



**nileGUIDE**

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Mike

# Best performance spaces in Chicago

## Chicago, 1 Day

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# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** Chicago is an artsy city with theater and dance companies in abundance. Just as the companies vary in size and artistic aim, so do the venues that house them. These 10 theater spaces provide unique experiences for their audiences and are all quality venues in their own right. Whether looking for a small modern dance concert or a huge touring Broadway production, you'll be sure to find a theater space that fits the bill. Photo: Scott Robinson

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Chicago



### Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA)

World Class Modern Art Collection



### Lookingglass Theater

Out of the rabbit's hat



### Chicago Shakespeare Theatre

An Englishman In Chicago



### Neo-Futurists

Too much light is a good thing



### Auditorium Building

Architectural heritage



### Ruth Page Center For The Arts

Downtown rocks



### Links Hall Studio

Off Beat Performance Venue



### Joan W Irving B. Harris Theater

Music, pirouettes and opera



### Goodman Theatre

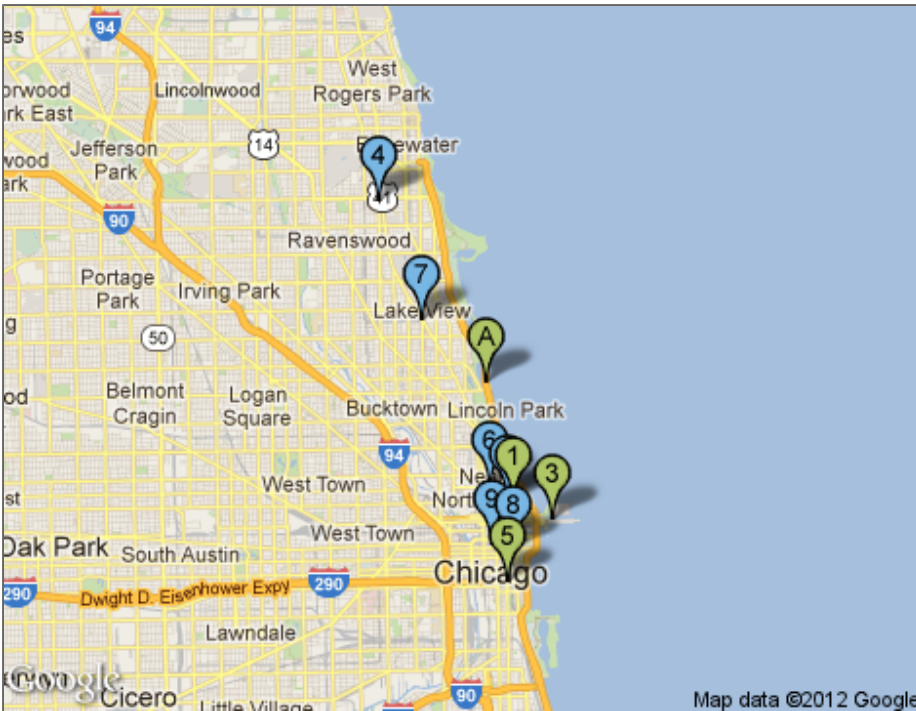
Widely renowned theater in brand new digs



### Theater on the Lake

Live performances on Lake Michigan's shores

# Day 1 - Chicago



## QUICK NOTE

**contact:**  
tel: 312/280-2660  
fax: +1 312 397 4095  
www.mcachicago.org

**location:**  
220 E. Chicago Ave  
Chicago IL 60611

**hours:**  
Tues 10am-8pm; Wed-Sun  
10am-5pm

## 1 Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA)

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Visit the MCA for its First Friday event each month, where you can mix and mingle at a hopping party right in the museum! Visit the website for more info.

**DESCRIPTION:** Located in the heart of the loop, The Museum of Contemporary Art brings today's most innovative visual work ranging from painting to sculpture to live performance. Pieces date from 1945 to present day, with works by famous artists like Andy Warhol. The MCA's permanent 2,500 piece collection focuses on a broad sampling of modern art in a variety of medias, and also shares works by great Chicago based artists. The performance series spans a wide scope from around the world as well, featuring artists like Philip Glass. Culture, history, and art become one at the MCA, sparking a great venue for new ideas and discussion. The MCA also features a great dining experience at its' restaurant Puck's, led by Chef Wolfgang Puck. © NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Museum of Contemporary Art

**contact:**

tel: 312337 0665  
http://www.lookingglasstheater.org/

**location:**

821 N Michigan Avenue  
Chicago IL 60611

**hours:**

Mo to Sa from 10:00 AM to  
06:00 PM, Sa from 10:00 AM  
to 03:00 PM

## 2 Lookingglass Theater

**DESCRIPTION:** While "Friends" star David Schwimmer is perhaps the most famous member of the theater company, no one in this troupe could be accused of riding on Schwimmer's coattails. The genesis for the company was a 1986 acting class at Northwestern University. There, seven students met to produce an adaptation of Andre Gregory and the Manhattan Theatre Project's "Alice!" Shortly after graduation in 1989, the students formed the company in 1989. Now, over 30 premieres, four Joseph Jefferson Awards and 26 Joseph Jefferson citations later, the theater is still going strong. Past productions included "The Idiot," "Metamorphosis" and "Her Name Was Danger." While the group's front office is located in the historic Athenaeum Theatre building, it currently has no permanent performance space (although a permanent space has been designated for construction). Instead, productions are staged at various locales throughout Chicago. Please call for schedule and locations. © wcities.com



