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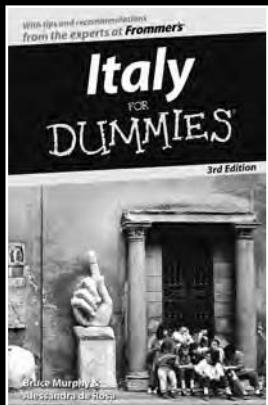
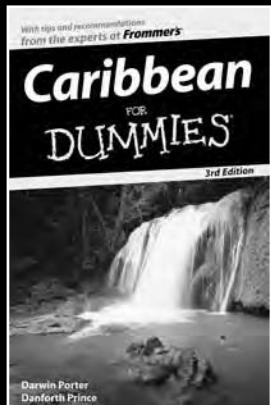
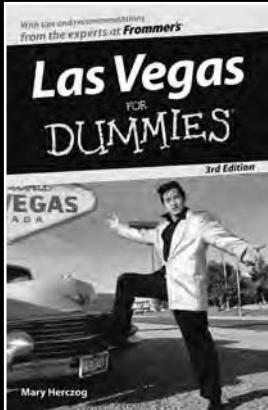
by Laura Tiebert



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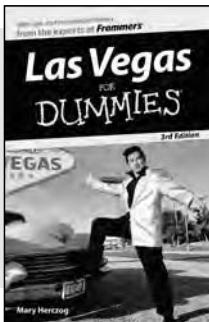
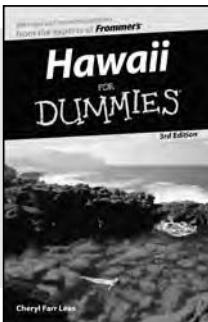
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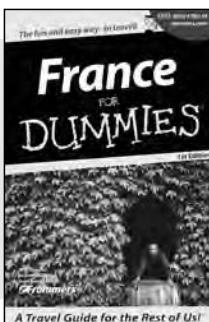
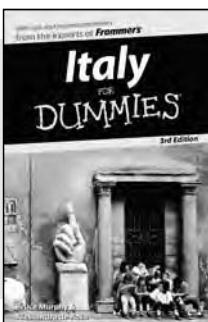


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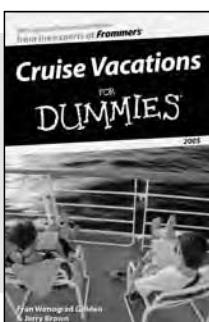
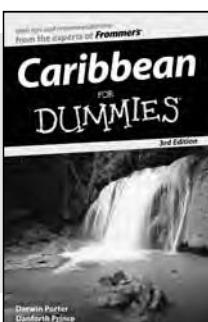


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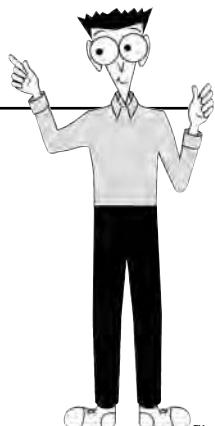
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by Laura Tiebert



Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Chicago For Dummies®, 4th Edition

Published by
Wiley Publishing, Inc.
111 River St.
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774
www.wiley.com

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Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2007926405

ISBN: 978-0-470-12480-2

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



About the Author

Laura Tiebert is a freelance writer whose travels have taken her from the frozen tundra of Dawson City in Yukon Territory to the wide beaches of Muscat, Oman. A native Midwesterner, she lived in New York City for years before returning to Chicago. Today, she stays a bit closer to home in Evanston, Illinois, where she lives with her husband and two young sons.

Author's Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the inspiration for this book. My grandparents, Ray and Monie Johnston, met in the late 1920s on the Burlington Northern commuter train between Chicago and the western suburbs and spent 60 years together. The colorful stories they told, about John Dillinger, the stockyards, the Loop, and nights out at the Palmer House Hilton, make me feel connected to the city today.

This book is better because of the insightful editing of William Travis and Kathleen Warnock. Thank you!

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our Dummies online registration form located at www.dummies.com/register/.

