, parks, shops, and restaurants. It's easy to plan a trip that combines culture, educational opportunities, and outdoor activities. The only challenge is deciding what to see if you have just a few days in town. .

Note: Be sure to read the Day Notes for the kid-friendly details on recommended attractions.

Ciao Bambino provides tips and advice around all things related to traveling with kids and is a guide to the best kid friendly hotels.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Chicago

DAY NOTE: Michigan Avenue Double Decker Bus Tour:

Start your Chicago experience with a double decker bus tour. The tour lasts about 2 hours and you can hop on and off as often as you like. Kids love riding in the open air and the Sears Tower (now the Willis Tower) is one of the many highlights of the tour.

American Girl Place:

Another popular activity here is a visit to American Girl Place in the Water Tower Building. You can bring your American Girl doll to the café for tea, lunch or dinner and even have her hair styled! You may want to book a reservation ahead of time because they get very busy. In the meantime, the boys can head over to Garrett Popcorn Shop. Garrett's has been serving popcorn since 1949 and the smell of fresh cheese and caramel corn greets you before you open the doors. This is consistently one of Oprah's "Favorite Things" - make sure you save some for the girls!

Hancock Tower:

When the weather and visibility is good, there are fantastic views from the top of this iconic Chicago landmark.

Navy Pier:

Navy Pier attracts both locals and tourists and is a great destination because there is something for everyone here. You can take the free Trolley from Water Tower Place on Michigan Avenue to get here. The Children's Museum is very popular and fun for toddler age children. Older kids love the wild ride on the Sea Dog speedboat cruises and adults and kids alike will have fun at the Billy Goat Tavern made famous by the Saturday Night Live skit! Note, the Children's Museum at Navy Pier is open until 8p on Thursday nights and it is fun to ride the ferris wheel at sunset followed by dinner at one of the many restaurants on the Pier. Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, there are fireworks off the pier every Wednesday and Saturday at 9pm.



Chicago City Hop-on Hop-off Tour

Hop-on Hop-off Tours



Magnificent Mile

High-end shopping Mecca



American Girl Place

Celebrating Girlhood



John Hancock Center

Magnificent view of the Mag Mile and beyond



Family Pavilion At Navy Pier

Great Place For the Family



Navy Pier Ferris Wheel

Jolly Ride on a Wheel

Day 2 - Chicago

DAY NOTE: Museum Campus and Museum of Science and Industry:

The Museum Campus is a 57-acre lakefront park that connects the Field Museum with the Shedd Aquarium and the Adler Planetarium. Large museums can be overwhelming so it pays to do your homework before you arrive and find a self-guided tour that works well for your family. It is also important to note that each museum could easily warrant a day-long visit – plan your visit accordingly.

The Field Museum has tours that include scavenger hunts and adventure highlights. If you need a break from sightseeing and want to relax, both the Aquarium and Planetarium offer educational movies for different age groups.

The Museum of Science and Industry is a bit of a trek from the other museums, but for elementary school age children it has a lot to offer. You can customize a museum day for your family with the museum's interactive visit planner. The museum recommends a "tour" for you based on your child's age and interests and provides a printable map of what your tour would look like - it's customizable for both first time or returning visitors . . . and kids love planning their day! Preschoolers will also enjoy this museum – there are tractors in the Farm Tech Exhibit they love to climb, baby chicks in the hatchery, and the world's largest pinball machine (The Swiss Jolly Ball). The exhibit that takes the cake for infants through Grade 3 is the fabulous Idea Factory, which has timed entries, so it's worth heading here first and then tackling the rest of the museum.

Millennium Park:

It's nice to balance a museum visit for half a day with an outdoor activity. Millennium Park is a fun outing for the entire family and ideally located on the way to the Museum Campus. This 25-acre park features award-winning landscape design and architecture as well as concert venues and a summer schedule with free programs for all ages. The Family Fun Festival runs throughout the summer and includes interactive activities, reading circles, musical games, concerts and lots of water activities. Kids love

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

to splash in the 1 inch of water between the giant faces in the Millennium Park Fountain - be sure to bring swimsuits and towels. After you dry off, grab a rainbow cone, a Chicago tradition, at the ice cream shop. In winter, the ice skating rink is open and the Park Grill is open year-round for dining (reservations recommended).

If you are visiting Chicago between Memorial Day and Labor Day, check the Grant Park Music schedule to see whether the Chicago Symphony Orchestra will be rehearsing at the outdoor Pritzker Pavilion (in Millennium Park) at Noon. If they are, get a picnic, sit on the lawn, and enjoy free music.

Chicago Art Institute:

You can walk from Millennium Park across a pedestrian bridge that connects it with the new wing of the Art Institute, and enjoy the view over the park from the museum's terrace. The bridge also crosses train tracks which kids find exciting.

If you don't have time to get to the Museum Campus, or want to stick around Grant Park, take the kids to the Art Institute's Touch Gallery, which is designed specifically for little ones. And yes, they can touch everything! Note, admission to the museum is free on Thursdays and the museum is open until 8p.

hide



Field Museum (The)

Natural history museum by the lake



John G. Shedd Aquarium

Explore the Deep



Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum

Explore the Celestial Skies



Museum of Science and Industry

Technological Treasury



Millennium Park

Downtown Outdoor Urban Oasis



Art Institute of Chicago

Global Art Leader

The Lincoln Park Zoo is a year-round destination and one of the oldest and most established zoos in the country. Kids love the Farm in the Zoo, and riding the vintage-looking-but-safe carousel. At Christmas time, the zoo is lit up with thousands of lights and offers a variety of holiday activities

North Avenue's huge sandy beach is the city's most popular beach in the summertime and can be easily accessed from the Lincoln Park Zoo - just walk across the pedestrian footbridge that crosses the Lakeshore Drive (at the south end of the zoo parking lot). Bring buckets, shovels, towels, and a picnic, or eat lunch at the cafe right on the beach.

Architecture River Cruise:

A 90-minute boat tour on the Chicago River, led by a member of the Chicago architecture foundation, is one of the tourist highlights for teenage-or-older children and adults. Book tickets in advance or risk them selling out. Not recommended for young children, as there is nowhere for kids to run around, and passengers have to be somewhat quiet in order to hear the guide's descriptions.



Lincoln Park Zoo

Animal lover must-see



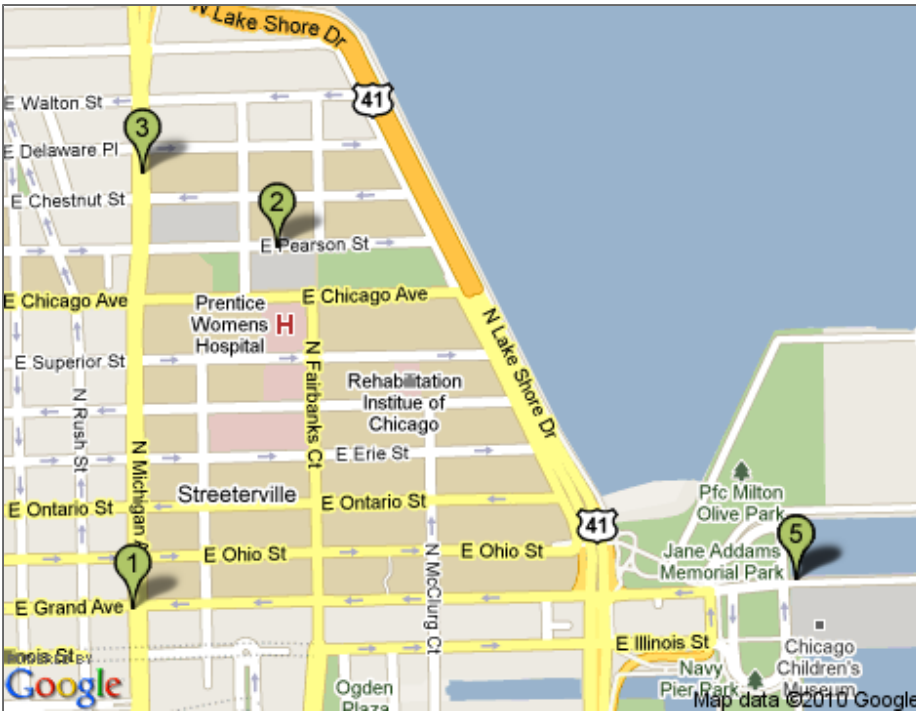
Architecture River Cruise

Fun and informative river cruise

Day 3 - Chicago

DAY NOTE: Lincoln Park Zoo and Beach:

Day 1 - Chicago



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contact:

<http://www.partner.viator.com/en/6793/tours/Chicago/Chicago-City-Hop-on-Hop-off-Tour/d673-2985TROLLEY>

location:

Chicago Illinois

Chicago City Hop-on Hop-off Tour

DESCRIPTION: See all the sights of Chicago at your own pace! On a Chicago City Hop-on Hop-off Tour you can get off the bus at any scheduled stop to visit Chicago's most popular attractions, then pick up the tour where you left off or get on at any other regular stop on the route. For individuals and families, this is the best way to see the sites in a day!

Your fully-narrated trolley (heated in winter) or double decker bus will tour 13 magnificent miles of Chicago's downtown and The Loop, taking you by the city's premier shopping, dining and attractions. The tour is about two hours if you do not get off. **Special Offer - Price displayed currently includes a discount of 10% off the recommended retail price - BOOK NOW!** © Viator



viator

contact:

tel: +1 312 642 3570
fax: +1 312 642 3826
<http://www.themagnificentmile.com/>

location:

625 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago IL 60611

1 Magnificent Mile

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

To avoid larger than usual crowds on the Mile, it is best to visit this area outside of the holiday shopping season. There are also cute shops on State Street (two blocks west) in River North and on Oak Street that tend to have fewer patrons, but be warned that some of them are expensive boutiques.

