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ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Mike

# Adventure Chicago: Experience a summer Saturday in the Windy City

## Chicago, 1 Day

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** With Lake Michigan, the Chicago River, and skyscrapers galore, Chicago offers riveting views at virtually every turn. For the adventurous at heart, the best way to see the big city is by literally taking it on. You'll stay in Lincoln Park, located north of the Chicago Loop and very close to the Lake for proximity to adventures both indoor and out. With biking, boating, walking, and lots of eating and drinking involved, you'll be crashing into bed with the satisfaction of a day thoroughly lived.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Chicago

**DAY NOTE:** Start the day off right by leaving your comfy lodging and heading out to the Green City Market, Chicago's most exciting farmers market. Walk east toward the lake and then south along Lincoln Park (the market is on the south end of the park, between Clark and Stockton Drive). Enjoy a made-to-order crepe or a fresh pastry and cider as you select a few locally produced organic snacks to nosh throughout your day (and maybe a pastry for tomorrow!). From the market, stroll over to the lake, and walk a short ways south along the bike/jog path to North Street Beach. At the beach, pick up your bike (advance reservations should be made online), and hit the path. Start your journey southward, toward the rockin' skyline view (you'll see the historic "Drake" sign and the Hancock Building right away). Ride your way along the lake, winding around at Navy Pier. Lock your bike and hop aboard the architecture tour boat for your pre-booked cruise (that ends in a heart-racing speedboat ride on the Lake!!). Bring your blood pressure back down with a quick stroll around the pier (it's pretty touristy) and a 7-minute, serene ride on the Ferris wheel to catch some birds-eye views of what you saw from the River. Hopping back on your bike, continue south to Monroe Street, where you'll cut across Lake Shore Drive. Work your way toward Millennium Park (you can't miss it) and take a short walk around the Lurie Gardens and Cloud Gate. Walk your bike on the sidewalk heading south, admiring the Magnificent Mile, and the Art Institute. When you reach Adams, walk (or bike, if you aren't afraid of city traffic!) west to the Sears Tower. Lock your bike and head up to the top for a completely knee-buckling view of the city. Make your way back down, grab your bike, and head back to the lake. Taking the path back to the north, stop off at Oak Street Beach to lounge and lunch at the Beachstro, a cute little lakeside café. Head back up to return your bike to North Street Beach (they charge by the hour), and see if you can start or get into a beach volleyball game. If not, take a nice dip (the water is great by mid-summer) and relax on the beach. When you're ready to head back inland, stroll along the park on North Avenue and catch the Clark Street bus northward, back to your lodging. After a quick shower-off, hop back on the northward Clark Street bus to Foster Street for a night of delicious food and Belgian brews at the Hopleaf. When you've been properly filled with mussels and hops, head around the corner to Foster and Ashland to the Neo-Futurarium where you'll see the completely thrilling Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind. Admission is first-come, first-served, so make sure you're there by 10:45 for the 11:30 show. After your mind has been blown by the 30 plays in 30 minutes, head back out to Clark Street for either one more round at the Hopleaf or a ride back on the bus to crash on your comfy and welcoming bed.



### Bike Chicago

Ride or skate through Chicago



### Navy Pier

Lakefront Fun Center



### Chicago Architecture Tour and Speedboat Ride on Lake Michigan

Speed Boat/Power Boat



### Millennium Park

Downtown Outdoor Urban Oasis



### Cloud Gate

Millennium Park's Scene-Stealing Bean



### Sears Tower Skydeck

See Chicago from Its Tallest Building



### Oak Street Beach

Perfect lakefront beach



### Hopleaf Tavern

Belgian beer-lovers unite!