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Introduction



Let's get one thing straight upfront: Chicago is the best-kept big-city secret in the United States. A bold statement, you say? It may be, but it's fitting for this straight-shooting metropolis on the prairie.

Chicago is loud and smart, crude and glamorous, brash and refined. In some ways it's casually elegant, and in others, unabashedly goofy. You can see the contrasts in the glamour of Michigan Avenue's elegant hotels and the boisterousness of the fans screaming for "Da Bears" at Soldier Field. Flashy sports cars idle curbside at Rush Street's hot spots, while farther west, art-school hipsters look for the offbeat in Wicker Park. Then again, you can find Midwesterners in their conservative pullovers and khakis just trying to make sense of it all.

The third-largest city in the United States, Chicago constantly revises itself and, in the last two decades, has reinvented itself to become a vibrant, cosmopolitan place. It has been said that Chicago is the most livable city in the United States. It's also one of the most visitable. Firmly rooted on Midwestern soil, Chicago is very much its own kind of town. I think it'll be your kind of town, too. In this book, I give you the resources to make your Chicago experience a singular, memorable one.

About This Book

My favorite way to travel is with a person who has lived in that place. That's my intention for you. Sure, I hit the must-see destinations, and I highlight the sights that actually merit their popularity. But I also point you to lesser-known places that Chicagoans frequent. The beauty of this approach is that in Chicago, unlike New York and Los Angeles, you can actually get into these places. Chicago is much less elitist, less concerned with the trendy, than those cities. The City of Big Shoulders also has open arms.

This is a guidebook and also a reference book. You can read it cover to cover, or you can jump in anywhere to find the information you want about a specific task (such as finding a hotel) or an aspect of your trip (such as dining). Whether you're sitting in your living room trying to make a reservation or standing on the corner of State and Madison wondering where to eat, *Chicago For Dummies*, 4th Edition, is set up so you can get the facts, descriptions, and recommendations you want, quickly. You can open it to any chapter and dig in to get the information you need without any hassles.

Dummies Post-it® Flags

As you're reading this book, you'll find information that you'll want to reference as you plan or enjoy your trip — whether it be a new hotel, a must-see attraction, or a must-try walking tour. Mark these pages with the handy Post-it® Flags included in this book to help make your trip planning easier!

For those hotels, restaurants, and attractions that are plotted on a map, I provide a page reference in the listing information. If a hotel, restaurant, or attraction is outside the city limits or in an out-of-the-way area, it may not be mapped.

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time — and this is especially true of prices. I suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets — all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

Conventions Used in This Book

In this book, I include lists of hotels, restaurants, and attractions. As I describe each, I often use abbreviations for commonly accepted credit cards. Take a look at the following list for an explanation of each:

AE: American Express

DC: Diners Club

DISC: Discover

MC: MasterCard

V: Visa

I divide the hotels into two categories — my personal favorites and those that don't quite make my preferred list but still get my hearty seal of approval. Don't be shy about considering the runner-up hotels if you can't get a room at one of my favorites or if your preferences differ from mine. The amenities that the runners-up offer and the services that each provides make all these accommodations good choices to consider as you determine where to rest your head at night.

I also include some general pricing information to help you decide where to unpack your bags or dine on the local cuisine. I use a system of dollar signs to show a range of costs for one night in a hotel (in a double room) or a meal at a restaurant (included in the cost of each meal is an appetizer, entree, and nonalcoholic beverage). Check out the following table to decipher the dollar signs:

Cost	Hotel	Restaurant
\$	\$125 and under	\$20 and under
\$\$	\$126–\$200	\$21–\$35
\$\$\$	\$201–\$300	\$36–\$45
\$\$\$\$	\$301 and over	\$46–\$60
\$\$\$\$\$		\$61 and over

Foolish Assumptions

As I wrote this book, I made some assumptions about you and what your needs may be as a traveler. Here's what I assumed about you:

- ✓ You may be an inexperienced traveler looking for guidance when determining whether to take a trip to Chicago and how to plan it.
- ✓ You may be an experienced traveler who hasn't had much time to explore Chicago and wants expert advice when you get a chance to enjoy the city.
- ✓ You're not looking for a book that provides all the information available about Chicago or that lists every hotel, restaurant, or attraction available to you. Instead, you're looking for a book that focuses on the places that give you the best or most unusual experience in Chicago.