DESCRIPTION: No trip to Chicago is complete without a stroll down North Michigan Avenue, or "the Magnificent Mile" to those in the know (which includes most, if not all, tourists). This stretch of almost a mile to the north of the Chicago river is home to most of the city's powerhouse retailers, which attract locals and visitors year-round. It is worth noting that all land to the east of Michigan Avenue is landfill; it was built up from debris from the Great Fire of 1871. Also of note is the Chicago Water Tower, located at Chicago and Michigan Avenues, which provided much of the water to put out the Fire. For a break from shopping sprees, head beneath the street to the Billy Goat Tavern (stairs are at Illinois Street) for a cheezborger. © NileGuide



Magnificent Mile

contact:

tel: +1 877 247 5223
<http://www.americangirl.com>

location:

835 North Michigan Ave.
(Water Tower Place)
Chicago IL 60611

2 American Girl Place

DESCRIPTION: When Louisa May Alcott penned her classic book Little Women, she probably never imagined that an American retail center would someday pay such a complete tribute to young girls, too. Just around the corner from the Magnificent Mile shopping district, this three-story complex features a playhouse showcasing The American Girl Review, a cafe offering delicious meals, and a shop featuring American



Photo courtesy of American Girl Place

Girls dolls and clothing. Girls aged seven and up will find this an irresistible getaway. © wcities.com

contact:
tel: +1 312 751 3680
<http://www.johnhancockcenterchicago.com/>

location:
875 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago IL 60611

3 John Hancock Center

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Go for the Signature Room bar, and order an import beer or martini. It's a bit more relaxing than the Observatory, and drinks are served!

DESCRIPTION: Chicago has two giant black buildings with observation decks- the Willis Tower downtown, and the John Hancock Center, which is at the top of the Magnificent Mile. Both are popular with tourists, but given its location in Chicago's main shopping district, a visit to the Hancock Center can be more of an afterthought than a planned excursion. Visitors must pay a fee to visit the observatory, but can go to the Signature Room, a restaurant on a floor above the observatory deck, for "free" with the purchase of a drink at the bar (or an expensive meal, if you prefer). The views from either the observatory or the Signature Room are impressive, and on a clear day visitors can see up to four states- Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, and, of course, Illinois. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of John Hancock Center

contact:
tel: +1 312 595 7437
<http://www.navy Pier.com/>

location:
600 East Grand Avenue
Chicago IL 60611

4 Family Pavilion At Navy Pier

DESCRIPTION: The Family Pavilion At Navy Pier, located in Chicago is one of the most popular places in the city when it comes to family outings. There is a lot to choose from at the Family Pavilion, go watch a great movie at the IMAX Theatre or pay a visit to the Chicago Children's Museum. Take a stroll through the indoor botanical park or just check out the various shops and restaurants in the area. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Family Pavilion At Navy Pier.

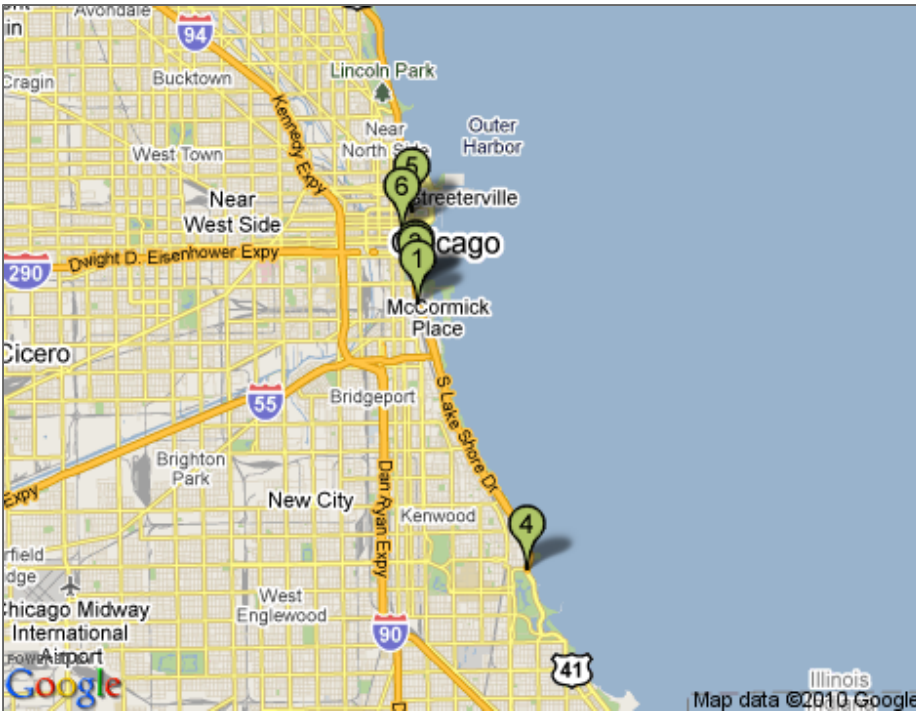
contact:
tel: +1 312 595 7437
<http://www.navy Pier.com/>

location:
600 East Grand Avenue
Chicago IL 60611

5 Navy Pier Ferris Wheel

DESCRIPTION: You cannot afford to miss the Navy Pier's most visible attraction, the 150 foot-high Ferris wheel. This fun ride is open year-round. It is not only fun for kids but for all age groups. It is modeled after the very first Ferris wheel, which was built for Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. On the Navy Pier Ferris wheel you can enjoy breathtaking views of the Chicago skyline and lake-front. During the evening, the illuminated Ferris wheel with thousands of sparkling lights is a sight that one must not miss. © wcities.com

Day 2 - Chicago



QUICK NOTE

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hide

contact:

tel: +1 312 922 9410
fax: +1 312 665 7701
<http://www.fieldmuseum.org/>

location:

1400 S Lake Shore Dr
Chicago IL 60605-2496

hours:

Daily 9am-5pm

1 Field Museum (The)

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

To view temporary exhibits, call ahead for tickets-sometimes they are sold out well in advance.

DESCRIPTION: As part of the Museum Campus on the lakefront (in addition to the Shedd Aquarium and Adler Planetarium), the Field Museum of Natural History is always at or toward the top of the list when it comes to popular cultural attractions in Chicago. The Field Museum was originally named the Columbian Museum of Chicago for the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, but changed its name to honor Marshall Field, its first major benefactor, in 1905. Since 2000, the Field Museum has housed Sue, the world's most complete and best preserved Tyrannosaurus Rex to date, in its main hall. The building itself was designed by famous Chicago architect Daniel Burnham, the mind behind the White City at the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Admission is free on the Second Monday of every month, and on additional days throughout the year as designated on the Field's website: www.fieldmuseum.org/plan_visit/free_days.htm. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of a2gemma

contact:

tel: 312/939-2438
fax: +1 312 939 8069
www.sheddaquarium.org

location:

1200 S. Lake Shore Dr
Chicago IL 60605

hours:

Memorial Day-Labor Day
daily 9am-6pm; early Sept-

2 John G. Shedd Aquarium

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Be prepared for crowds, there is often a long wait. Plan your visit for the weekdays when school is in session.

DESCRIPTION: The Shedd is one of the world's largest indoor aquariums, and houses thousands of river, lake, and sea denizens in standard aquarium tanks and elaborate new



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late May Mon-Fri 9am-5pm,
Sat-Sun 9am-6pm

habitats within its octagon-shaped marble building. The only problem with the Shedd is its steep admission price (\$24.95 for adults). You can keep your costs down by buying the "Aquarium Only" admission, but you'll miss some of the most stunning exhibits. A CityPass can save you money if you visit enough of the other included attractions. The first thing you'll see as you enter is the **Caribbean Coral Reef**. This 90,000-gallon circular tank occupies the Beaux Arts-style central rotunda, entertaining spectators who press up against the glass to ogle divers feeding nurse sharks, barracudas, stingrays, and a hawksbill sea turtle. A roving camera connected to video monitors on the tank's periphery gives visitors close-ups of the animals inside, but I'd recommend sticking around to catch one of the daily feedings, when a diver swims around the tank and (thanks to a microphone) talks about the species and their eating habits. The exhibits surrounding the Caribbean coral reef re-create marine habitats around the world. The best is **Amazon Rising: Seasons of the River**, a rendering of the Amazon basin that showcases frogs and other animals as well as fish (although the sharp-toothed piranhas are pretty cool). You'll pay extra to see the other Shedd highlights, but they're quite impressive, so I'd suggest shelling out for them if you plan to spend more than an hour here. The **Oceanarium**, with a wall of windows revealing the lake outside, replicates a Pacific Northwest coastal environment and creates the illusion of one uninterrupted expanse of sea. On a fixed performance schedule in a large pool flanked by an amphitheater, a crew of friendly trainers puts dolphins through their paces of leaping dives, breaches, and tail walking. Check out the Oceanarium schedule as soon as you get to the Shedd; seating can fill up quickly, so you'll want to get here early. If you're visiting during a summer weekend, you may also want to buy your Oceanarium ticket in advance to make sure you can catch a show that day. (**Note:** The Oceanarium will be closed for structural maintenance from Sept 2008 until early June 2009.) **Wild Reef -- Sharks at Shedd** is a series of 26 connected habitats that house a Philippine coral reef patrolled by sharks and other predators. The floor-to-ceiling windows bring the toothy swimmers up close and personal (they even swim over your head at certain spots). If you want a quality sit-down meal in a restaurant with a spectacular view of Lake Michigan, check out Soundings. There's also a family-friendly cafeteria. Allow 2 to 3 hours. © Frommer's

contact:

tel: 312/922-STAR
fax: +1 312 322 2257
www.adlerplanetarium.org

location:

1300 S. Lake Shore Dr
Chicago IL 60605

hours:

Memorial Day-Labor
Day daily 9:30am-6pm;
early Sept-late May daily

3 Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum

DESCRIPTION: The building may be historic (it was the first planetarium in the Western Hemisphere), but some of the attractions here will captivate the most jaded video-game addict. Your first stop should be the modern Sky Pavilion, where the don't-miss experience is the **StarRider Theater**. Settle down under the massive dome, and you'll take a half-hour interactive virtual-reality trip through the Milky Way and into deep space, featuring a computer-generated 3-D-graphics projection system and controls in the armrest of each seat. Six high-resolution video projectors form a seamless image above



Photo courtesy of Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum

9:30am-4:30pm; 1st Fri of every month until 10pm. StarRider Theater and Sky Shows run throughout the day; call main number for current times

your head -- you'll feel as if you're literally floating in space. If you're looking for more entertainment, the **Sky Theater** shows movies with an astronomical bent; recent shows have included *Secrets of Saturn* and *Mars Now!* The planetarium's exhibition galleries feature a variety of displays and interactive activities. If you're only going to see one exhibit (and have kids in tow), check out **Shoot For the Moon**, an exhibit on lunar exploration that's full of interactive stations (it also showcases the personal collection of astronaut Jim Lovell, captain of the infamous Apollo 13 mission, who now lives in the Chicago suburbs). Other exhibits include **Bringing the Heavens to Earth**, which traces the ways different cultures have tried to make sense of astronomical phenomena, and **From the Night Sky to the Big Bang**, which includes artifacts from the planetarium's extensive collection of astronomical instruments (although suitable for older children, these can get a bit boring for little ones unless they're real astronomy nuts). The museum's cafe provides views of the lakefront and skyline. On the first Friday evening of the month, the museum stays open until 10pm, and visitors can view dramatic close-ups of the moon, the planets, and distant galaxies through a closed-circuit monitor connected to the planetarium's Doane Observatory telescope. Allow 2 hours, more if you want to see more than one show. © Frommer's

contact:

tel: 800/468-6674 outside the Chicago area

fax: +1 773 684 7141

www.msichicago.org

location:

5700 S Lake Shore Dr
Chicago IL 60637

hours:

Memorial Day-Labor Day
Mon-Sat 9:30am-5:30pm, Sun
11am-5:30pm; early Sept-late
May Mon-Sat 9:30am-4pm,
Sun 11am-4pm

4 Museum of Science and Industry

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

If traveling without a car, take the #6 bus, or the Metra.