### Neo-Futurists

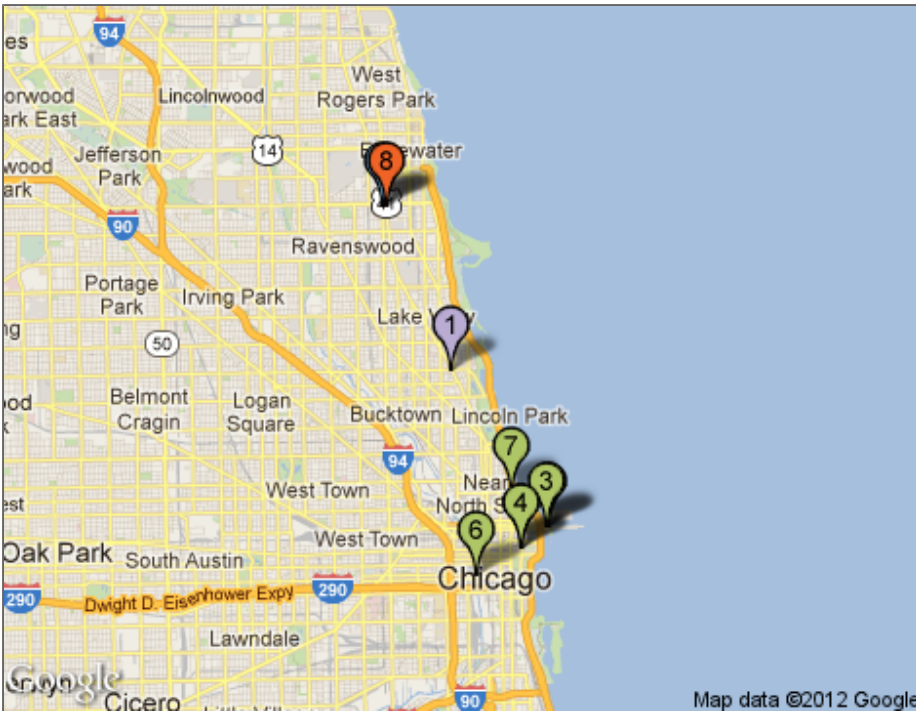
Too much light is a good thing



### Days Inn Chicago

Familiar hotel in bustling Lincoln Park locale

# Day 1 - Chicago



## QUICK NOTE

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**contact:**

tel: +1 773 525 7010 / +1 800 654 7871

fax: +1 773 525 6998

http://www.lpndaysinn.com/

**location:**

644 West Diversey Avenue  
Chicago IL 60614

## 1 Days Inn Chicago

**DESCRIPTION:** Looking for a great stay away from the Loop and tucked into a Chicago neighborhood? Days Inn Chicago is just a few blocks from Lake Michigan, within walking distance of Wrigley Field, and in near great shopping and restaurants in the popular and bustling neighborhoods of Lakeview and Lincoln Park. The rooms are simple and clean, perfect for those who are looking to spend most of their time exploring the city. The staff is extremely friendly and helpful, and always available to answer questions about the neighborhoods. This is a great choice for travelers looking to experience a neighborhood feel, while still feeling in the middle of it all.

© NileGuide



**contact:**

tel: +1 312 595 9600

http://www.bikechicago.com

**location:**

600 East Grand Avenue  
Chicago IL 60611

## 2 Bike Chicago

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

Be prepared to rent for at least two hours.

**DESCRIPTION:** Grab a friend, rent a bike or in-line skates and sweat your way through Chicago. You may trek the 18-mile lakefront or choose any of the other scenic bike paths. Mountain bikes, kids bikes and quadricycles available. Bike Chicago has three other locations at these popular tourist spots: Oak Street Beach, Lincoln Park Zoo and Buckingham Fountain, and you may pick up your bike or skates at one location and drop them off at another. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Bike Chicago

**contact:**

tel: 800/595-PIER (outside 312 area code)

www.navy pier.com

**location:**

600 E. Grand Ave  
Chicago IL 60601

**hours:**

Summer Sun-Thurs  
10am-10pm, Fri-Sat 10am-  
midnight; fall-spring Mon-  
Thurs 10am-8pm, Fri-Sat  
10am-10pm, Sun 10am-7pm

## 3 Navy Pier

**DESCRIPTION:** Built during World War I, this 3,000-foot-long pier was a Navy training center for pilots during World War II. Now, the military aura is long gone, replaced with a combination of carnival attractions, a food court, and boat dock, making it a bustling tourist destination (whether or not that's a good thing depends on your tolerance for crowds). If you do make it all the way to the end of the pier, though, you'll be rewarded with great views of the city. Midway down the pier are the **Crystal Gardens**, with 70 full-size palm trees, dancing fountains, and other flora in a glass-enclosed atrium; a carousel and kiddie carnival rides; and a 15-story Ferris wheel, a replica of the original that made its debut at Chicago's 1893 World's Fair. The pier is also home to the **Chicago Children's Museum**, a **3-D IMAX theater** (tel. 312/595-5629), a small ice-skating rink, and the **Chicago Shakespeare Theatre**. The shops tend to be bland and touristy, and dining options include a food court, an outpost of Lincoln Park's popular Charlie's Ale House, and the white-tablecloth seafood restaurant Riva. You'll also find a beer garden with live music; **Joe's Be-Bop Cafe & Jazz Emporium**, a Southern-style barbecue restaurant with live music; and Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. & Market, a casual family seafood