If you fit any of these criteria, *Chicago For Dummies*, 4th Edition, gives you the information you're looking for!

How This Book Is Organized

This book is divided into six parts covering the major aspects of your trip. Each part is broken down into specific components so you can go right to the subtopic you want (you don't have to read all about nightlife if you're just looking for a jazz club, for example). Following are brief summaries of the parts.

Part 1: Introducing Chicago

Get a panoramic view of Chicago as I scan the city's highlights, the not-to-be-missed attractions and activities. It's an exciting era in the city's

history, and I help you decide when to go, based on weather considerations and event schedules.

Part II: Planning Your Trip to Chicago

By nature, I'm a planner. In fact, for me, planning the trip is half the fun. Ah, the possibilities! If you're a planner too, you'll love this part. I debate the pros and cons of your travel options and even review airports. In this part, you can plan your budget; contemplate using trains, planes, or automobiles; join in a tour; and find particular advice for those with special travel needs and interests.

Part III: Settling into Chicago

Being in a new city can be a bit like groping around in the dark. After reading this part, you'll be navigating the city like a native. (You may even find yourself giving directions to hapless tourists!) You also get the lowdown on Chicago's hotels and restaurants — what's the latest and greatest, what's getting shabby around the edges, what offers the ultimate in luxury or the biggest bargain.

Part IV: Exploring Chicago

In this part, I guide you through Chicago's attractions. I point out the major sights and show you additional attractions, in case you have the time, energy, and inclination. If you want to take a piece of Chicago home with you, turn to the chapter on shopping. And if this jumble of things to do and see is just too much for you, I provide a variety of ready-made itineraries.

Part V: Living It Up after Dark: Chicago Nightlife

Chicago offers culture vultures options that stack up favorably against anything you'll find anywhere else. In this part, I cover the best of the sights and sounds of nighttime Chicago. I run the gamut of information on Chicago's live theater and performing-arts scene (including its world-class symphony, opera, and dance), as well as Chicago's best bars and clubs.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

In this part, I provide lists of information to help you craft your perfect vacation — from the top ten Chicago experiences to ten creative ideas for days when the weather isn't cooperating. Most important, you discover indispensable tips for experiencing Chicago as the locals do.

In the back of this book, I include an appendix — your Quick Concierge — containing lots of handy information you may need, like phone numbers and addresses for emergency personnel or area hospitals and pharmacies, lists of local newspapers and magazines, protocol for sending mail

or finding taxis, and more. Check out this appendix when searching for answers to lots of questions that may come up as you travel. You can find the Quick Concierge easily, because it's printed on yellow paper.

Icons Used in This Book

These icons appear in the margins throughout this book:



Keep an eye out for the Bargain Alert icon as you seek money-saving tips and/or great deals.



The Best of the Best icon highlights the best that Chicago has to offer in all categories — hotels, restaurants, attractions, activities, shopping, and nightlife.



This icon points out insider information on where locals eat, shop, and spend time in Chicago.



Watch for the Heads Up icon to identify annoying or potentially dangerous situations, such as tourist traps, unsafe neighborhoods, budgetary rip-offs, and other circumstances to beware of.



Look to the Kid Friendly icon for attractions, hotels, restaurants, and activities that are particularly hospitable to children or people traveling with kids.



The Tip icon highlights useful advice on things to do and ways to schedule your time.

Where to Go from Here

Your next stop is Chicago, a living, vibrant, wonderfully diverse city that offers something for every taste, inclination, or budget. This book helps you make decisions about how you can tailor Chicago to be your kind of town.

Part I

Introducing Chicago

The 5th Wave By Rich Tennant



"The closest hotel room I could get you to the Magnificent Mile for that amount of money is in Cleveland."

In this part . . .