DESCRIPTION: Even if you don't plan on spending the day in Hyde Park, you'll likely pass through the neighborhood on your way to one of Chicago's most popular tourist attractions. The massive Museum of Science and Industry is the granddaddy of interactive museums, with some 2,000 exhibits. Schedule at least 3 hours here; a comprehensive visit can take all day, especially if you catch an OMNIMAX movie. While the museum is constantly adding new displays to cover the latest scientific breakthroughs, you shouldn't miss certain tried-and-true exhibits that have been here for years and epitomize the museum for Chicagoans. The **U-505**, a German submarine that was captured in 1944 and arrived at the museum 10 years later, brings home the claustrophobic reality of underwater naval life. The sub is displayed in a dramatic indoor arena with exhibits and newsreel footage that put the U-boat in historical context (a guided tour of the sub's interior costs \$7 extra, but the exhibit is worth visiting even if you don't go inside). The full-scale **Coal Mine**, which dates back to 1934, incorporates modern mining techniques into the exhibit -- but the best part is the simulated trip down into a dark, mysterious mine. Get to these exhibits quickly after the museum opens because they attract amusement-park-length lines during the day. Kids who love planes, trains, and automobiles shouldn't miss **All Aboard the Silver Streak**, a refurbished Burlington Pioneer Zephyr train with onboard interactive exhibits; the massive model-train exhibit that makes up **The Great Train Story**; or



Photo courtesy of Museum of Science and Industry.

Take Flight, an aviation exhibit featuring a full-size 727 airplane that revs up its engines and replays the voice recordings from a San Francisco-Chicago flight periodically throughout the day. More low-tech -- but fun for kids -- are **The Farm** (where children can sit at the wheel of a giant combine) and the **Chick Hatchery** inside the exhibit **Genetics: Decoding Life**, where you can watch as tiny newborn chicks poke their way out of eggs. **ToyMaker 3000** immerses minicapitalists in the goings-on of a virtual company and includes an entire automated toy-making assembly line. If you have really little ones (under age 5), head for the **Idea Factory**, which is filled with hands-on play equipment (admission is limited to a set number of kids, so pick up a free timed ticket in advance). I hate to indulge in gender stereotypes, but girls (myself included) love **Colleen Moore's Fairy Castle**, a lavishly decorated miniature palace filled with priceless treasures (yes, those are real diamonds and pearls in the chandeliers). The castle is hidden on the lower level. Also tucked away in an inconspicuous spot -- along the Blue stairwell between the Main Floor and the Balcony -- are the **Human Body Slices**, actual slivers of human cadavers that are guaranteed to impress teenagers in search of something truly gross. A major addition to the museum is the **Henry Crown Space Center**, which documents the story of space exploration in copious detail, highlighted by a simulated space-shuttle experience through sight and sound at the center's five-story OMNIMAX Theater. The theater offers double features on the weekends; call for show times. When you've worked up an appetite, you can visit the museum's large food court or the old-fashion ice-cream parlor; there's also an excellent gift shop. Although it's quite a distance from the rest of Chicago's tourist attractions, the museum is easy enough to reach without a car; your best options are the no. 6 Jeffrey Express bus and the Metra Electric train from downtown (the no. 10 bus runs from downtown to the museum's front entrance during the summer). © Frommer's

contact:

tel: +1 312 742 1168 / +1 312 744 3370 (Event Hotline)
<http://www.millenniumpark.org/>

location:

222 North Columbus Drive
Chicago IL 60601

5 Millennium Park

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

If visiting during the winter, skating on the ice rink is free for those with their own skates. Otherwise it's \$10.

DESCRIPTION: Chicago is full of must-see attractions, but at the top of the Can't Miss list is Millennium Park. It debuted in 2004, several years overdue, but it was worth the wait. It is a true gem, right downtown between Michigan Avenue and the lake. One can easily spend an afternoon just sitting on the benches at the perimeter of the Pritzker Pavilion, stare at their warped reflection in Cloud Gate ("The Bean" to locals), and watch the rotating faces in Crown Fountain spew water every five minutes or so. Immediately to the south of Millennium Park lie the Art Institute and Grant Park, which all together would make for a wonderfully relaxing day. If you only have time for



one of the three, though, do not pass go, do not collect \$200- without going to Millennium Park. © NileGuide

contact:

tel: 312/443-3600

fax: +1 312 443 0849

www.artic.edu

location:

111 S. Michigan Ave
Chicago IL 60602

hours:

Mon-Fri 10:30am-5pm (Thurs
until 8pm, until 9pm Thurs-
Fri Memorial Day-Labor Day);
Sat-Sun 10am-5pm

6 Art Institute of Chicago

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

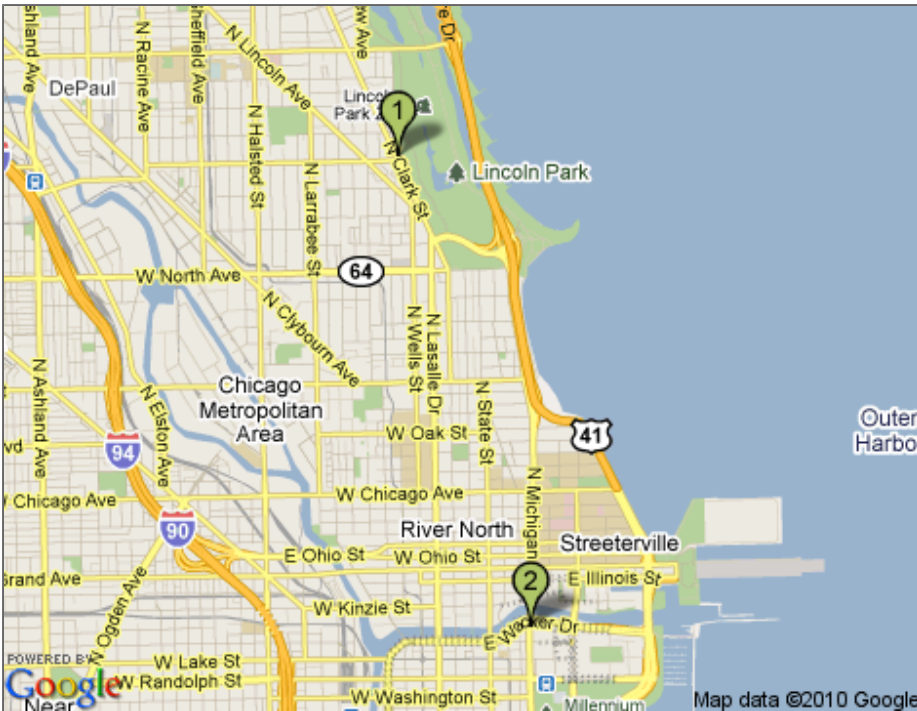
Admission is FREE 5pm-8pm on Thursdays. It is also conveniently located off the red line in the loop.

DESCRIPTION: You can't -- and shouldn't -- miss the Art Institute. (You really have no excuse, since it's conveniently located right on Michigan Ave. in the heart of downtown.) No matter what medium or century interests you, the Art Institute has something in its collection to fit the bill. Japanese ukiyo-e prints, ancient Egyptian bronzes, Greek vases, 19th-century British photography, masterpieces by most of the greatest names in 20th-century sculpture, and modern American textiles are just some of the works on display, but for a general overview of the museum's collection, take the free "Highlights of the Art Institute" tour, offered at 2pm on Tuesday, Saturday, and Sunday. If time is limited, head straight to the museum's renowned anthology of **Impressionist art**, which includes one of the world's largest collections of Monet paintings; this is one of the most popular areas of the museum, so arriving early pays off. Among the treasures, you'll find Seurat's pointillist masterpiece *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. The galleries of **European and American contemporary art** include paintings, sculptures, and mixed-media works by Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Salvador Dalí, Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, and Andy Warhol. Visitors are sometimes surprised when they discover many of the icons that hang here (Grant Wood's *American Gothic*; Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*). Often overlooked but worth seeing are the Arthur Rubloff collection of delicate mid-19th-century **glass paperweights**, and the great hall of **European arms and armor** dating from the 15th to the 19th centuries. Composed of more than 1,500 objects, including armor, horse equipment, swords and daggers, polearms, and maces, the collection is one of the most important assemblages of its kind in the country. (If you do head down here, you'll see Marc Chagall's stunning stained-glass windows at the end of the gallery.) Children younger than 12 get in for free, and the Art Institute goes the extra mile to entertain them. The **Kraft Education Center** on the lower level features interactive exhibits and has a list of "gallery games" to make visiting the museum more fun. When I was a kid, I was entranced by the **Thorne Miniature Rooms**, filled with tiny reproductions of furnished interiors from European and American history (heaven for a dollhouse fanatic). The museum has a cafeteria and an elegant full-service restaurant, a picturesque courtyard cafe (open June-Sept), and a large shop. It offers a busy schedule of lectures, films, and other special presentations, as well as guided tours. The museum also has a research library. Allow 3 hours. **Touring the Art Institute** -- If you want to enjoy your favorite masterpieces in something resembling peace and quiet, put some thought into the timing of your visit to the Art



Institute, a museum so popular that it draws as much traffic as our jammed expressways. Some tips for avoiding the rush hour: Many people don't realize the museum is open on Monday; keep this secret to yourself, and visit when the galleries are relatively subdued. Also, many visitors aren't aware that the museum stays open late on Thursdays, so consider stopping by after an early dinner (another bonus: free admission). © Frommer's

Day 3 - Chicago



QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: Lincoln Park Zoo and Beach:

The Lincoln Park Zoo is a year-round destination and one of the oldest and most established zoos in the country. Kids love the Farm in the Zoo, and riding the vintage-looking-but-safe carousel. At Christmas time, the zoo is lit up with thousands of lights and offers a variety of holiday activities

North Avenue's huge sandy beach is the city's most popular beach in the summertime and can be easily accessed from the Lincoln Park Zoo - just walk across the pedestrian footbridge that crosses the Lakeshore Drive (at the south end of the zoo parking lot). Bring buckets, shovels, towels, and a picnic, or eat lunch at the cafe right on the beach.

