



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Mike

The best free finds in Chicago

Chicago, 1 Day

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Who doesn't love free stuff? Especially when traveling, freebies can make an experience so much sweeter. These 10 free activities will show you some of Chicago's best features without feeling like cheap hand-outs. Chi-town's museums all have a free day (or at least a range of free hours), and the zoo animals, plant life, and gorgeous grassy areas of the city can all be experienced without opening a wallet. Who says music and culture have to be expensive? Photo: Lisa Wallis

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Chicago



Lincoln Park Zoo

Animal lover must-see



Grant Park Music Festival

Free Concerts



Chicago Botanic Garden

Lush and Sprawling Botanic Garden



Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA)

World Class Modern Art Collection



Lincoln Park Conservatory

Greenhouse With Tropical Displays



Millennium Park

Downtown Outdoor Urban Oasis



Garfield Park Conservatory

Landscape Art Under Glass



Art Institute of Chicago

Global Art Leader



John G. Shedd Aquarium

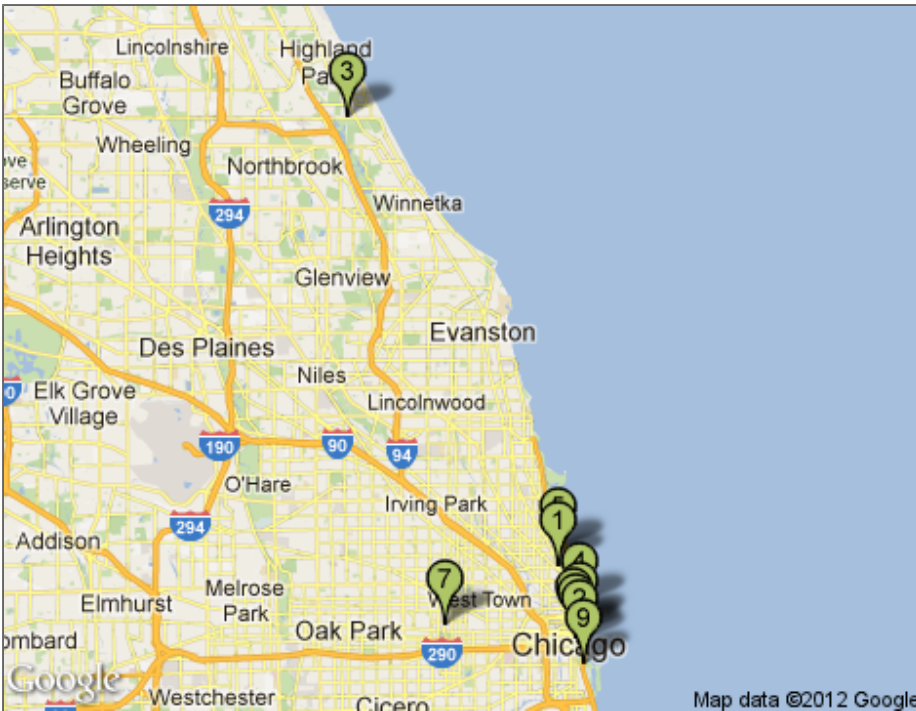
Explore the Deep



Chicago Cultural Center

Great Cultural Performances

Day 1 - Chicago



QUICK NOTE

contact:

tel: +1 312 742 2000

fax: +1 312 742 7666

http://www.lpzoo.org/index_2.html

location:

2001 North Clark Street
Chicago IL 60614

1 Lincoln Park Zoo

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

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

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: +1 312 742 7638
http://www.grantparkmusicfestival.com/

location:

500 South Columbus Drive
Chicago IL 60616

2 Grant Park Music Festival

DESCRIPTION: Throughout the summer months (June-August), a symphonic ensemble performs at the Petrillo Music Shell in Grant Park, and this is no ordinary festival orchestra. Many of the guest performers are internationally acclaimed stars of opera and Broadway. The orchestra is composed of players in the renowned Chicago Symphony and music teachers from throughout Chicagoland. The roster of music is usually on the lighter side. For the best listening, arrive early and grab a seat at the shell itself. Otherwise, a tree-covered speaker system will fill your ears inside the park. Reserved seating is available for a fee. General lawn admission is free. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Grant Park Music Festival

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

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



Photo courtesy of Chicago Botanic Garden

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

4 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: 312/742-7736

location:
2391 N Stockton Dr
Chicago IL 60614

hours:
Daily 9am-5pm

5 Lincoln Park Conservatory

DESCRIPTION: Just beyond the zoo's northeast border is a lovely botanical garden housed in a soaring glass-domed structure. Inside are four great halls filled with thousands of plants. If you're visiting Chicago in the wintertime, I can't think of a better prescription for mood elevation than this lush haven of greenery. The Palm House features giant palms and rubber trees (including a 50-ft. fiddle-leaf rubber tree dating back to 1891); the Fernery nurtures plants that grow close to the forest floor; and the Tropical House is a shiny symphony of flowering trees, vines, and bamboo. The fourth environment is the Show House, where seasonal flower shows take place. Even better than the plants inside, however, might be what lies outside the front doors. The expansive lawn, with its French garden and lovely fountain on the conservatory's south side, is one of the best places in town for an informal picnic (especially nice if you're visiting the zoo and want to avoid the congestion at its food concession venues). The Lincoln Park Conservatory has a sister facility on the city's West Side, in Garfield Park, that is even more impressive. In fact, the 2-acre **Garfield Park Conservatory**, 300 N. Central Park Ave. (tel. **312/746-5100**), designed by the great landscape architect Jens Jensen in 1907, is one of the largest gardens under glass in the world. Unfortunately, it's surrounded by a rather blighted neighborhood with a high crime rate, so I recommend driving there rather than using public transportation. It's open 365 days a year from 9am to 5pm. Allow a half-hour for the Lincoln Park Conservatory. © Frommer's



heather

contact:

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

location:

222 North Columbus Drive
Chicago IL 60601

6 Millennium Park

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

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

DESCRIPTION: Chicago is full of must-see attractions, but at the top of the Can't Miss list is Millennium Park. It debuted in 2004, several years overdue, but it was worth the wait. It is a true gem, right downtown between Michigan Avenue and the lake. One can easily spend an afternoon just sitting on the benches at the perimeter of the Pritzker Pavilion, stare at their warped reflection in Cloud Gate ("The Bean" to locals), and watch the rotating faces in Crown Fountain spew water every five minutes or so. Immediately to the south of Millennium Park lie the Art Institute and Grant Park, which all together would make for a wonderfully relaxing day. If you only have time for one of the three, though, do not pass go, do not collect \$200- without going to Millennium Park. © NileGuide



wcities

contact:

tel: +1 312 746 5100
fax: +1 773 638 1777
<http://www.garfield-conservatory.org>

location:

300 North Central Park Avenue
Chicago IL 60624

7 Garfield Park Conservatory

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

This beautiful conservatory is easily accessible from the Green Line El. Make sure to go on a day that is pleasant (or cooler if possible), because it's warm inside.

DESCRIPTION: The Garfield Park Conservatory is often referred to as "landscape art under glass" and is one of Chicago's best kept secrets. Off the beaten path, it is located on the West Side and is easily accessible by the CTA Green Line. In the late 19th century, each of the three large parks on Chicago's West Side (Garfield, Humboldt, and Douglas parks) had their own conservatories and greenhouses, but over 20 years they were not kept well, became obsolete, and were demolished. For their replacement, the Parks Commission decided in 1905 to build "the largest publicly owned conservatory under one roof in the world" at Garfield Park. The Conservatory now houses several natural landscapes; impressive among them are the Palm Room and the Fern Room. © NileGuide

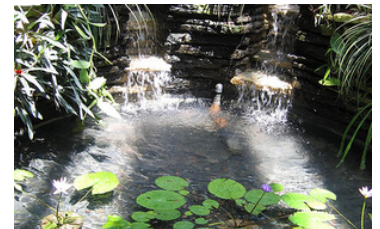


Photo courtesy of moonrat24

contact:

tel: 312/443-3600
fax: +1 312 443 0849
www.artic.edu

location:

111 S. Michigan Ave
Chicago IL 60602

hours:

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

8 Art Institute of Chicago

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

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

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



relatively subdued. Also, many visitors aren't aware that the museum stays open late on Thursdays, so consider stopping by after an early dinner (another bonus: free admission). © Frommer's

contact:

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

location:

1200 S. Lake Shore Dr
Chicago IL 60605

hours:

Memorial Day-Labor Day
daily 9am-6pm; early Sept-
late May Mon-Fri 9am-5pm,
Sat-Sun 9am-6pm

9 John G. Shedd Aquarium

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

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

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



wcities

There's also a family-friendly cafeteria. Allow 2 to 3 hours. © Frommer's

contact:

tel: 312/744-6630

fax: +1 312 744 2089

www.cityofchicago.org/exploringchicago

location:

78 E. Washington St
Chicago IL 60602

hours:

Mon-Thurs 10am-7pm; Fri
10am-6pm; Sat 10am-5pm;
Sun 11am-5pm

A Chicago Cultural Center

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Stop by during lunch time to catch a noon performance in the lobby for free!

DESCRIPTION: The Chicago Cultural Center was built in 1897 as the city's public library, and in 1991, it was transformed into a showplace for visual and performing arts. Today, it's an overlooked civic treasure with a basic Beaux Arts exterior and a sumptuous interior of rare marble, fine hardwood, stained glass, and mosaics of Favrile glass, colored stone, and mother-of-pearl inlaid in white marble. The crowning centerpiece is Preston Bradley Hall's majestic **Tiffany dome**, said to be the largest of its kind in the world. The building also houses a **Chicago Office of Tourism** visitor center, which makes it an ideal place to kick-start your visit. If you stop in to pick up tourist information and take a quick look around, your visit won't take longer than 15 minutes, but the Cultural Center also schedules an array of art exhibitions, concerts, films, lectures, and other special events (many free), which might convince you to extend your time here. A long-standing tradition is the 12:15pm Dame Myra Hess Memorial classical concert every Wednesday in the Preston Bradley Hall. Guided architectural tours of the Cultural Center run at 1:15pm on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. © Frommer's



www.commonswikimedia.org

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.

©