When should you go to Chicago? What annual events hold the most interest for you? Which attractions are absolute must-sees, and which activities should be on the list of anyone visiting the city? Come with me as I survey Chicago from a bird's-eye view, taking in the big picture of all the attractions and activities that await!

Chapter 1

Discovering the Best of Chicago

In This Chapter

- Kicking back: Barbecue and the blues
- Seeing a show: Theater, opera and comedy
- Eating your way around town

*Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders*

—Carl Sandburg, “Chicago”

In this chapter, you get a sampling of the qualities that make Chicago the most American of American cities. Today, you’d hardly recognize Chicago by Sandburg’s description. No longer home to stockyards, the city is a cosmopolitan, vibrant place. But Chicago retains its unique identity: big and brawling, inventive, and wonderfully diverse. Chicago is the least pretentious and most livable metropolis in the United States — and maybe the best to visit, too.

Some activities just say, “Chicago.” They’re the quintessential Chicago experiences, and no visit is complete without them. Read on for some of the activities that make Chicago a special place to visit. Throughout the book, the Best of the Best icon is attached to those places or activities mentioned in this chapter.

The Best Hotels

Most Family Friendly: With cribs, laundry service, free hot breakfast, and every room a suite, the **Embassy Suites Hotel Chicago–Downtown/Lakefront** is ideal for families looking for more space than the typical

hotel room provides. The in-room Nintendo, indoor pool, and location near Navy Pier — plus hamburger joint P. J. Clarke's in the same building complex — should keep Junior happy, too.

Best Room with a View: This isn't an easy call. Peering over the elevated tracks, **The Silversmith** in the Loop offers a distinctly urban vista. But consider several other hotels for their mix of lake and city views: the **Four Seasons Hotel Chicago**, **The Drake**, the **Ritz-Carlton Chicago**, and **Park Hyatt Chicago**.

Best Bet for Romance: A hip hotel that's known for its sense of romance and whimsy is **Hotel Burnham**. During the holidays, you're right across the street from the world-famous windows at Macy's (formerly Marshall Field's) and within viewing distance of the massive Christmas tree at Daley Plaza. Inside, you get a feel for the handcrafted beauty of the former Reliance Insurance building, one of the city's first skyscrapers. Windows are huge — you won't feel left in the dark or cramped here. Rooms are clubby but glamorous, with plush beds, mahogany writing desks, and chaise longues.

Best Place to Splurge: You want luxury? You've got luxury at three of Chicago's hotels, which are among the best in the world. **The Peninsula Chicago** was named *Conde Nast Traveler's* "Number One Hotel in the World," in 2006, as well as *Travel + Leisure* magazine's 2006 "Number One Urban Hotel Spa." The attention to detail, regal pampering, and well-connected concierges you'll find at the ultra-lux **Ritz-Carlton Chicago** and **Four Seasons Hotel Chicago** make them the hotels of choice for travelers who want to feel like royalty.

Best Place to Save a Buck: **Red Roof Inn Chicago Downtown** offers a fabulous location for a bargain price. But the **Hampton Inn & Suites Chicago-Downtown** gets bonus points for being a bargain stay and for having a pool.

Best Swimming Pool: With its dazzling, all-tile, junior Olympic-size pool constructed in 1929, the **InterContinental Chicago** takes this award easily.

For more information on the hotels listed in this section, see Chapter 9.

The Best Restaurants

Best New Restaurant: How can you give this title to any restaurant other than Grant Achatz's **Alinea**, named best restaurant in the nation by *Gourmet* magazine in 2006? Of course, if you don't have hundreds of dollars to drop on a meal, you may want to try something that's both well-recommended and affordable (but still hopping), such as **Avec**, which is garnering kudos from foodies nationwide for its Mediterranean small-plate dining. It's small, it's crowded (you share a table with other diners), but it's a truly unique experience.

Best View: A location right on the Magnificent Mile means **The Hancock Observatory** (Chapter 11) offers an up-close-and-personal view of the city from its observation deck. For lunch, visit the **Signature Room at the 95th**, a sleek restaurant that offers a delicious lunch buffet. On a clear day, you can see 50 miles and part of three surrounding states — Michigan, Indiana, and Wisconsin. (Ladies, make sure to visit the restroom — it's got the best views in the restaurant!)