Architecture River Cruise:

A 90-minute boat tour on the Chicago River, led by a member of the Chicago architecture foundation, is one of the tourist highlights for teenage-or-older children and adults. Book tickets in advance or risk them selling out. Not recommended for young children, as there is nowhere for kids to run around, and passengers have to be somewhat quiet in order to hear the guide's descriptions.

contact:

tel: +1 312 742 2000
fax: +1 312 742 7666
http://www.lpzoo.org/index_2.html

location:

2001 North Clark Street
Chicago IL 60614

1 Lincoln Park Zoo

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Admission is free, but pack your own food/water, which is expensive if you purchase at the zoo. Take the CTA red line to avoid difficult parking, or drive early so you can find street parking instead of using the expensive zoo parking lot.



Photo courtesy of yimhafiz

DESCRIPTION: As the only zoo in the City of Chicago, the Lincoln Park Zoo is free and open to the public 365 days a year. Founded in 1868, it is also one of the nation's oldest zoos. The Lincoln Park Zoo does an impressive job with its various exhibits, most notably the Regenstein Center for African Apes, where you can look a gorilla in the face (from the other side of the rail or glass, of course). The Lincoln Park Conservatory is directly to the north of the zoo, where you can take in some flora to complement your fauna fix from the zoo. A nice pre or post-zoo meal can be had at R.J. Grunt's, directly across the street. During the Christmas season the zoo lights up with a free light show every evening.

© NileGuide

contact:

tel: +1 312 751 1380

http://www.architecture.org/tour_view.aspx

location:

333 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago IL 60601

hours:

May 1-Jun 13: 1p, 3p M-F,
11a, 1p, 3p Sa-Su. June 14-
Oct 3: 10a, 11a, noon, 1p, 2p,
3p daily; Oct: 1p, 3p Mon-Fri;
11a, noon, 1p, 2p, 3p Sat-Sun

2 Architecture River Cruise

DESCRIPTION: An architecture river cruise is a perfect activity for sunny spring and summer days, and is fun for the whole family. Tour goers are treated to a 90 minute description and back story of how Chicago literally rebuilt itself after the Great Fire of 1871. Each tour guide will add his or her take on some of the buildings discussed, as well as the heavyweight architects behind them. Remember sunscreen! © NileGuide



Architecture River Cruise

Chicago Snapshot

Local Info

Chicago is "The City that Works" and "The City of Big Shoulders." It boasts North America's tallest building and one of the world's largest office buildings. With the ubiquitous elevated trains creating a continuous clatter, the city looks, feels and, in fact is, big.

At first glance, Chicago can be overwhelming. But, like any city, it is the sum of its parts, and its parts are diverse. Also known as "The City of Neighborhoods," Chicago comprises more than 75 official neighborhoods. Each features its own distinct quality and character.

So, when trying to digest Chicago, don't try to take it all in with one big bite. Break it up into manageable portions.

The Loop

This area takes its name from the elevated train, the "El," that loops around the city's central core. While the downtown area stretches beyond these boundaries, much of the lifeblood that invigorates the rest of the city also pumps through the Loop. The Sears Tower, North America's tallest building, is here, as is the Chicago Board of Trade, one of the biggest options and futures trading floors in the world. City government offices are based here, as well as the home offices of several major corporations.

When it's time for the city that works to relax, the Loop does not disappoint. The city's magnificent Harold Washington Library, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Chicago Cultural Center are all here. While not as ritzy as the city's Magnificent Mile where State Street is a shopping mecca.

Thanks to a burgeoning theater district, the Loop is increasingly becoming a place to visit when the workday ends. The restored Ford Center for the Performing Arts-Oriental Theatre hosts lavish Broadway productions while the Chicago Theatre has several musical concerts. The landmark Auditorium Theatre, considered by some the most beautiful theater in America, hosts musicals, concerts and other performances in the South Loop area. The renowned Goodman Theatre also offers several performances throughout the year. This North Loop site includes dining and retail options.

Many restaurants, such as The Original Heaven on Seven, Italian Village and Berghoff, vie to whet every Loop-goer's appetite. Boutique Hotels such as the Hotel Allegro, Hotel Burnham Chicago and Hotel Monaco compete for guests with the more traditional Palmer House and Chicago Hilton Plaza and Towers.

While technically just outside the Loop's borders, Grant Park should not be missed. Hugging Lake Michigan, this park is often referred to as "Chicago's Front Yard." The majestic Buckingham Fountain is here, as is a plush rose garden and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's outdoor home, the Petrillo Music Shell. The park is immense, with the capacity to hold up to three million people, as is tested annually by the Taste of Chicago festival. Grant Park also plays host to many music and arts festivals during the summer, including Jazz Fest and Blues Fest.

Near North Side

Just to the north of the Loop, bordered by the Chicago River on the south, the Lake on the east and North Avenue on the north, is Chicago's Near North Side neighborhood. This area is in turn made up of several other smaller districts.

The city's "Magnificent Mile" (known as the "Mag Mile" to locals) is one of the Near North's most famous offerings. Stretching along Michigan Avenue from the Chicago River to Oak Street, this shoppers' paradise is home to high-scale chains like Neiman Marcus and Bloomingdale's at the 900 North Michigan Avenue Shops, as well as the lavish boutiques of Marilyn Miglin and Room & Board. The city's early monument to modernity, the John Hancock Center, is just a few blocks from the city's links to its past, the Water Tower and the Chicago Water Works, two of the few buildings that survived the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Water Tower Place, an upscale indoor shopping mall, houses numerous other chain stores. You can enjoy RL Restaurant or Ralph Lauren's, the designer's largest retail store and its hip adjoining restaurant. Nordstrom, Crate & Barrel and Saks Fifth Avenue can be found a few blocks south on Michigan Avenue.

If you are wondering where the people who can afford to shop at the more expensive stores on Michigan Avenue live, head east

to Streeterville, or the adjoining Gold Coast neighborhood. Theoretically, the Gold Coast is named for the African coast of the same name, but the moniker also describes the area's opulence. The neighborhood is the nation's second wealthiest, surpassed only by New York City's Central Park East.

Just north of the Chicago River and a few blocks west of the Mag Mile is River North, home to an eclectic mix of swanky galleries, trendy cafes and theme restaurants like the Hard Rock Café. While many of the city's residents pretend they have never been to these restaurants, they most likely have — so go and enjoy with a clear conscience.

South Loop

In stark contrast to the garish designs of the chain restaurants, the South Loop offers a quaint, Old World charm, neighborhood bars and smaller restaurants. Once home to one of the largest publishing centers in the Midwest, the warehouses left behind have been renovated and taken over by young, affluent professionals who wish to walk to their jobs in the Loop. The area's focal point, Dearborn Station, sets the tone for the neighborhood. The former rail transportation hub's façade has been lavishly restored.

Beyond Downtown

Lake Shore Drive, one of the city's major north-south arteries, runs along the picturesque lakefront. While the Drive will take you to many of the city's attractions, do not forget that this boulevard is an attraction in itself. The lake view, the bold skyline and even the Drive's own tree-lined medians offer some of the most breathtaking views in the city. However, Chicagoans have little patience for "Sunday drivers" gawking at the sites. So when you get on Lake Shore Drive, have a destination in mind.

Lincoln Park

Once you pass North Avenue, you will enter Lincoln Park, one of the city's more gentrified areas. Tree-lined Fullerton Avenue, with its brownstones converted into condos, gives you a feel for the neighborhood residents. Lincoln Park also surrounds the DePaul University neighborhood. A variety of bars, dance spots and inexpensive restaurants cater to the college and just-out-of-college crowd.

Chicago Snapshot continued

Not all of Lincoln Park hustles and bustles. In fact, the park from which the neighborhood takes its name is one of the city's largest and most pastoral. Designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, who also drew up the blueprints for New York's Central Park and Lincoln Park encompasses more than 1,000 acres. It includes a Zoo, the Lincoln Park Conservatory, a driving range, dozens of ball fields and several biking and running paths connecting it to lakefront beaches. You'll find many pickup games of soccer and ultimate Frisbee here on warm summer days.

Lakeview

Heading further north brings you to Lakeview, a neighborhood that serves as a popular nightlife center for both the straight and gay communities. These groups tend to party separately, with the standout exception being Berlin, a late-night dance club where hipsters of every orientation party together.

Halsted Street between Belmont Avenue and Irving Park Road serves as the headquarters for gay nightlife. The area is not hard to find; just look for the gigantic rainbow-colored pylons that line the streets. For dancing, head to Roscoe's Tavern or Spin.

If partying is not your thing, don't despair. The area also offers its share of restaurants, from Angelina Ristorante and Yoshi's Cafe to the 24-hour Melrose Restaurant.

For the straight set, head a few blocks west to Wrigleyville, a bar area that gets its name from the nearby Wrigley Field, home of the Chicago Cubs. The numerous taverns here make for excellent bar-hopping, so stop in the Cubby Bear or The Metro, a bar that features live music and up-and-coming rock bands like the Smashing Pumpkins, who played here before they made it big and returned for their final two shows.

Diners can satisfy a variety of tastes in Wrigleyville, including Asian, Cajun, Italian and Mexican. Those who prefer to stick with the bar scene can eat well at Bar Louie, John Barleycorn Memorial Pub or Sluggers.

