



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Mike

Best budget picks in Chicago

Chicago, 1 Day

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Traveling is not always easy on the pocketbook; fortunately, there are plenty of ways to experience Chicago without going broke. The 10 picks on this list range from free to cheap to comfortably affordable while still delivering top notch quality. From barbecue to Bonsai trees- from hot dogs to hip bands- there is something well-priced for most any budget traveler to enjoy. Photo: marya

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Chicago



Chicago Botanic Garden

Lush and Sprawling Botanic Garden



Lincoln Park Zoo

Animal lover must-see



Wiener Circle (The)

Hot dogs with a side of sass



The Hideout

The best performance bar in the land



Piece

Hand-Crafted Brews & Pizza Too



Village Tap

Roscoe Village's favorite hangout



Millennium Park

Downtown Outdoor Urban Oasis



City Suites Hotel

Small hotel on Belmont Avenue



Hecky's Chicago

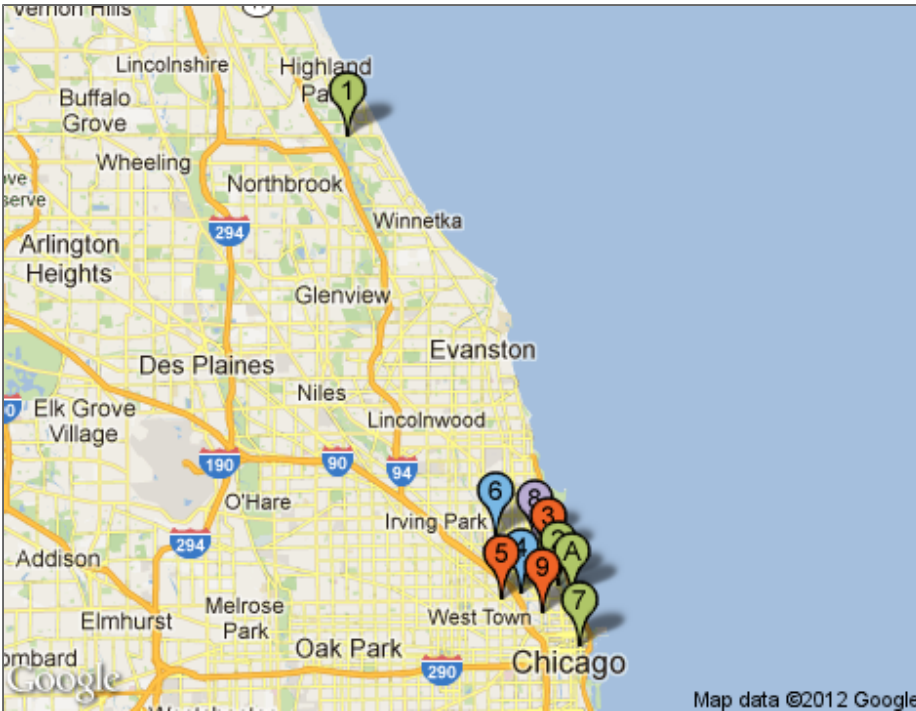
Ribs and hush puppies



North Avenue Beach and Chess Pavilion

Match wits at chess or just relax

Day 1 - Chicago



QUICK NOTE

contact:

tel: 847/835-5440

fax: +1 847 835 4484

www.chicago-botanic.org

location:

1000 Lake-Cook Rd
Glencoe IL 60022

hours:

Daily 8am-sunset. Tram tours
Apr-Oct

1 Chicago Botanic Garden

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Entrance to the gardens is free, but be prepared for \$20 parking. The gardens are also accessible by Metra and bike.

DESCRIPTION: Despite its name, the world-class Chicago Botanic Garden is 25 miles north of the city in the suburb of Glencoe. This 385-acre living preserve includes eight large lagoons and a variety of distinct botanical environments including the Illinois prairie, an English walled garden, and a three-island Japanese garden. Also on the grounds are a large fruit-and-vegetable garden, an "enabling garden" (which shows how gardening can be adapted for people with disabilities), and a 100-acre old-growth oak woodland. If you're here in the summer, don't miss the extensive rose gardens (just follow the bridal parties who flock here to get their pictures taken). The Botanic Garden also has an exhibit hall, auditorium, museum, library, education greenhouses, outdoor pavilion, carillon, cafe, designated bike path, and garden shop. Carillon concerts take place at 7pm Monday evenings from late June through August; tours of the carillon are offered beforehand. Every summer the Botanic Garden stages a special outdoor exhibition (one year giant animal-shaped topiaries stood in unexpected locations throughout the grounds; another year, model railroads wound through miniature versions of American national parks).



Photo courtesy of Chicago Botanic Garden

Check the website or call for event schedules. Allow 3 hours. © Frommer's

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

2 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.

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



Photo courtesy of yimhafiz

contact:
tel: 1 773 477 7444
<http://www.wienercircle.net/>

location:
2622 North Clark Street
Chicago IL 60614

hours:
11a-4a Su-Th, 11a-5a F & Sa

3 Wiener Circle (The)

DESCRIPTION: The Wiener's Circle serves up what many locals agree to be the City's best hot dogs at all hours of the day and night. For the uninitiated, a Chicago style hot dog is made up of the following: char dog, onions, tomatoes, mustard, celery salt, and neon-green relish. Warning: this establishment is not family-friendly after 10 pm on weekends; that's when the bar crowd starts to come through, and insults unsuitable for children's ears are traded between the cooks and patrons. It's actually the main reason people flock here and love it so much.