Best Ice Cream: Since the 1920s, **Margie's Candies** has been serving mammoth sundaes in conch-shell-shaped dishes. Margie is gone now, but her husband, Peter, still mans the cash register. Don't miss the homemade hot fudge, real butterscotch, and caramel. The place is frozen in time — about 1940, to be exact — and is stuffed with kitschy dolls, boxes of homemade candy, stuffed animals, and news clippings from through the years.

Best Outdoor Dining: Long tables and family-style dining reign in **Greektown**, making it a comfortable, fun destination for families and large groups. At **Pegasus**, a rooftop garden affords diners a panoramic view of the Chicago skyline. The restaurant is so family- and large-group-oriented, that when I called to make a reservation for a group of ten, the host replied, "Ten is not a big group!" So there you have it.

Best Burger: The hamburger at **Mike Ditka's Restaurant** tastes more like chopped steak and can easily feed two. Sports fans will be entertained by football memorabilia, and Bears fans can relive the glory days of former coach Mike Ditka, who owns the place. Take your kids to the main dining room, though, because the bar vicinity tends to get a little foggy with cigar smoke.

Best Barbecue: At longtime city favorite **Carson's**, \$20 gets you a full slab (nearly 2 pounds' worth) of incredible baby-back ribs, accompanied by a bowl of Carson's almost-as-famous coleslaw and a choice of potatoes.

Best Vegetarian: Vegetarians and veggie lovers alike will delight in the twist on fine dining served up at **Green Zebra**. The restaurant features "small plates" of veggie specialties, such as fennel risotto cake with a syrah reduction, and Hawaiian heart of palm with Kaffir lime and Thai basil chile.

Best Beer Garden: Chicago's favorite hometown beer, **Goose Island**, has a wonderful brewery and restaurant with a fantastic beer garden that welcomes families, too. Sample some of the brews on tap (and Goose Island's own root beer, for those not imbibing).

Best Family-Style Dining: **Maggiano's** is a mecca for Italian family-style dining. Heaping plates of pasta meant to be shared make Maggiano's a good choice for a budget-conscious (and hungry!) family. Everything on the menu is super-sized. Most steaks are more than a pound, and the full pasta dishes weigh in at over 25 ounces. (You can also get half-portions:

You'd be amazed at how large even a 14-ounce portion of pasta can be!) You're expected to share dishes, pass things around, and try a little bit of everything.

Best Hot Dog: Gold Coast Dogs, a River North fast-food stand, serves up the authentic item, meaning a Vienna All-Beef Frank slathered with mustard, green relish, chopped onion, sliced tomato, hot peppers, and celery salt. Your kids may be brave enough to ask for and receive ketchup, but as an adult, I wouldn't risk the disapproving, raised-eye-brow look you'll get from the counter staff. You can round out the meal with cheese fries, made from Idaho potatoes and topped with a generous glob of Wisconsin cheddar.

Best Pizza: In the town where deep-dish pies were born, Chicagoans take their out-of-town relatives to **Gino's East** or **Lou Malnati's** to taste the real thing: mouthwatering slabs of pizza loaded with fresh ingredients atop delectably sweet crusts. Lou's fan base is so enamored that the restaurant has instituted a popular overnight mail-order business to get expat Chicagoans with a deep-dish jones over the hump.

Best Fast Food: Even though you're in the hometown of McDonald's, my vote goes to **foodlife** in Water Tower Place, a food court exemplar with everything from Asian noodles to pizza to smoothies.

Best Brunch: Cajun and Southern cooking is in store for you at **Wishbone**. Outsider art, bright colors, and a bustling crowd make this a great place for kids. A diverse crowd, from Harpo Studios employees (Oprah is headquartered around the corner) to businesspeople in suits and ad-agency types, frequent the place. For brunch, try the salmon cakes.