Uptown

For more live music, head farther north, where you'll find the Aragon Ballroom, the Riviera and the prohibition-era jazz bar,

Green Mill. When you're strolling through this area, a word of caution is in order. As the once grand, now deteriorating buildings that house the Aragon and the Riviera suggest, this formerly posh neighborhood has changed drastically over the years. Still, some of the best music in the city (be it jazz, rock, or something in between) can be found here.

Wicker Park/Bucktown

A hot spot for artisans and heavy drinkers alike is the Wicker Park/Bucktown area. Hang out at bars like the Blue Note and Holiday Club or restaurants like Northside Bar & Grill and Beat Kitchen and it won't be long before some hipster starts talking to you about gentrification.

The South Side

If you are visiting the city, do not make the mistake many North Siders do by forgetting that Lake Shore Drive also runs south of downtown.

As you cruise south on Lake Shore Drive, admire the Museum Campus where the Shedd Aquarium, Adler Planetarium and the Field Museum converge. If you have the time, you could easily spend a day in each museum, but it's also well worth a stop just to enjoy the lake views and watch sailboats go by.

Just south, you will pass Soldier Field, home of the Chicago Bears. Immediately after gazing at Soldier Field you will need to guard against whiplash as you turn to stare at the sprawling McCormick Place, one of the largest convention centers in North America and home to numerous annual trade shows, like the Boat & RV Show and Auto Show. The space includes more than 2.2 million square feet of exhibition space, Chicago's largest ballroom and the Arie Crown Theater.

Comiskey Park, home of the Chicago White Sox, lies on the west side of Lake Shore Drive. The modern stadium features an exploding scoreboard that sets off fireworks along with a Sony Jumbo Screen.

Further south, the charming Hyde Park neighborhood has a quaint, old-world look to it. Home to the world-famous University of Chicago, the area boasts interesting restaurants like the Dixie Kitchen and Medici, great used book stores like O'Gara & Wilson's (the oldest used bookstore in the country), and the quaint

57th Street Art Fair. Hyde Park is also home to the gigantic 350,000 square-foot Museum of Science and Industry. This monument to 20th century technology houses a replica coal mine, a German U-Boat and a Zephyr train all under one roof.

After visiting the museum, push away thoughts of industriousness long enough to take a leisurely stroll through Jackson Park. Like its sister to the north, Lincoln Park, Jackson Park was designed by Frederick Law Olmstead. It features a Japanese garden, a bird sanctuary, a reflecting pond and a golf course.

All in all, do not be overwhelmed by Chicago's size or grit. Just find a corner of this city that suits you and celebrate its diversity.

©

History

Sitting on the bank of a swampy lake, with not a hill in sight, and an unforgiving weather pattern, Jean Baptiste Pointe du Sable became the first non-native settler of the Chicago River in the 1770's. French explorers had been attracted to the land, perfectly situated at the base of the Chicago and Des Plaines rivers, for its transportation potential. Jean Baptiste became the first to establish a trading post on the Chicago river, marking the beginning of the next great American city. On August 13, 1803 with a population of about 300, the Town of Chicago (the name deriving from the Miami-Illinois word for "stinky onion") became incorporated, and was then granted a city charter in 1837.

The French explorers were correct in their vision of the land becoming a transportation Mecca. In 1848 the Illinois and Michigan Canal opened to allow shipping from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico by way of the Mississippi River. In the same year the Galena and Chicago Union railroads were built, surpassing water transportation. Today, much of the country's freight transportation passes through Chicago. Also, at the same time, marking economic development, the Chicago Board of Trade was born with 82 businessmen, and still goes strong today in downtown Chicago.

Chicago's transportation success caused a rapid population growth, with a population of 4,000 in 1833 to 90,000 in 1857. By 1870 it was the second largest city in the

Chicago Snapshot continued

country. The intense population growth caused severe problems for the early city's environment, which was emphasized by severe weather conditions. Intense flooding and mud made transportation by foot or horse difficult. Furthermore, the city was not capable of dealing with mass sewage. Streets became filthy, the city smelled, and the unsanitary conditions caused illness. At this time, sewage was being dumped into the waters of Lake Michigan. To remedy the increasing health issues and stench, the city proposed to raise the city by 5 feet to install a mass underground sewage system. The five story Briggs Hotel was raised while still open and operating, proving a true feat to the world. Also, through the use of a lock system, the flow of the Chicago River was reversed to stop open dumping in the lake.

After twenty years of success, the power of Chicago was challenged with the horrendous damage of the Great Chicago River of 1870. Most of the city was constructed using wood, causing the fire to spread rampantly, destroying 18,000 buildings and killing 300 people. The Chicago Water Tower, which is located on Chicago and Michigan Avenues is one of the only remaining buildings. To recover, the city completely restructured the city's layout to be further away from the swampy lakefront and be built using steel. This also led to the revolutionary invention of the skyscraper (the Home Insurance Building) to utilize the vertical space.

As a mark of recovery, Chicago hosted the World's Colombian Exposition of 1893, which celebrated the anniversary of Columbus's arrival to the New World. Over 27 million people attended the fair, making the fair and Chicago and symbol of American development and power. The Museum of Science and Industry remains as an original building of the World's Fair.

The industrial success of the city drew immigrants of Europe and people from rural areas surrounding the city to work in factories. However, this created an imbalance of power, with wealthy money mongers ruling the city, creating dire work environments for a rapidly growing poor working class. Tension began to build, and the Prohibition era and Great Depression only brought more tension and violence. African American also flocked to the city at this time from the Great Migration. Different racial groups settled near each other, often competing for similar jobs. Friction over

territory, work, and overcrowding caused severe racial tension that eventually broke out into the 1919 Chicago Race Riots that lasted for six days. Arson and looting were rampant during this time, and close to 100 people were murdered.

The bloody and corrupt environment of Chicago continued with the Prohibition era that led to the power of Al Capone and the rise of intense violent gang activity. Al Capone dominated the liquor supply to the city, giving him extreme power. Even from jail after he was found guilty for the organization of a bloody killing of five members of the North Side Gang, known as the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, he continued to have a tight hold on the governing of the city.

The city continued to see severe ups and downs even after a small recovery after WWII and the end of the Great Depression. Dissatisfaction and unrest still swept the city through the 1970's. Finally, the economic improvement of the 1980's brought growth in population, particularly to neighborhoods that were previously worn down and violent, as well as building development in the Loop. This included the Willis Tower (formerly the Sears Tower), which today is the country's tallest building. Today, the city continues to be a dominating metropolis of the U.S., continuing to expand and grow.

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Hotel Insights

Chicago may have more neighborhoods than any other city in North America. While many of them have begun to look similar, each maintains distinct features. Whether looking for the exotic or a bit of the city made famous by novelist Nelson Algren, you can find what you need in Chicago.

Four of Chicago's neighborhoods offer most of its best hotels: the Loop, North Michigan Avenue, the Gold Coast and Lincoln Park. Each neighborhood has its pros and cons, but you can be assured that you won't have to worry about stray bullets coming through your window or the elevated train clattering by, à la The Blues Brothers.

The Loop

When people think of Chicago, the Loop is often what first comes to mind. This district encompasses towering skyscrapers

including the Sears Tower, the Chicago Board of Trade and the Art Institute of Chicago, along with numerous theaters, restaurants and universities. The Loop is the historic heart of Chicago and offers a wealth of buildings rich with architectural and historic significance. However, while it teems with life during the business week and on weekends, outside of the theaters, little nightlife can be found.

If you want to stay in the heart of the city with easy access to every neighborhood and attraction, consider booking a room at the Palmer House Hilton or the W Chicago City Center (formerly the Midland Hotel). Each of these hotels has historical significance, but the Palmer House really takes the cake. This is actually the hotel's third incarnation. The first building was destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, and the second was torn down to make way for the present building. Check out the Hotel Burnham or Hotel Allegro for posh alternatives adjacent to the theater district.

North Michigan Avenue

As two of the few surviving buildings from the fire of 1871, the Water Tower and the Chicago Water Works look out proudly over the growth that has occurred around their home on North Michigan Avenue. A post-World War II boom turned this strip into the Magnificent Mile, Chicago's preeminent shopping and tourist district. The Mile begins at the Chicago River near the Wrigley Building and continues north to ritzy Oak Street. Along the way, you will find not only upscale stores and theaters, but entertainment ventures like the ESPN Zone. Just off Michigan Avenue there are lots of themed restaurants for families including old favorites like the Hard Rock Café.

Most tourists opt to stay in this district because of its location and proximity to attractions. Staying in this area will cost you, but you can find weekend rates and more moderate prices at hotels such as the Lenox Suites. Business travelers and families alike find reasonable rates and welcome amenities at the centrally located Hilton Garden Inn Chicago Downtown North and the Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile. For those wanting to flex their credit cards, the Four Seasons Hotel consistently ranks as one of the best in the country, and it has the prices to prove it.

Chicago Snapshot continued

The Drake Hotel, the stately and luxurious home of the famed Cape Cod restaurant, has offered a four-star experience since 1920.

Some people might want to stay on North Michigan for the convenience it offers, but at the same time avoid the tourists and weekend shoppers who congest the area. The Tremont Hotel offers the perfect hideaway, located just a block off Michigan Avenue.

The Gold Coast

People thought Potter Palmer was crazy when he uprooted his family from their Prairie Avenue home and moved them to the wilderness of the North Side. For years Prairie Avenue was synonymous with wealth, but Palmer's move marked the beginning of the end for this once fabulously wealthy street. Not long after his departure, the poverty of nearby immigrant neighborhoods began to encroach upon the homes of Chicago's wealthy. So they joined Potter Palmer in the part of town now called the Gold Coast.

To this day, it remains an elite place to live, the mark of wealth and sophistication. Walk along Astor and North State Street to admire the gorgeous brown and red stone buildings. Perhaps you will even decide to stay at a first-class place like the Omni Ambassador East Hotel. It is home to the Pump Room, where celebrities such as Frank Sinatra drank and talked the night away. Some of its 1940s glamor still survives. You may need to rely more on taxis or buses if you're staying in the Gold Coast, but for seclusion, elegance and a piece of the high life, this area can't be beat.