© NileGuide



citysearch

contact:
tel: 773 227 4433
fax: +1 773 227 3650
<http://www.hideoutchicago.com/>

location:
1354 West Wabansia Avenue
Chicago IL 60622-1519

hours:
8p-2a M, 4p-2a Tu-F, 7p-3a Sa

4 The Hideout

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The bar is very hard to find, and is hidden among factory warehouses. Take a cab.

DESCRIPTION: This friendly tavern's OLD STYLE BEER sign shines like a beacon, guiding roots-music fans through the grimy industrial neighborhood that surrounds it. The owners' beer-can collection and some "celebrity" memorabilia are on display in the front room. In back, local musicians play



Hideout

country, rock, and bluesy tunes on a small stage backed by an impressive stuffed sailfish. It's no-frills, all right, but the Hideout also books some of the best lineups of folk and "alt country" bands in the city, including Jeff Tweedy (of Wilco), Kelly Hogan, and the New Duncan Imperials. © Frommer's

contact:
tel: 773/772-4422
www.piecechicago.com

location:
1927 W. North Ave
Chicago IL 60622

hours:
Mon-Thurs 11:30am-11pm;
Fri-Sat 11:30am-12:30am;
Sun 11am-10pm

5 Piece

DESCRIPTION: Piece proves to deep-dish-loving Chicagoans that thin-crust pizza deserves respect. A casual, welcoming hangout, Piece makes a good lunch stop for families with older kids; at night it becomes a convivial scene full of young singles sipping one of the restaurant's seasonal microbrew beers. The large, airy dining room -- a former garage that's been outfitted with dark wood tables and ceiling beams -- is flooded with light from the expansive skylights overhead; even when it's crowded (as it gets on weekend evenings), the soaring space above keeps the place from feeling claustrophobic. Piece offers a selection of salads and sandwiches on satisfyingly crusty bread, but pizza in the style of New Haven, Connecticut (hometown of one of the owners), is the house specialty. Pick from three styles -- plain (tomato sauce, Parmesan cheese, and garlic), red (tomato sauce and mozzarella), or white (olive oil, garlic, and mozzarella), then add on your favorite toppings. Sausage and/or spinach work well with the plain or red, but the adventurous should sample a more offbeat choice: clam and bacon on white pizza. © Frommer's



Photo courtesy of Piece

contact:
tel: 773 883 0817
http://thevillagetap.com/

location:
2055 West Roscoe Street
Chicago IL 60618

hours:
5p-2a M-Th, 3p-2a F, noon-3a
Sa, noon-2a Su

6 Village Tap

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

The year-round beer garden in the back of the bar (it is heated in the winter) has giant picnic tables making it perfect for large groups.

DESCRIPTION: Roscoe Village is a comfortable, working class neighborhood that has become more and more attractive of late because of its shady streets and reasonable rents. Village Tap is the favorite hangout of the locals - a place where the bartender might, in fact, know your name. With 31 kinds of beer on tap, good food in the kitchen, and lots of board games, plus a large beer garden, where else would you want to ruin your liver? © wcities.com



citysearch

contact:

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

location:

222 North Columbus Drive
Chicago IL 60601

7 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: +1 773 404 3400 / +1 800 248 9108
fax: +1 773 404 3405
<http://www.cityinns.com>

location:

933 W Belmont Ave
Chicago IL 60657

8 City Suites Hotel

DESCRIPTION: The City Suites Hotel is located only a few blocks from Wrigley Field and is a good choice for those in town to watch a Cubs game. Guests say the western side of the hotel faces the elevated train and can be noisy. The bathrooms are well-stocked with bath products including bath salts and fluffy bath robes. Guests mention that the regular rooms are smaller than comparable hotels, but the suites are spacious. © Raveable

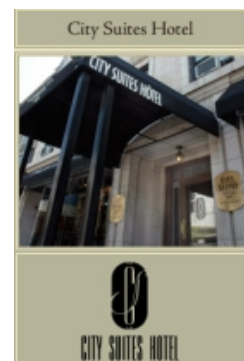


Photo courtesy of City Suites Hotel

contact:

tel: (312) 377-7427
<http://heckys.com>

location:

1234 N Halsted St
Chicago IL 60622

hours:

Mon-Thu 11am-11pm Fri-Sat 11am-12am Sun 11am-9pm

9 Hecky's Chicago

DESCRIPTION: Hecky Powell has been serving up his famous barbecue at the original Hecky's in Evanston since 1983. This Chicago spinoff offers carry-out, delivery and self-serve dine-in options. The menu features both baby back and spare ribs smothered with his secret sauce. Also try jumbo-fried shrimp, beer-battered cod and fried and barbecued chicken. Side choices include hush puppies, baked beans, lyonnaise potatoes and corn bread. Lighter options include salads, wraps, hot dogs and Polish sausage sandwiches.



contact:
tel: +1 312 747 0832

location:
1600 North Lake Shore Drive
Chicago IL 60614

A North Avenue Beach and Chess Pavilion

DESCRIPTION: Cross over the North Avenue Bridge from Lincoln Park, pause to admire the stunning view of Lake Shore Drive and Michigan Avenue, and then head to the beach to stake your ground for summertime fun. Left to crumbling and rust for many years, the North Avenue Beach House was recently restored. Shaped something like a boat, the beach house contains restrooms and snack bars. If swimming and sun bathing is not your thing, try matching wits with one of the players at the vintage chess pavilion near the beach house. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of gezelle

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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