Best Neighborhood Hangout: **Stanley's** is a classic Lincoln Park restaurant with a family-friendly bent. When you walk in, there's a bar, but the adjacent dining room feels as though you've entered someone's family room, decorated with photos, quilts, bowling trophies, and children's drawings. On Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., there's an all-you-can-eat brunch buffet, featuring make-your-own omelets, build-your-own-Belgian waffles, home-fried potatoes, fried chicken, and mashed potatoes. Daily specials are posted on the chalkboard out front.

For more information on the restaurants listed in this section, see Chapter 10.

The Best Museums

Best Museum for Older Children: Yes, the biggest *T. rex* fossil ever unearthed resides at Chicago's **Field Museum of Natural History**. As long as you're going to see "Sue" (if you're on a first-name basis with the famous *T. rex*), you can check out an entire "campus" of museums nearby, including the **Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum** and

the John G. Shedd Aquarium. Farther south in Hyde Park, the incomparable **Museum of Science and Industry** wows kids and adults with a real-life U-boat submarine that's been completely refurbished and placed in a new indoor exhibit, as well as an airplane, an ant colony, a doll-house, and more.

Best Museum for Younger Children: The **Shedd**, the nation's largest (and oldest) indoor aquarium, is housed in a spectacular 1929 Beaux Arts structure. The aquarium revamped and improved facilities to celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2005.

Best Art Museum: Downtown, the **Art Institute of Chicago** is a great starting point for seeing masterpieces.

Best Museum for Exploring the Outdoors Indoors: Located in Lincoln Park, the **Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum** is an environmental museum for the 21st century and boasts kid-friendly hands-on exhibits.

For more information on the museums in this section, see Chapter 11.

The Best Nature

Best Park: The city's latest and greatest urban project welcomed flocks of visitors in its first month alone, and for good reason. The 25-acre **Millennium Park** sets a new standard for what an urban park can be. With sculptures you can touch and feel (and in one case, splash around in), it's also home to a spectacular Frank Gehry-designed band shell and pedestrian bridge. And of course, the sentimental favorite is **Lincoln Park**, worth at least a few hours' stroll.

Best Golf Course: Within Grant Park on Monroe Street between Columbus and Lake Shore drives, you may want to putt around at **The Green at Grant Park**, an 18-hole putting course (and with its beautifully landscaped greens, you'll recognize immediately that this is *not* your usual miniature-golf course).

Best Beach: In Lincoln Park, stroll the lakefront path, and whether you're coming from the north or south, eventually, you'll see the North Avenue pedestrian bridge that crosses Lake Shore Drive. Walk over the lanes of traffic, and you'll find Chicago's number-one summer-fun destination: **North Avenue Beach.** Join Chicagoans at the lake in a game of beach volleyball, or simply walk, run, or relax.

Best View: Lively, renovated **Navy Pier** has become the city's number-one tourist destination over the last decade. The view as you walk out on the pier, and then turn and watch the city glimmer in the twilight, is among the best in the world.

For more information on the listings in this section, see Chapters 11 and 14.

Second City, Third Coast

Although it may surprise residents of the first two coasts (East and West, that is), Chicagoans consider themselves residents of the Third Coast — Lake Michigan's shore. Thanks to the foresight of city founders who, in 1836, wrote that the lakefront was a public ground "to remain forever open, clear, and free" from construction, the shore has no warehouses or shipping docks. More than half of Chicago's 2,800 acres of lakefront were created by filling in the lake and building a string of splendid lakeshore parks. The result? Thirty miles of sand beaches, green lawns, beds of flowers, and bicycle paths.

The Best Culture

Best Opera: A perennial favorite is the **Lyric Opera**, one of the nation's best opera companies, which amazes with top-notch productions at the Civic Opera House on the banks of the Chicago River in the Loop. The opera sells out every performance, but don't worry: Subscription holders hand in unused tickets before the performance, so you can still get some great seats if you know where to look.

Best Symphony: Now under the direction of Dutch-born principal conductor Bernard Haitink (well-known conductor Daniel Barenboim's term ended in 2006), the **Chicago Symphony Orchestra** is world-class.

Best Ballet: Chicago has adopted the **Joffrey Ballet**, which does a sumptuous production of *The Nutcracker* each holiday season in the spectacular setting of the Auditorium Theatre, one of Chicago's architectural gems.