Lincoln Park

It is hard to believe that Lincoln Park was once a cemetery. Nothing is left of those days except the Getty Tomb. Instead, Lincoln Park is a thriving community that borders the park of the same name on the east, Ashland Avenue on the west, and North and Diversey Avenues on the south and north. If you want to stay in a real Chicago neighborhood that has all the convenience of the Loop, look no further. Bus and train routes cut across Lincoln Park at several points, making it easy to get just about anywhere in the city or suburbs.

A number of moderately priced hotels are available, and for a rock bottom rate you

can't beat the Days Inn Lincoln Park on Diversey. Check out the Willows Hotel or the Majestic Hotel if you want to stay on a quiet residential street. For a more invigorating, Art Deco atmosphere, check into the City Suites Hotel, located on Belmont Avenue. A frequent haunt of gangsters and mobsters during Prohibition, the hotel now caters to both tourists and business travelers.

From the lake to the park to museums, restaurants and transportation options, Lincoln Park is probably the best place to stay in Chicago if you don't mind being away from the throngs of North Michigan Avenue or the history of the Loop. Get up early to jog along Lake Michigan, or sit on Belmont Rocks to watch the sun set over the city. Lincoln Park is truly a great place to experience city life at its best.

©

Restaurants Insights

Chicago is a marvelous mix of awe-inspiring architecture and stunning lake views, blues houses and jazz clubs, celebrity (Michael Jordan) and infamy (Al Capone). It is home to the Sears Tower, architectural gems by the likes of Frank Lloyd Wright, and "da Bears." With this kind of diversity, it's not surprising that the city's culinary offerings are world class.

There is something to suit everyone's appetite, from the classic Chicago-style pizza at Pizzeria Uno to mouthwatering hot dogs to pound-heavy T-bones. Fine dining establishments are top-of-the-line and plentiful. Many excellent ethnic eateries also flourish here, whether you're in the mood for generous Italian, hands-only Ethiopian, Indian curries or spicy Thai.

Get to know the many charming (and tasty) areas of Chicago:

The Loop

This is the heart of downtown, with its elevated commuter tracks, State Street shopping and architectural landmarks. For a taste of classic German food in a classic Chicago setting, you can't go wrong with the Berghoff. The exquisite Everest is a perfect place for big (and big bucks) occasions. And Cajun/Creole-lovers can try The Original Heaven on Seven for the Chicago version of heaven.

While many night-crawlers will want to venture outside the Loop to truly paint the town red, Kitty O'Shea's, a hotel bar in the Chicago Hilton Plaza and Towers, provides a good setting for an after-dinner drink. Another favorite is the legendary Miller's Pub.

Magnificent Mile

After shopping for hours in Michigan Avenue's chic shops, you're sure to feel those taste buds kick in. If you're dressed in the designer duds you just bought, dine at the luxurious Spiaggia (its sister Café is just as popular and a bit less expensive.) The seafood and chowder at the Cape Cod Room in the Drake Hotel really hits the spot after a day of window shopping, especially on a blustery Chicago winter day. The Signature Room on the 95th Floor in the John Hancock Tower offers a meal with a breathtaking view.

Stepping just off the strip will lead you to a range of memorable dining options. Allen's Cafe features seasonal menus in an elegant setting. Popular specialty foods just off the Magnificent Mile include Pane Caldo for Italian fare and Big Bowl for Pan-Asian food.

But what the Magnificent Mile has in high-class shopping and fashionable restaurants, it lacks in nightlife. For a true bar-hopping experience, head to the nearby Rush Street bars in the Gold Coast. One Mag Mile bar to try is the Chicago classic, the Billy Goat Tavern. This subterranean institution features a full bar that will lift your spirits even if you are not in the mood for its signature "cheezeburgers." **River North/ Gold Coast**

The areas surrounding the Magnificent Mile are home to many innovative restaurants. The River North area, a few blocks west of Michigan Avenue, features several trendy and popular restaurants. An eclectic menu tempts diners at mk, and Frontera Grill puts a new twist on Mexican fare. Coco Pazzo offers Tuscan delights, and Tsunami showcases sushi in a sleek setting. The area is also home to many of the city's theme restaurants like The Original Rock'n' Roll McDonald's and Harry Caray's.

The more affluent residents of the Gold Coast, a posh area north of Michigan Avenue, would probably frown at the theme restaurants. They prefer high class, as evidenced by their eateries. Steak lovers

Chicago Snapshot continued

should visit Chicago Chop House or the celebrity-favorite, Gibson's. The Pump Room at the Omni Ambassador East Hotel offers a taste of glamor and Chicago tradition. Le Colonial on Rush Street features Vietnamese food with a French influence.

You will also find a popular area for nightlife in the Gold Coast. Head toward Rush and Division Streets and pop into Jilly's Piano Bar for a classy, swingin' Sinatra-esque atmosphere. Young guns on the prowl can go to meat/meet market bars like Butch McGuire's, Mother's or Bar Chicago.

Lincoln Park, Lakeview/Wrigleyville

This is a fun, vibrant community, famous for its boutiques, restaurants and bars. With so many great options, it is impossible to list them all. For starters, you might try sushi at Sai Café, a taste of Spain at Emilio's Tapas or anything on the menu at Charlie Trotter's. Theatre-goers frequently start their evenings with the Italian fare at Vinci.

North of Diversey Avenue, you will find yourself in the Lakeview neighborhood with its plentiful restaurants. Enjoy fork-free Ethiopian eats at Mama Desta's Red Sea Restaurant or cozy sushi dining at Shiroy Hana. On Belmont Avenue, the Swedish Ann Sather's is a popular weekend brunch destination. Near Wrigley Field, The Outpost offers global cuisine, and the original Mia Francesca draws crowds with their classic Italian fare.

If you are in the mood to see live music after dinner, see who's playing at the Elbo Room, which features a mix of jazz, rock and spoken word concerts. Another area institution is The Metro, where several local bands like the Smashing Pumpkins started their careers before making it big.

Bars line the streets in these areas. Popular destinations include the Cubby Bear and Murphy's Bleachers in Wrigleyville. In Lincoln Park, Kincade's, Durkin's and Glascott's are among the many favorites. Many in the gay and lesbian community head to places like Roscoe's Tavern for their nights on the town.

Hyde Park

This community is known for its diversity, the University of Chicago campus and the renowned Museum of Science and Industry. The culinary offerings are limited, but it offers some gems. Mellow Yellow

is a charming local spot with award-winning chili and rotisserie-chicken. The Calypso Cafe offers Caribbean cuisine under a corrugated tin ceiling. And, as one of Chicago's most popular Southern roadhouse-style joints, the Dixie Kitchen is a can't-miss with catfish, corn fritters and country-fried steak.

Chinatown

It may not be one of the largest Chinatowns you'll visit, but its restaurants hold their own with many authentic offerings. One perennial favorite is Evergreen. For weekend dim sum, Phoenix is your best bet. If you want more than just Chinese, Penang's extensive menu boasts an array of Southeast Asian treats.

Wicker Park/Bucktown

Café Absinthe serves up creative French bistro fare, as do the intimate Le Bouchon and Cafe Matou. Located just outside the Wicker Park area, Mirai, serves sushi in a trendy metal-and-glass club setting. The Meritage Cafe and Wine Bar combines Pacific Northwest and Asian influences with an emphasis on seafood. The funky Violet Hour serves up high-end versions of American classics. For a supper club feel and killer martinis, try Club Lucky.

It will not take you long to realize that Wicker Park is no slouch in the nightlife department. Holiday Club and The Note are just a few of the neighborhood favorites.

©

Nightlife Insights

Great food isn't the only thing this city has to offer. From its world-class theaters and museums to its ever-growing music and arts scene, Chicago has staked its claim as the Midwest's entertainment capital.

Architecture

You cannot talk about art in Chicago without mentioning its architecture, from the modern behemoth that is the Sears Tower to the old Water Tower. Several buildings showcase the Modernist genius of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, including the IBM building, the Ralph Metcalf Federal Building, numerous structures on the Illinois Institute of Technology campus, and twin "glass house" apartment buildings on Lake Shore Drive. World-renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright designed many

of the beautiful buildings that make the city and surrounding suburbs unique; learn more about him with a visit to his Home and Studio in Oak Park. While in the suburb, be sure to see Unity Temple, the Unitarian Church Wright designed.

To gain a thorough understanding of the buildings that surround you, visit the Chicago Architecture Foundation, which offers an array of tours by foot, bus and even water. The River Cruise is highly recommended. Another great place to visit is the Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design, which offers tours, unique exhibits and a wonderful book and gift store.

Film

The Chicago International Film Festival is one of the country's oldest competitive film festivals—a must-see if you happen to be here in the fall. The Navy Pier Imax Theatre is a nice alternative to the standard movie house fare, offering an exciting, panoramic 3-D viewing experience. The Gene Siskel Film Center at the Art Institute of Chicago presents world cinema in a non-commercial context, and hosts a monthly film series. For classic movies in a classic theater, visit the distinctive Music Box Theatre, which shows old films at weekend matinées and foreign and artsy films in the evening.

Music

Chicago is a blues town, with many great blues houses to choose from. Buddy Guy's Legends, owned by the legendary bluesman himself, is sure to please. Kingston Mines is one of the oldest venues in the city, but still holds its own with low admission prices. For great jazz, try the Green Mill, a former Al Capone-owned speakeasy where the best and hottest still play. Another good bet is the Jazz Showcase, which brings big name acts into town. Grant Park offers Blues and Jazz festivals each year. The summer-long jazz series at the Ravinia Festival brings standard greats like Tony Bennett to the Chicago suburbs and is a great way to spend a summer evening.

Alternatives to the blues and jazz are provided by the Cubby Bear, which features rock-n-roll acts. For more live rock, don't miss the Double Door, the Metro, the Riviera or the Aragon Ballroom. If you've ever wanted to be the performer on stage, then head to the Old Town School of Folk

Chicago Snapshot continued

Music, which holds classes as well as public performances.

For the more classical side of Chicago, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Lyric Opera are world renowned. In the summer, the Chicago Symphony joins classical legends and young guns alike to make music under the stars at the Ravinia Festival.

