

DESTINATION CHICAGO

Parks, Galleries, Libraries, Zoos, Shopping and more

The best destinations around the Windy City

Chicago Tourism Guide



Did you know that Chicago is one of the biggest tourist destinations in the country? From miles of beautiful beach shorelines to world-class museums, Chicago has an activity for everyone. We have navigated the city and provided our best recommendations on sites and attractions, whether you are a local Illinoisan or an out-of-towner visiting for the conference.

We hope you enjoy a walk through Millennium Park or a lazy day on the beach—both free and paid activities are listed below. If activities aren't your speed, enjoy a meal at a rooftop bar and take in the beautiful views.

Want More Ideas?

Check out these websites for even more sites and attractions!

ChooseChicago.com
EnjoyIllinois.com
Timeout.com/Chicago

How Do I Get There?



Uber — download the Uber App



Lyft — download the Lyft App



CTA — download the Citymapper App or Chicago Transit Authority App for Chicago public transportation time(s) and route(s).

Free Activities

CHICAGO CULTURAL CENTER

78 E. Washington Street, Chicago, IL 60602 (0.4 mi)

This historic landmark hosts hundreds of free programs year round. The building has two unbelievable stained-glass domes, which you can see on your own or on a free building tour. The many halls regularly host free events, from weekly classical music concerts to blues, jazz and more. Also, check out the daily [Chicago Cultural Center](#) schedule for free dance performances, film screenings, seminars and theatrical events.

CHICAGO LAKEFRONT TRAIL

5800 N. Sheridan Road - 7100 S. South Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60649

Hit the Lakefront Trail to run, walk, bike or rollerblade with the blue waters of Lake Michigan to one side and gorgeous green parks to the other. Along the trail are green spaces, [beaches](#) and gardens; recreation areas, including playgrounds, soccer fields, volleyball nets and tennis courts; and amenities like washrooms, drinking fountains and concession stands.

CHICAGO RIVERWALK

E. Upper Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60611

Eat, drink and play along Chicago's multi-award-winning River walk, a scenic promenade on the water's edge that stretches from downtown Lake Street to Lake Michigan. See a bridge lift from inside the bridge house with a visit to the [McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum](#) (free on Sundays), and take in the world-famous architecture that lines the Chicago River.

CITY GALLERY AT THE HISTORIC WATER TOWER

806 Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611 (3.1 mi)

This treasured landmark on The Magnificent Mile has been transformed into a beautiful, intimate gallery for rotating art exhibits of works by local photographers and artists. Constructed between 1867 and 1869, it was created for Chicago's municipal water system and originally housed a 135-foot iron standpipe used to regulate water pressure. It gained special significance as one of the few buildings to survive the destructive path of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Both the Water Tower and Pumping Station to the east (home to Looking Glass Theatre Company) were designed by William W. Boyington, one of Chicago's most prolific architects of the mid-19th century.

HAROLD WASHINGTON LIBRARY CENTER

400 S. State Street, Chicago, IL 60605 (1.2 mi)

This is one of the largest public libraries in the world, encompassing close to a million square feet, filling a whole city block, and housing more than 13 million published works. Enjoy all the architectural details while you are there, which include giant owls perched on the roof; the Roman goddess of grain, Ceres, on the facade; and a sun-streamed 9th floor Winter Garden. Also, explore the [art collection](#), which features more than 50 local and internationally known artists displayed throughout the halls and reading rooms.

LINCOLN PARK CONSERVATORY

2391 N. Stockton Drive, Chicago, IL 60614 (3.8 mi)

Located in stunning Lincoln Park, this conservatory displays some of the most stunning flowers and rare plant life. No matter the season, a walk through this storied greenhouse will always feel like a stroll through paradise.

LINCOLN PARK ZOO

2001 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60614 (2.9 mi)

One of only a few free zoos in the country, Lincoln Park Zoo covers more than 35 acres and features more than 230 species of animal. The Farm in the Zoo and Nature Boardwalk bring you up-close-and-personal with the natural world.

MAGGIE DALEY PARK PLAY GARDEN

337 E. Randolph Street, Chicago, IL 60601 (0.7 mi)

Located immediately east of Millennium Park, this play park for kids is an imaginative 20 acres designed in the spirit of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. It comes complete with its own mini lighthouse, a life-sized ship, two climbing walls (fee starts at \$15), 30-foot Suspension Bridge Towers, a quarter-mile-long skating ribbon, an Enchanted Garden of upside-down trees, and several Picnic Groves.

MILLENNIUM PARK

201 E. Randolph Street, Chicago, IL 60601 (0.6 mi)

One of the state's most popular tourist attractions features larger-than-life public art (don't miss Cloud Gate for a mirrored look at the skyline or splashing in Crown Fountain during warm-weather months); a cutting-edge performance stage (the Frank Gehry-designed Jay Prizker Pavilion), which is a venue for free concerts and film screenings all summer; and the all-seasons beauty known as Lurie Garden. Make sure you check out the [Millennium Park](#) schedule for a listing of upcoming events and tours.

CLOUD GATE (ALSO KNOWN AS "THE BEAN")

You'll recognize this one. It's the iconic, bean-shaped sculpture in [Millennium Park](#) that mirrors and distorts the surrounding Chicago skyline. When people see this selfie, they'll know you're in Chicago.

NAVY PIER

600 E. Grand Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611 (1.1 mi)

One of Chicago's most recognizable landmarks boasts gorgeous lakefront views. Over the summer, you will witness free weekly fireworks on Wednesday and Saturday evenings, as well as free outdoor concerts in the Miller Lite Beer Garden.

