nileGUIDE
ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP

Mike

Best Chicago restaurants

Chicago, 1 Day

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Guide Description

AUTHOR NOTE: Chicagoans love to eat. Deep dish pizza and hot dogs are the signatures, but cuisine from all over the globe is cooked daily in Chicago kitchens. From Japanese to Brazilian, these ten restaurants highlight the diverse ethnic influences on Chicago's cuisine while also showcasing the best of the hometown classics (you really can't visit the city without at least ONE slice of cheesy stuffed deep dish). With spots ranging from fancy schmancy to counter-ordering, there's sure to be something to satisfy everyone's tastes. Photo: Anna Smith

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Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Chicago

Hopleaf Tavern
Belgian beer–lovers unite!

Frontera Grill & Topolobampo
Colorful Mexican Dining

Giordano's
Chicago's favorite deep dish

Schwa Restaurant
Food as Art

Hot Doug's Inc.
Sausage superstore!

Reza's
Mediterranean Medley

Charlie Trotter's
Upscale and intimate dining favorite

Fogo de Chão Churrascaria
Brazilian fiesta

Udupi Palace
South Indian specialties

Japonais
Japanese food in a soothing ambiance

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Day 1 - Chicago

QUICK NOTE

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

1 Hopleaf Tavern

wcities

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

contact:
tel: 312/661-1434
fax: +1 312 661 1830
www.fronterakitchens.com

location:
445 N. Clark St
Chicago IL 60610

hours:
Frontera Grill Tues-Fri 11:30am-2:30pm; Sat 10:30am-2:30pm; Tues-Thurs 5-10pm; Fri-Sat 5-11pm. Topolobampo Tues 11:45am-2pm; Wed-Fri 11:30am-2pm; Tues-Thurs 5:30-9:30pm; Fri-Sat 5:30-10:30pm

2 Frontera Grill & Topolobampo

Photo courtesy of Frontera Grill & Topolobampo

DESCRIPTION: Owners Rick and Deann Bayless are widely credited with bringing authentic Mexican regional cuisine to a wider audience. Their restaurant is the place to taste real Mexican food, so don't show up expecting a plate of nachos with processed-cheese topping. The building actually houses two restaurants: the casual Frontera Grill (plain wood tables, terra-cotta tile floor) and the fine-dining Topolobampo (white linen tablecloths, a more hushed environment). At both restaurants, the focus is on fresh, organic ingredients supplied by local artisanal farmers. At Frontera, the signature appetizer is the sopes surtidos, corn-tortilla "boats" with a sampler of fillings (chicken in red mole, black beans with homemade chorizo, and so on). The ever-changing entree list might include pork loin in a green mole sauce; smoked chicken breast smothered in a sauce of chiles, pumpkin seeds, and roasted garlic; or a classic sopa de pan ("bread soup" spiced up with almonds, raisins, grilled green onions, and zucchini). Yes, you can also get tacos (with fillings such as portobello mushrooms, duck, and catfish). The Baylesses up the ante at the adjacent Topolobampo, where both the ingredients and presentation are more upscale. It can be tough to snag a table at Frontera during prime dining hours (they only accept a limited number of reservations each day), so do what the locals do: Put your name on the list and order a few margaritas in the lively, large bar area. For an affordable taste of Frontera downtown, stop by **Frontera Fresco,** a counter-service lunch spot on the 7th floor of Macy's, 111 N. State St. (tel. **312/781-4884**). You can sample authentic Mexican tortas, quesadillas, and tamales, all priced less than $8; it's open Monday through Saturday from 11am to 4pm. © Frommer's

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contact:
tel: 1 312 951 0747
http://www.giordanos.com/

location:
730 North Rush Street
Chicago IL 60611

hours:
11a-11p Su-Th, 11a-noon F-Sa

3 Giordano's

photo by A Gude

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:
You probably won't be able to finish a deep dish pizza from here. The good news: it makes delicious leftovers!