wcities

joint. Summer is one long party at the pier, with fireworks on Wednesday and Saturday evenings. The **Smith Museum of Stained Glass Windows** may sound dull, but decorative-art aficionados shouldn't miss this remarkable installation of more than 150 stained-glass windows set in illuminated display cases. Occupying an 800-foot-long expanse on the ground floor of Navy Pier, the free museum features works by Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Sullivan, John LaFarge, and Louis Comfort Tiffany. If the noise and commercialism get overwhelming, take the half-mile stroll to the end of the pier, where you can enjoy the wind, the waves, and the city view, which is the real delight of a place like this. Or, unwind in **Olive Park**, a small sylvan haven with a sliver of beach just north of Navy Pier. You'll find more than half a dozen sailing vessels moored at the south dock, including a couple of dinner-cruise ships, the pristine white-masted tall ship Windy, and the 70-foot speedboats Seadog I, II, and III. In the summer months, water taxis speed between Navy Pier and other Chicago sights. Allow 1 hour. © Frommer's

**contact:**

<http://www.partner.viator.com/en/6793/tours/Chicago/Chicago-Architecture-Tour-and-Speedboat-Ride-on-Lake/d673-5042CHIARC>

**location:**

Chicago Illinois

## Chicago Architecture Tour and Speedboat Ride on Lake Michigan

**DESCRIPTION:** Chicago is renowned for its stunning and original architecture – and the most relaxing way to see it is on a cruise on the Chicago River! You'll learn all about Chicago's history and landmarks before the tour's grand finale, a thrilling speedboat ride on Lake Michigan.

From the land, you'll see and hear about the dozens of skyscrapers lining the Chicago River, including the Sears Tower and the Tribune Tower.

Then, for a spectacular view of the Chicago skyline from Lake Michigan, you'll take a thrilling 30-minute speedboat ride along the lake. From the water, you'll see Buckingham Fountain, Grant Park, beautiful Chicago Harbor and Chicago's Museum Campus.

Your best choice for experiencing Chicago, this tour combines coach and boat travel. It's the only tour that takes you from the lakefront, through the locks and along the river.

Along the way, you'll: Learn when and why the flow of the Chicago River was reversed Learn how Chicago architects pioneered skyscraper construction Learn why the beautiful Chicago lakefront is almost all parkland Learn about an \$80 million dollar skyscraper construction mistake Travel through the historic Chicago River Locks and up the Chicago River to Sears Tower © Viator



viator

**contact:**

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

**location:**

222 North Columbus Drive  
Chicago IL 60601

**4 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



wcities

**contact:**

tel: +1 312 742 1168  
[http://explorechicago.org/city/en/things\\_see\\_do/attractions/dca\\_tourism/MP\\_orinial.html](http://explorechicago.org/city/en/things_see_do/attractions/dca_tourism/MP_orinial.html)

**location:**

222 North Columbus Drive  
Chicago IL 60601

**5 Cloud Gate**

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

The Bean is located near many of Chicago's main landmarks/attractions, including the Chicago Cultural Center's Visitor Center, making it a great place to start your Chicago sightseeing.

**DESCRIPTION:** This popular sculpture in Millennium Park has become a landmark of Chicago's cityscape. Ever since the public first glimpsed the then-unfinished structure in 2004, its unique appearance has drawn a great deal of both criticism and praise. Designed by British artist Anish Kapoor and forged from steel plates that have been polished to a mirror-like finish, Cloud Gate has been affectionately named "The Bean" by city residents because of its legume-like shape. At 66 feet long, 42 feet wide, and 33 feet high, this is one mighty bean, weighing in at 110 tons. The highly reflective surface and curved shape create an effect similar to that of a funhouse-mirror, distorting the shape of curious onlookers and making it a popular attraction for children of all ages. The sculpture often takes on a life of its own as its surface reflects Chicago's skyscrapers and the blue sky. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of David Paul Ohmer