Lookingglass Theater

**contact:**

tel: +1 312 595 5600  
fax: +1 312 595 5644  
http://www.chicagoshakes.com/

**location:**

800 East Grand Avenue  
Chicago IL 60611

## 3 Chicago Shakespeare Theatre

**DESCRIPTION:** To be or not to be, that is the question - if this famous line rings a bell, then pop on down to the Chicago Shakespeare theatre. This place is known for its high quality productions of the bard's plays. It is also the hub for new and original works by some of the country's exceptionally talented playwrights and directors. Highlights at this theatre include Measure For Measure, Comedy Of Errors, Kabuki Lady Macbeth, and the classic, Romeo and Juliet. Viewers who are interested in knowing more about an upcoming play can attend the free introductory lecture given by cast members or a scholar. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Chicago Shakespeare Theatre

**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

## 4 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



Photo courtesy of Neo-Futurists

-- but still want to be entertained -- this is the place to go. ©  
Frommer's

**contact:**  
tel: +1 312 341 3500  
(Roosevelt University)  
<http://www.roosevelt.edu/campuses/downtown.htm>

**location:**  
430 South Michigan Avenue  
Chicago IL 60605

**hours:**  
Vary

## 5 Auditorium Building

**DESCRIPTION:** The Auditorium Building has been a major historic landmark of Chicago since 1890. Back then, architects Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan created a hotel, several offices and the wonderful Auditorium Theater inside this masterpiece construction—the building was considered the world's eighth wonder when it first opened its doors to the public. Although the structure stood independently since it took shape, it is a part of the Roosevelt University today and is preserved by the university's authorities—a number of literary events, music shows and educational forums are held at the Auditorium. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Auditorium Building

**contact:**  
tel: 312337 6543  
fax: 312337 6542  
<http://www.ruthpage.org>

**location:**  
1016 North Dearborn  
Parkway  
Chicago IL 60610

**hours:**  
M-Th 11a-9p, Sa 9:30a-4p

## 6 Ruth Page Center For The Arts

**DESCRIPTION:** Ruth Page Center for The Arts is a wonderful place, that helps promote art but more specifically dance. It's open to people of all age groups. So put on your dancing shoes and get yourself enrolled, have fun and learn some smooth dance moves... Oh and by the way Ruth Page also hosts shows, so you can dazzle the audience with your new found love! © wcities.com



Ruth Page Center For The Arts

**contact:**  
tel: 773 281 0824  
fax: 773 281 1915  
<http://www.linkshall.org/>

**location:**  
3435 North Sheffield Avenue  
Chicago IL 60657

**hours:**  
8p F & Sa, 7p Su

## 7 Links Hall Studio

**DESCRIPTION:** Wrigleyville is packed with sports fanatics and a plethora of bars, but is also home to one of the best performance venues in the city. Established in 1978, Links Hall is home to many local performing artists, and virtually every weekend you can catch a show in the small, intimate performance space, which also seconds as a rehearsal studio rented by many local theater and dance artists. This is a great way to see some of Chicago's smaller scale artists and experience something off the normal tourist path.  
© NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Links  
Hall Studio

**contact:**

tel: +1 312 334 2400  
fax: +1 312 334 2498  
<http://www.harristheaterchicago.org/>

**location:**

205 East Randolph Drive  
Chicago IL 60601

**8 Joan W Irving B. Harris Theater**

**DESCRIPTION:** If you're looking for more than just drama, visit the Joan W Irving B. Harris Theater, a center for a variety of shows by dance and music companies from the Chicago region. The companies that have performed at the theater are Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, Old Town School of Folk Music, Chicago Opera Theater and Hubbard Street Dance Company. This is a great theatre to watch local talents perform. If you're in the city, check it out. Some of the highlights for the coming months are the River North Chicago Dance Company, La Resurrezione, an Opera composed by Handel and the Vermeer Quartet. © wcities.com



wikipedia

**contact:**

tel: 312 4433800  
<http://www.goodman-theatre.org>

**location:**

170 North Dearborn Street  
Chicago IL 60601

**9 Goodman Theatre**

**DESCRIPTION:** Originally presented as a gift to the Art Institute, this theater is now the oldest and largest not for profit theater in the city. A new, much larger location, in the heart of the theater district, opened to rave reviews. While many students have honed their craft at the Goodman School of Drama, the theater has also won much acclaim for major productions like "Death of a Salesman" with Brian Dennehy as Willy Loman, and the annual production of "A Christmas Carol." Productions are of consistently outstanding quality, under the guidance of art director Robert Falls and his committed staff of associate directors and artistic staff. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Goodman Theatre

**contact:**

tel: +1 312 742 7994 / +1 312 742 7529  
fax: +1 312 742 5393  
<http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/>

**location:**

2401 North Lake Shore Drive  
Chicago IL 60614

**A Theater on the Lake**

**DESCRIPTION:** Enjoy outdoor theater as only Chicago can do it. Located in Lincoln Park, yards from Lake Michigan, this summer theater dates back to 1942, when it featured amateur productions. It now boasts encore performances by some of the city's many renowned production companies, including Second City, the Steppenwolf Theatre, the Eclipse Theater and the Porchlight Theater. © wcities.com



wcities

**hours:**

See the website for event times

# 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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