DESCRIPTION: Locations all over the city, thin crust and deep dish, and mostaccioli to die for--Giordano's is known for being at the top of Chicagoans' "best of" lists, particularly when it comes to pizza. Stuffed to the brim of its flaky golden crust, the deep dish at Giordano's won't disappoint--try the Special (sausage, green pepper, and onion) or the Hawaiian (Canadian bacon, pineapple, and onion). Definitely start off by sharing a family-style salad to get your greens in, and if you can possibly manage to save room for dessert, savor some tiramisu. Not in the mood for pizza? Try one of their meatball or Italian sausage sandwiches.
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contact:
tel: 1 773 252 1466
http://www.schwarestaurant.com/

location:
1466 North Ashland
Chicago IL 60622

hours:
5:30p-10:30p Tu-Sa; closed Su-M

4 Schwa Restaurant

citysearch

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:
Notoriously difficult to get a reservation, but keep trying!

DESCRIPTION: Schwa offers top-notch food in a laid-back environment. The focused, meticulously prepared menu is stunningly presented. Also, the minimalist atmosphere, lacking affectation and excess, consists of just fourteen tables. Both attributes combine to ensure that the emphasis is on the food and the restaurant's mantra of "food as art" is made apparent. Schwa Restaurant is BYOB, so bring along your favorite bottle of vino to compliment the meal. Reservations are recommended. © wcities.com

contact:
tel: (773) 348-0326
http://chicago.citysearch.com/profile/external/11558979/chicago_il/hot_doug_s_inc.html

location:
3324 North California
Chicago IL 60618

hours:
Mon-Sat 10:30am-4pm

5 Hot Doug's Inc.

citysearch

DESCRIPTION: There are no two finer words in the English language than 'encased meats,' my friend. Try the duck fat fries if they have them.

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contact:
tel: 312/664-4500
fax: +1 312 664 9661
www.rezasrestaurant.com

location:
432 W. Ontario St
Chicago IL 60654

hours:
Daily 11am-midnight

6 Reza's

DESCRIPTION: Reza's doesn't look like the typical Middle Eastern restaurant. Housed in a former microbrewery, it has high ceilings and expansive, loftlike dining rooms. The Persian-inspired menu will soon make you forget all about beer. Specialties include a deliciously rich chicken in pomegranate sauce and a variety of kabobs with heaps of dill rice (although, in a nod to carb-conscious diners, they'll substitute a salad if you want). Despite the menu's meat-heavy emphasis, there's a selection of vegetarian plates, too. If you can't decide what to order, go for an appetizer combo: a generous sampler of Middle Eastern dishes including hummus, stuffed grape leaves, tabbouleh, and other standbys, nicely presented in a red-lacquer bento box. Reza's has another location in Andersonville, at 5255 N. Clark St. (tel. **773/561-1898**), but the River North spot is the most convenient for visitors staying downtown. © Frommer's

Photo courtesy of rezasrestaurant

contact:
tel: 773/248-6228
fax: +1 773 248 6088
www.charlietrotters.com

location:
816 W. Armitage Ave
Chicago IL 60614

hours:
Seatings Tues-Thurs at 6 and 9pm; Fri-Sat at 5:30 and 9pm

7 Charlie Trotter's

DESCRIPTION: Foodies flock to the namesake restaurant of chef Charlie Trotter, Chicago's first celebrity chef. Yes, he's done TV shows and authored a series of cookbooks (with almost impossible-to-follow recipes), but Trotter's focus is this restaurant, a shrine to creative fine dining. There is no a la carte menu, so this is not the place to come if you're a picky eater. Your only choice is to decide between the vegetable ($135) or grand ($155) degustation menu. Trotter delights in presenting diners with unfamiliar ingredients and presentations, and prides himself on using only organic or free-range products (so you can feel good about indulging). The entree descriptions signal Trotter's attention to detail; sample dishes from a recent menu include steamed Casco Bay cod with cockles, picholine olives, artichokes, and stinging nettles; and roasted saddle of rabbit with fingerling potatoes, turnips, and mustard greens. Be prepared to linger: Dinner here can take up to 3 hours. The dining room may be formal, but the overall attitude is not intimidating. The wine list is extensive, and a sommelier is on hand to help match wines with each course. For a taste of Trotter's gourmet fare without the high price tag, check out **Trotter's to Go,** his gourmet food store in Lincoln Park at 1337 W. Fullerton Ave. (btw. Lakewood and Wayne aves.; tel. **773/868-6510**). © Frommer's