OAK STREET BEACH

1000 N. Lake Shore Drive, Gold Coast, Chicago, IL (1.5 mi)

Great people watching, a palm tree-covered oasis and close proximity to downtown make Oak Street Beach a sure bet. If you want refreshments, escape to [Oak Street Beach Food + Drink](#).

Reservation & Ticket Purchase Required

SKYDECK AT WILLIS TOWER

233 S. Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60606 (1.6 mi)

The Ledge at Skydeck Chicago is at your feet—literally. Dare to stand out on the 103rd floor and look 1,353 feet straight down from a glass box extending 4.3 feet out from the Skydeck, providing never-before-seen views of Chicago. Enjoy a 360-degree view spanning up to 50 miles and 4 states. The new multimedia elevator ride gives visitors one of the fastest rides in the world while referencing points of interest that match the ascending height. Atop the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere, Skydeck Chicago is a "one-stop Chicago" experience featuring museum-quality interactive exhibits.

JOHN HANCOCK CENTER & 360 CHICAGO

875 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611 (1.2 mi)

If you are looking for one of the best views of Chicago, a visit to 360 CHICAGO is a must. In fact, *Travel + Leisure* magazine named it one of the Best Views in America. Located high above The Magnificent Mile, 360 CHICAGO is an observation deck nestled on the 94th floor of the John Hancock Center. The Hancock is the fourth-

tallest building in the city and is recognized for the distinctive X-shaped external bracing that has made it a Chicago architectural icon.

ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603 (0.9 mi)

No trip to Chicago is complete without a visit to the Art Institute. Consistently rated among the world's top museums by TripAdvisor travelers, the Art Institute of Chicago is home to the greatest collection of Impressionist paintings outside of Paris, including works by Monet, Renoir, Seurat and Van Gogh. Explore the Renzo Piano-designed Modern Wing and its extraordinary collection of works by Chagall, Dalí, Matisse, Picasso and Pollock and visit the Ryan Learning Center, a free space offering programs and art-making activities for the whole family.

BIG BUS TOURS CHICAGO

98 E. Upper Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60601 (377 ft)

These sightseeing bus tours of Chicago take you on an extensive route showcasing the best the city has to offer. From the great vantage point of a double-decker buses, you will enjoy panoramic views of Chicago's finest skyscrapers, including the John Hancock Center, the Willis Tower and the Wrigley Building. Take in the city's impressive landmarks while the tour guide provides entertaining commentary and insight into Chicago's history. Enjoy exploring this dynamic city with the freedom to hop on and hop off the bus as many times as you wish to visit attractions like the Shedd Aquarium and Field Museum. The conveniently located stops make navigating your way around the city easy, and with a choice of Classic, Premium or Deluxe Tickets, you can experience Chicago through different viewpoints.

CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE BOAT TOUR

400 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60601 (0.2 mi)

Experience the "top tour in Chicago and one of the top 10 tours in the U.S." according to TripAdvisor users. The Chicago Architecture Foundation River Cruise is a must for out-of-towners and Chicagoans alike. CAF-certified volunteer tour guides interpret more than 50 buildings along the Chicago River. You'll find out how Chicago grew from a small settlement into one of the world's largest cities in fewer than 100 years. In 90 minutes, get the real story on Chicago architecture and its history.

LAKEFRONT NEIGHBORHOODS BIKE TOUR

540 N. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60611 (1.1 mi)

Rated the best Chicago sightseeing tour of 2017 by TripAdvisor, the most organized bike ride of Chicago by the Chicago Reader, and Best Chicago Tour by Citysearch! This tour takes you off the tourist beat and onto the quiet neighborhood streets, city parks and beaches of the North Side of Chicago, giving you a glimpse into how Chicagoans enjoy their beautiful city. Highlights include the Gold Coast Mansions, Oprah's old Chicago digs, Lincoln Park Zoo, Old Town Historic District, North Avenue Beach and the amazing Chicago Lakefront. All ages and fitness levels will enjoy, but children must be strong, capable riders. Reservations recommended.

FIELD MUSEUM

1400 S. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60605 (2.1 mi)

Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History is one of the largest natural history museums in the world.

SHEDD AQUARIUM

1200 S. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60605 (2.6 mi)

Like no other aquarium in the world, Shedd combines the best of early 20th-century "age of aquariums" characteristics—a diverse, global animal collection surrounded by eye-popping architecture—with 21st-century advances in animal care, environments and interpretation. Excellence and innovation are Shedd traditions, and they began with the founder.

SECOND CITY

1616 N. Wells Street, Chicago, IL 60614 (2.7 mi)

Known for its many famous alums, this storied spot hosts popular sketch shows and improv classes as the world's premier comedy club, comedy theatre and school of improvisation. Live shows every night.

MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

5700 S. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60637 (7.9 mi)

The Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago—one of the largest science museums in the world—is home to more than 400,000 square feet of hands-on exhibits designed to spark scientific inquiry and creativity.

ADLER PLANETARIUM

1300 S. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60605 (2.6 mi)

The Adler Planetarium is a public museum dedicated to the study of astronomy and astrophysics. It was founded in 1930 by Chicago business leader Max Adler on the northeast tip of Northerly Island. The Adler was the first planetarium in the United States and is part of Chicago's Museum Campus, which includes the John G. Shedd Aquarium and The Field Museum. The Adler's mission is to inspire exploration and understanding of the universe.