Museums and Galleries

Chicago has a diverse offering of museums. Depending on your length of stay, you will want to take in several of these gems. The Art Institute of Chicago features French Impressionists, an Oriental Collection and great special exhibits. The Adler Planetarium offers a wide array of hands-on exhibits and information about the universe. The Field Museum of Natural History features Sue, the world's most complete remains of a T-Rex. The Shedd Aquarium, the world's largest indoor aquarium and oceanarium, showcases beluga whales. The mammoth Museum of Science and Industry includes a coal mine, a German U-Boat and a Zephyr, and an old-style steam train, all under one roof.

Art lovers will find plenty of options in this city. An obvious choice is the world-class Art Institute of Chicago, which houses a renowned Impressionist collection. The Museum of Contemporary Art and the Terra Museum of American Art are other good bets.

For a more hands-on arts experience, you will not want to miss the summer's 57th Street Art Fair in Hyde Park on the South Side. It is a delightful way to view and purchase original works by local artists. In Wicker Park, the Around the Coyote Festival is another popular annual arts event. Finally, don't miss dipping in and out of Chicago's myriad galleries. River North is a good place to start. You'll find Carl Hammer Gallery, Fassbender Gallery, and the Illinois Institute of Art all within a few short blocks of each other.

Theater

Increasingly, the Loop has become the place to be for large-scale theater. The Cadillac Palace Theatre joins the ranks of the Ford Center for the Performing Arts-Oriental Theatre, the Auditorium Theatre and the Chicago Theatre for Broadway-style shows. The Goodman Theatre has relocated from the Art Institute to a North

Loop site. Some good off-Loop theater options include the Steppenwolf Theater, the Victory Gardens Theater and the Royal George Theatre Center.

Comedy

Second City has launched many a comedian's career, especially those of Saturday Night Live fame. Seating is cabaret-style, the drinks are good, and the improv ensemble shows are top-notch hilarious. Zanies is a Chicago standout for standup comedy, with occasional appearances by established stars. For unique, off-the-wall productions, try the Neo-Futurarium.

©

Things to Do Insights

Chicago is a city filled with cultural attractions; everything from the stunning architecture beginning at the top of Michigan Avenue, also known as the "magnificent mile" to the landscaped environs of Grant Park which hosts a food lovers paradise known as Taste of Chicago. Chicago is a city of contrasts, and despite its appearance as a concrete mecca of art and architecture, the city has more than 7300 acres of parkland and over 550 different parks dispersed around town.

Magnificent Mile

Starting at the top of the avenue at Oak Street, the visitor can use the famous Drake Hotel as a point of reference. Going down the "magnificent mile" is an architectural paradise, after all, it was here in Chicago that the first skyscraper was built. The first imposing building at Chestnut Street is the John Hancock Center, here you can voyage 94 stories up to the observation deck and obtain the most amazing views of Chicago and on clear days you can even see Indiana. There is also an open-air skywalk where the visitor can understand more directly why Chicago is called the "Windy City". Further along, you will pass the Old Water Tower, one of the only buildings that survived the fires of 1871, it is made of limestone and has an interesting castle design. Across the street is the new Water Tower Place, a multi-level shopping center with more than 100 stores. At Chicago Avenue, if you feel like seeing a bit of contemporary art, hang a left and visit the Museum of Contemporary Art which specializes in works created after 1945.

Before you reach the river, two of the most architecturally exquisite buildings are based, the Wrigley Building is a masterpiece. Built in 1920 by the chewing gum magnate, William Wrigley, it is actually two buildings and the interior is as beautiful as the exterior. On the other side there is the Tribune Tower, built in 1922, it is a gothic wonder with a little known outer wall, that has bricks and pieces from other buildings and structures around the world. Some stones come from the Great Wall in China, the Taj Mahal, Notre Dame and even the Alamo.

Lower Michigan Avenue

When passing over the river, (which is engineered to flow backwards, an engineering marvel) you will see the two flanks that create an impressive backdrop to the lower end of Michigan Avenue. On the left is the 333 North Michigan Building, completed in 1928, this art-deco inspired building is one of the most ignored buildings in Chicago. Across the street on the other flank there is the London Guarantee Building, another architectural masterpiece built during the 1920's. As you reach the corner of Randolph and Michigan, don't forget to stop by the Chicago Cultural Center, this building used to house the city's library and was the place of reception for diplomats. The interior's wide spaces make the visitor feel extremely small and the attention to detail is quite impressive. On the corner also is the Smurfit-Stone building, it is an unforgettable part of the Chicago skyline, it is the building that looks like the top is shaped as a diamond. Look out below during the winter as the sidewalk is blocked off when icicles 2 feet long come down!

Millenium Park

Across the street, Millennium Park as it is today is a park with many sculptures, walkways and a wonder of landscape design. It had not always been this way, it was a former rail yard and remained a blight for the downtown area until 1977, when the city's denizens lobbied for its transformation. Now there is more than 23 acres that hold outdoor concerts, art exhibitions and is a wonderful place to just stroll through, grab your skates during the winter and hop on the rink or admire the internationally renowned sculptures.

Art Institute

Chicago Snapshot continued

Some of the world's most famous paintings reside at the Art Institute. See Picasso, Chagall, Dali, armor, ceramics, sculpture, amongst art from around the world. And if you go, don't forget to visit the Thorne Miniature Rooms, this exhibit provides a glimpse in miniature of rooms and chambres throughout history. The attention to detail and exactitude is impeccable. Also as an adjunct to the more famous artists, a visit to the School of the Art Institute Gallery 2 is well worth the visit. These galleries display works from the students that attend the school. Further south go to the Clarence Buckingham Fountain for a picnic and enjoy magnificent skyline.

Museum Plaisance

Just south of the Loop, you will find the Adler Planetarium, the Shedd Aquarium and the Field Museum, connected by a vast museum campus. Also included in this area is Soldier Field, where the city's beloved Chicago Bears play football. This 57-acre green space is a perfect place to relax, eat a picnic lunch and enjoy the brilliant lake views. A stroll around the Chicago Riverwalk, with its many restaurants, like Chicago Firehouse Restaurant, makes for a lovely afternoon. The Adler Planetarium provides a journey through space for the entire family. The planetarium has an interesting simulation for visitors that gives them a first-hand look at a voyage through our own Milky Way galaxy.

Down the way is the Shedd Aquarium, an aquatic paradise where you can see more than 650 species of fish, amongst other marine life. Similar to Sea World, you can watch marine mammals like dolphins interact with their trainers and sometimes with the public. The aquarium also has some great places to enjoy lunch while looking out over majestic Lake Michigan. On the other side of the park is the Field Museum, as you enter you will see the most complete fossilized skeleton of a Tyrannosaurus Rex ever found, named "Sue" she menacingly greets visitors as they enter. Built in 1893, this was the Palace of Fine Arts during the World's Columbian Exposition and is dedicated to expanding knowledge of civilizations from pre-history up until the present. One day is simply not enough here, most visitors find that it is almost impossible to accomplish in this amount of time.

Hyde Park

This neighborhood on the near south side of Chicago is filled with interesting architecture and other delights that are sometimes hardly visited, even by the city's inhabitants. Home to the University of Chicago and the home of Barack Obama, the university is one of the best in the world, it has the accolade of creating the most Nobel laureates alongside with the notoriety of being the birthplace of the atomic bomb. The campus was created in 1881 and there are many intriguing sculptures throughout. Don't forget to stop by the Renaissance Society, an art gallery dedicated to the avant-garde and post modern movements. The Museum of Science and Industry certainly is that, with more than 350,000 square feet holding more than 800 exhibits. You can also catch a movie at the Omnimax theater. After a day of touring the museum, visit the neighboring Jackson Park. When you become hungry, a local favorite is the Calypso Cafe. One other must see is the Robie House, by renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright. It has been called a masterpiece in modern home architecture and well worth the visit just for the windows alone. Another museum located in the Hyde Park area is the Oriental Institute Museum. This museum houses art from the near east and has an amazing collection of works from ancient Persia. The Hyde Park Art Center is another gallery to put on the "to do list" while in Hyde Park, since 1939 it has provided a space for artists throughout the city to express their creativity in the visual arts.

River North

In this neighborhood of Chicago, River North has the second largest amount of galleries in the country, outside of Manhattan. This area was a former warehouse district that became an art district which features galleries like the Carl Hammer Gallery and the David Leonardis Gallery, nearby grab a steak at Gene & Georgetti, this steakhouse is considered a Chicago landmark and a place to hobnob with powerbrokers from City Hall. A visit to River North is not complete until you visit the The Merchandise Mart, once the largest building in the U.S. in terms of floor space (the Pentagon now holds this title), the "Merch" as it is affectionately known provides both retail and wholesale products to an international clientele. If it's comedy that your looking for, a little further outside of this neighborhood on Halstead Street,

go and visit the world famous Second City, where an innumerable amount of actors and artists have honed their craft.

North Side

Visiting the north side of Chicago can take years to really see it all, since the amount of restaurants, galleries, shops, monuments and general points of interest are abundant. One favorite Chicago pastime is just strolling through Lincoln Park. There is also a free Zoo, a nature conservatory, rowing canals, bike paths and many other outlets from the concrete surroundings. Grab some lunch at Bacino's Pizza, then stop in the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum. No tour of the north side is complete without visiting Wrigley Field, home to those lovable losers, the Chicago Cubs. This field is a veritable trip back in time, catching a ballgame during the summer is one of the rites of passage for any North sider. For the die-hard Cubs fan or even the general baseball one, the park provides a guided tour with Wrigley Field Tours, a 90 minute tour about 100 years and counting of losing baseball. The neighborhood of "Wrigleyville" is also a good place to grab a beer and enjoy one of the many restaurants in this nostalgic residential area. A little further north on Clark Street is Graceland Cemetery and Crematorium, this cemetery is Chicago's version of Père Lachaise in Paris, all of Chicago famous are buried here and the architecture is amazing. For a more upbeat time, head over to the Vic Theatre and catch the "brew and view" where you can watch a film and drink cheap beers.

Loop

This part of town is known as the loop because of the "El" train that loops around the area. One fixture of this area is the Sears Tower where the views are stunning. Around the corner on canal street, visit Union Station which is a must for any lover of architecture. Two other architectural marvels in this area are the Monadnock Building and the Rookery Building, the former is still regarded as the first skyscraper in Chicago. Afterwards, go towards State Street and catch a show at the Chicago Theatre or grab some lunch at Mossant Bistro. The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture & Design and the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre are also nearby. At Daley Plaza, you can't miss the Picasso Statue, which resembles a baboon,

Chicago Snapshot continued

it is a gift from the famous artist standing at over 50 feet tall.