Photo courtesy of Charlie Trotter's

contact:
tel: 1 312 932 9330
fax: 1 312 932 9388
http://www.fogodechao.com/locations/chicagoIL.htm

location:
661 North LaSalle Street
Chicago IL 60610

hours:

8 Fogo de Chão Churrascaria

DESCRIPTION: Fogo de Chão is a paradise for meat lovers! And at this location, diners can exploit the all-you-can eat service to the maximum with its wide range of salads, Brazilian side dishes, vegetables, and of course, sizzling fire-cooked meats. Traditional Brazilian drinks and desserts complete the meal. Now that should reassure any finicky foodie! Don't forget to try the decadent signature dessert, Papaya Cream. © wcities.com

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Lunch: M-F 11a-2p, Dinner: M-Th 5p-10p, F 5p-10:30p, Sa 4:30p-10:30p, Su 4p-9:30p

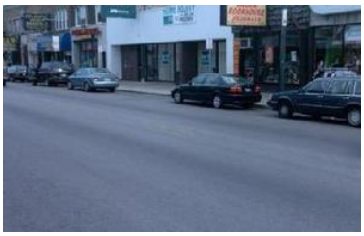
contact:
tel: 1 773 338 2152
fax: +1 773 338 2155
http://www.udupipalace.com

location:
2543 West Devon Avenue
Chicago IL 60659

hours:
Noon-9:45p M-Th, noon-10p F & Sa, noon-9:30p Su

9 Udupi Palace

DESCRIPTION: The majority of Indian restaurants serve north Indian cuisine, so it is always a fresh and inviting change to find a place that offers dishes of the southern variety. Connoisseurs understand that distinct tastes and flavors are particular to different regions. There are many strong vegetarian dishes here, and this is really the specialty. And, as if your meals are not spicy and flavorful enough, you are presented with various mix-and-match sauces as accompaniments. © wcities.com



citysearch

contact:
tel: 312 822 9600
fax: 312 822 9623
http://www.japonaischicago.com/

location:
600 West Chicago Avenue
Chicago IL 60610

hours:
11:30a-2:30p M-F, Dinner: 5p-11p M-Th, 5p-11:30p F-Sa, 5p-10p Su, Lounge: 5p-1a M-W, 5p - 2a Th-F, 5p-3a Sa, 5p-midnight Su

A Japonais

DESCRIPTION: Japonais serves authentic Japanese food in a warm and soothing ambience. The restaurant has two dining rooms; both are spacious and elegant with cozy seating arrangements. The lounge & bar is very romantic with its plush interior and comfortable sofas. Make sure you try at least one of the sushi combinations and the Sashimi. The restaurant hosts private parties and has live music performances from time to time. © wcities.com

Japonais

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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.

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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 gaping 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 countries 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

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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 countries 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 laThe 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.

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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"cheezeborgers." **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

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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 Shiroi 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

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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 ofSaturday 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 it's appearance as an 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 a 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 building 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

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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 neighboorhood 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 hob-nob 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,

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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://bigleaguetours.com/)

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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

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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 athttp://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 deceivingly 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

Weird Fact: The origin of the name'Chicago' comes from a French interpretation of the Miami-Illinois Indian name, 'Shikaakwa' meaning'wild leek.'The Harold Washington Library is the largest public library building in the countryFun Fact: The Chicago River is the only river in the world that actually flows backwards! It was reversed in 1900 to empty into the Mississippi River instead of Lake Michigan.The Chicago Cultural Center is home to the largest Tiffany glass dome in the world!The first ever Ferris wheel was showcased in Chicago at the 1893 World's Colombian Exposition.The Willis Tower is the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere and has the fastest running elevators in the world.For only $10, the Lincoln Park Zoo purchased its first animal, a bear cub! Go Cubbies!The moved an eight lane freeway to create Museum Campus, which is comprised of the Field Museum, the Shedd Aqarium, and the Adler Planetarium.Interesting Fact: Chicago is home to Sue, the largest and most complete dinosaur skeleton in the world. She lives in the lobby of the Field Museum.Random Fact: The birth of"Playboy" by Hugh Hefner was in Chicago in 1953.The Chicago Post office is the only post office in the country that you are able to drive a car through.Western Avenue, one of Chicago's main avenues, is the longest street in the world.

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