**contact:**

tel: 312/875-9696  
fax: +1 312 875 9774  
www.the-skydeck.com

**location:**

233 S. Wacker Dr  
Chicago IL 60606

**hours:**

Apr-Sept daily 10am-10pm;  
Oct-Mar daily 10am-8pm

**6 Sears Tower Skydeck**

**DESCRIPTION:** First Sears sold the building and moved to cheaper suburban offices in 1992. Then the skyscraper got an ego blow when the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, went up and laid claim to the title of world's tallest building. (The Sears Tower has since put up a 22-ft. antenna in an attempt to win back the title.) Tallest-building posturing aside, this is still a great place to orient yourself to the city, but I wouldn't put it on the top of must-see sights for anyone with limited time (and limited patience for crowds). The view from the 103rd-floor Skydeck is everything you'd expect it to be -- once you get there. Unfortunately, you're often stuck in a very long, very noisy line, so by the time you make it to the top, your patience could be as thin as the atmosphere up there. (Come in the late afternoon or early evening to avoid most of the crowds.) On a clear day, visibility extends up to 50 miles, and you can catch glimpses of four surrounding states. Despite the fact that it's called a "skydeck," you can't actually walk outside. Multimedia exhibits on Chicago history and Knee High Chicago, an exhibit for kids, are additional attractions. The 70-second, high-speed elevator trip will feel like a thrill ride for some, but it's a nightmare for anyone with even mild claustrophobia. Allow 1 hour, more if there's a long line. © Frommer's



Photo courtesy of Sears Tower Skydeck

**contact:**

tel: +1 312 747 0832

**location:**

1000 North Lake Shore Drive  
Chicago IL 60611

**7 Oak Street Beach**

**OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:**

This is a great place for the whole family, with plenty of room to spread out. It is not quite as crowded as the more popular North Avenue beach.

**DESCRIPTION:** With so many beaches to choose from in Chicago, make sure to put this one at the top of your list. There is plenty of room for lounging, playing volleyball, and running with the kids, all while you take in great views of Lake Michigan, Lake Shore Drive, and the Hancock building. Plus, enjoy food from Avenue, the adorable cafe right on the beach. The beach is also within walking distance of Gold Coast museums, restaurants, and fantastic shopping. This beach is also never quite as crowded as the North Avenue beach just 1/2 a mile away.

© NileGuide



**contact:**  
tel: 773 334 9851  
<http://www.hopleaf.com>

**location:**  
5148 N Clark Street  
Chicago IL 60640

**hours:**  
Mo to Fr from 03:00 PM to  
02:00 AM, Sa from 03:00 PM  
to 03:00 AM, Su from 03:00  
PM to 02:00 AM

## 8 Hopleaf Tavern

**DESCRIPTION:** If you don't know your Farmhouse from your Trappist or your Abbey-style ales, or perhaps, more importantly, if you do, then Hopleaf should be your next destination for a goblet or two. In addition to an extensive list of Belgian beers available on tap (over 15) or by the bottle (over 100), this tavern also features beers from all over North America and Europe. If beer isn't your thing (gasp!) then check out the wine list; Hopleaf features a number of wines available by the glass or bottle. Of course, with all this drinking you'll probably want to do a little eating. A few standout features on the menu include the mussels (white-wine steamed or white-ale steamed, your choice) and the frites with aioli. © [wcities.com](http://wcities.com)



[wcities](http://wcities.com)

**contact:**  
tel: 773 275 5255  
fax: 773 878 4514  
<http://www.neofuturists.org/>

**location:**  
5153 North Ashland Avenue  
Chicago IL 60640

**hours:**  
11:30p F & Sa, 7p Su

## 9 Neo-Futurists

**DESCRIPTION:** A fixture on Chicago's late-night theater scene, the Neo-Futurists have been doing their hit *Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind* since 1988 (it's now the longest-running show in Chicago). The setting -- a cramped room above a funeral home -- isn't much, but the gimmick is irresistible: Every night the performers stage a new collection of "30 plays in 60 minutes." The "plays" vary from a 3-minute comedy sketch to a lightning-quick wordless tableau; the mood veers from laugh-out-loud silly to emotionally touching. The show starts at 11:30pm on weekends; get there about an hour ahead, because seats are first-come, first-served, and they do sell out. The late-night curtain attracts a younger crowd, but I've taken 60-something relatives who have had a great time (unlike many improv comedy troupes, the Neo-Futurists don't rely on raunchy or gross-out humor). Admission is random: Theatergoers pay \$9 plus the roll of a six-sided die. If you want to feel that you've experienced edgy, low-budget theater -- but still want to be entertained -- this is the place to go. © Frommer's



Photo courtesy of Neo-Futurists

# 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.

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