There are many different ways to experience all that Chicago has to offer, from exploring on foot to signing up for tours with knowledgeable guides that will teach you about the diverse history of this incredible city. It has over seventy neighborhoods, so get started!

Walking Tours Tour Black Chicago(+1 773 684 9034/<http://www.tourblackchicago.com/>) Untouchable Tours(+1 773 881 1195/<http://www.gangstertour.com/>) Chicago Neighborhood Tours(+1 312 742 1190/<http://www.chicagoneighborhoodtours.com>) American Sightseeing Chicago(+1 312 251 3100)

Bus Tours Gray Line Tours(+1 312 251 3107) See It ALL Tours(+1 773-525-6152/<http://www.chicagostyletours.com/>)

Train Tours Loop Tour Train(+1 312 922 3432/http://www.architecture.org/tour_view.aspx?TourID=94)

Fire Truck Tours O'Leary's Fire Truck Tours(+1 312 287 6565/<http://www.olearysfiretours.com/>)

Trolley Tours Chicago Trolley Tours(+1 773 648 5000/<http://www.chicagotrolley.com>)

Sports Tours Wrigley Field Tours(+1 773 404 2827/http://chicago.cubs.mlb.com/chc/ballpark/wrigley_field_tours.jsp) Big League Tours(+1 866 619 1748/+1 317 534 2475/<http://bigleaguertours.com/>)

Boat Tours Architecture River Cruise(+1 312 751 1380)

Ugly Duck Cruises(+1 312 396 2200) Odyssey Cruises(+1 888 957 2322/<http://www.odysseycruises.com>) Wendella Sightseeing Boats(+1 312 337 1446/<http://www.wendellaboats.com/>) Chicago Duck Tours(+1 312 461 1133/<http://www.chicagoducks.com/>) Mercury Chicago's Skyline Cruises(+1 312 332 1353/<http://www.mercuryskylinecruiseline.com>) Wacky Pirate Cruise(+1 312 332 1353)

Air Tours Air Tours of Chicago(+1 708 524 1172) AM Air Service(+1 847 602 1888/<http://www.amairservice.com/>) Midway Aviators, Inc.(+1 773 767 8100/<http://www.midwayaviators.com/>) Magic

Carpet Helicopters(+1 847 336 1001/<http://www.magiccarpethelicopters.com/>)

Bike Tours Bobby's Bike Hike(+1 312 915 0995/<http://www.bobbysbikehike.com/>) Chicago's Quintessential Bicycle Tour(+1 888 881 3284/http://www.chicagotours.us/tours/tourDetail.cfm?tour_id=6214) Chicago's Lakefront Neighborhood Bicycle Tour(+1 888 881 3284/http://www.chicagotours.us/tours/tourDetail.cfm?tour_id=3250) Bike and Roll(+1 773 327 2706/<http://www.bikeandroll.com/locations/chicago.aspx>) Bike Chicago(+1 312-595-9600/<http://www.bikechicago.com/>) ©

Travel Tips

Getting to Chicago by Air

O'Hare International Airport(ORD):(773) 686-3700, www.ohare.com/

Located on the Northwest side of the city, O'Hare is the second largest airport in the USA. O'Hare offers carriers from all over the world, with easy transportation to and from the airport throughout the city.

Midway International Airport(MDW): www.chicago-mdw.com/

Midway is the smaller of the two airports, located on the southwest side of the city, but is rapidly growing. It has three concourses, offering service from most major carriers. There is also easy public transportation from the city.

Transportation To and From the Airport

Car Rentals

O'Hare

Renting a car at ORD is very simple, with most major agencies represented. You can find the agencies customer service booths at the lower level of baggage claim in Terminals 1, 2, and 3. Terminal 5 offers a phone service to connect with the agencies in the main terminals. Shuttles will take customers to the designated parking lots.

Midway

Renting a car at MID is very simple, with most major agencies represented. Customer service desks are located by the baggage claim, and cars can be picked up in the Parking Garage on Level 2.

Alamo(800)327-9633 Avis(800)331-1212 Budget(800)527-0700 Dollar(800)800-4000

Enterprise(800)867-4595 Hertz(800)654-3131 National(800)227-7368

Taxi

Taking a cab to your destination from the airport is easy. Taxi stands are located at both airports just outside of baggage claim. All cabs begin at \$2.25, every 1/9 of a mile after is an additional \$0.20. The first adult passenger is \$1.00, and \$0.50 for every adult after that. All taxis leaving from the airports or arriving at the airports are an additional \$1.00. The cost from Midway to downtown is generally \$30 and \$40 from O'Hare. Flat rates can sometimes be negotiated, but do not count on it. By law, Chicago cab drivers cannot deny the use of a credit card for payment, but be prepared for drivers to be disgruntled if you cannot pay in cash.

Shuttle

Continental Airport Express is the best airport shuttle service in the city, serving both airports. It offers door-to-door service daily from most city and suburban locations. Hours of operation are from 6:00am to 11:30pm. The cost from either airport to a central downtown location is about \$30. Tel: 1-888-284-3926 web: www.airportexpress.com/

Bus(Kiss n' Fly)

The Chicago PACE bus system offers a bus route from O'Hare to designated locations throughout the city. The PACE bus can be found at the Kiss n' Fly location in Lot E. The routes serve Downtown Evanston, the Des Plaines Metra Station, La Grange, Bellwood, and Mannheim Metra stations. Other stops are made along the way for all these routes.

For further information: 312-836-7000 RTA TTY: 312-836-4949 General Information: 847-364-PACE(7223) www.pacebus.com/

The"El" System

The El is a simple, fast, and cheap way to travel to and from the airports, especially to avoid highway traffic. The Blue line serves O'Hare and the Orange Line serves Midway from downtown. The travel time from downtown to O'Hare is about 40 minutes and about 30 minutes to Midway. A one-way fare is \$2.25. Fare cards can be purchased at all train stops. www.transitchicago.com/

Getting Around Chicago Public Transportation

Chicago Snapshot continued

In general, Chicago is easy to navigate even though its' sheer size can be overwhelming. Most streets run on a sensible grid system, however there are the occasional diagonal streets to mix things up. Chicago has an extensive public transportation system that can take you anywhere in the city and to the surrounding suburbs. The elevated train system(the El) is a color-coded set of trains that run in all directions from the Loop. Be sure to check train schedules online or at the stations, as many services do not run 24 hours a day. Buses are also found on most major streets and avenues, with stops marked by blue and white signs. Due to recent budget cuts, many services have been cut back, so be sure to check bus schedules.

Fare cards can be purchased at vending machines at 'L' stations or online at <http://faremedia.chicago-card.com/>. A one-way fare for the train is \$2.25 and \$2.00 for a one-way bus fare. It is \$0.25 to transfer. Bus drivers do not give change, be prepared with the exact amount.

Taxi/Foot/Bike

Chicago is definitely a walking city, especially the downtown area. Even in harsh weather conditions, Chicagoans are prepared to walk to their destination, or at least to the nearest method of public transportation. This can be a great way to see the city, but may be hard for those new to the city. The key is to have a grasp of the CTA system and always keep oriented with the Lake, which is to the East. Chicago is deceptively large, so be aware of the distance between destinations in order to make the best transportation choice.

Like any city, cabs are plenty, but try to avoid them in high traffic areas or during rush hours, as they can be expensive. You can easily hail one at any major thoroughfare, and are highly recommended at late night hours when public transportation is not as safe.

Biking in Chicago is a great option, especially along the waterfront in the summer time. There are many bike routes that will take you along Chicago must-sees, which can be found at www.cityofchicago.org/. You can also find bike rental locations and bike shops at the City of Chicago website. Bikes can be taken on trains and buses easily. Find detailed information about how to do so at www.transitchicago.com/.

Driving

Using a personal or rental car in Chicago can be helpful if traveling far distances. However, congestion on Chicago highways from rush hour and construction can be intense. Avoid the downtown areas during rush hour times, if possible. When parking in the neighborhoods check the permit regulations. Most neighborhood streets are permit parking only between 6pm and 6am, so you will want to find metered parking or a parking garage for overnight stays. In the last year, all Chicago meters have become privatized, raising the cost of metered parking significantly. Be prepared for high rates when parking on the street in the Loop.

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Fun Facts

Chicago State: Illinois **Country:** United States

Chicago By The Numbers

Population: 2,897,000(city);
9,785,000(metropolitan) Elevation: 578 ft/
176 m Average Annual Rainfall: 36 in/ 91
cm Average Annual Snowfall: 38 in/ 97 cm
Average January Temperature: 21°F/-6°C
Average July Temperature: 73°F/ 23°C

Quick Facts

Major Industries: Communications,
Information Technology, Finance,
Transportation Electricity: 110 volts,
60Hz, standard two pin plugs Time Zone:
GMT-6(GMT-5 daylight saving time);
Central Standard Time(CST) Country
Dialing Code: 1 Area Code: 312& 773

Did You Know?

Chicago's Windy City nickname has nothing to do with weather. It was coined in 1893 by Charles Dana, the editor of the New York Sun newspaper, in commenting on Chicago's politicians.

The claim that Catherine O'Leary's cow knocked over a lantern in the family barn caused the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 is a myth. Chicago Republican reporter Michael Ahern admitting to fabricating that tale in 1893. Mrs O'Leary, who passed in 1895, spent the rest of her life thinking the fire was her fault.

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Chicago Snapshot continued

Weather

Statistics	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Temperature C												
Average High	0	3	9	15	21	27	29	28	25	18	10	3
Average Mean	-4	-1	5	10	16	22	24	23	20	13	6	-1
Average Low	-8	-4	0	5	11	16	19	18	14	8	2	-5
Temperature F												
Average High	32	37	47	59	70	80	84	83	76	64	49	37
Average Mean	25	31	40	49	61	70	75	74	65	55	42	31
Average Low	18	24	32	42	51	61	66	65	57	46	35	24
Rainy Days	11	9	13	13	11	10	10	9	10	9	11	11
Rain Fall (cm)	2.2	1.8	3.0	3.6	3.7	4.3	3.7	3.9	3.2	2.7	3.3	2.6
Rain Fall (in)	5.5	4.5	7.6	9.3	9.4	10.9	9.4	9.8	8.2	6.9	8.4	6.7

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