Best Theater: Excellent theater companies include the **Goodman**, **Steppenwolf**, and **Victory Gardens** theaters. Steppenwolf, in Lincoln Park, focuses on new American works, as well as adaptations and reconsidered revivals of older plays. The Goodman has a more traditional repertoire and includes some musicals each season. Victory Gardens stages world-premier plays, which the rest of the U.S. theater scene keeps an eye on, in a new home, the former **Biograph Theater** in Lincoln Park. Other theater highlights include the refurbished **Oriental** and **Palace** theaters and two top-notch facilities in their respective genres, the **Chicago Shakespeare Theater** on Navy Pier and the **Old Town School of Folk Music theater and education center**, which presents traditional and contemporary folk music from around the world.



If you skip Chicago's theater scene, you just may miss out on the next Broadway hit. Two of the most widely applauded Broadway productions of the past few years started at the Goodman Theater: Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, starring Brian Dennehy, and Eugene O'Neill's *Moon*

for the Misbegotten, with Cherry Jones and Gabriel Byrne. *The Producers*, starring Matthew Broderick and Nathan Lane, debuted in Chicago before taking New York by storm.

Best Comedy: Nobody does comedy better than **The Second City**, a training ground for comedians such as John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd, Bill Murray, and Chris Farley. Other companies are on the rise: Improv fans should also check out **ImprovOlympics**, located near Wrigley Field, for cutting-edge comedy performed by teams.

For more information on the performing arts events listed in this section, refer to Chapters 15 and 16.

The Best Live Music

Best Blues: Chicago is the blues capital of the world. And if you get to know this style of music, you may gain a greater appreciation for other popular forms, such as jazz and rock 'n' roll. Nothing is quite as sweet as hanging out at **Buddy Guy's Legends** on a Thursday night and discovering that the man seated next to you is B. B. King's drummer, visiting Chicago on a rare night off. Even if you don't love the blues, do yourself a favor and check it out when you're here.

Best Rock: You can't do better than **Metro**, housed on North Clark Street in an old theater (they just removed all the seats). It's one of Chicago's best live-music venues, intimate but not too small, and the launching pad for great local bands gone international, like the Smashing Pumpkins and Ministry.

Best Small Venues: One of the city's most intimate rooms for live music is at **Schuba's Tavern and the Harmony Grill** on North Southport Avenue. The style here is eclectic, with sounds ranging from rock to funk to the occasional mariachi band. You'll find everything from local bands on their way up to national acts still loyal to Schuba's. It's general admission (mostly standing, with some seats) and has the added bonus of having the Harmony Grill connected to it — this atmospheric former Schlitz Brewery tap house built around 1900 still offers Schlitz beer in bottles.

Best Eclectic Music: **Elbo Room** is one of the top venues for music in the city, located on North Lincoln Avenue. Upstairs, there's a cocktail lounge with a full bar. Downstairs, you'll find the stage, with seating along the walls. It's sweaty, crowded, and filled with lovers of live music from ska to hip-hop.

For more information on music venues, head to Chapter 16.

Chapter 2

Digging Deeper into Chicago

In This Chapter

- Immersing yourself in Chicago history
- Scoping out the skyline: Chicago's famous architectural heritage
- Familiarizing yourself through books and movies

Here's a little background to make it easier for you to hit the ground running, so you can better enjoy Chicago. In this chapter, you get easy-to-digest cultural information, with a historical timeline, architectural highlights, culinary tidbits, local lingo, and recommended reading and films so that you can discover Chicago's uniqueness.

History 101: The Main Events

Chicago has a long and illustrious history that began in the late 1600s, when two French explorers discovered a portage that linked the Great Lakes with the Mississippi River valley. From then on, there was no looking back!

Chicago timeline: 1673–2007

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|-------------|--|
| 1673 | French explorers Marquette and Joliet discover portage at Chicago linking the Great Lakes region with the Mississippi River valley. |
| 1779 | Afro-French-Canadian trapper Jean Baptiste Point du Sable establishes a trading post on the north bank of the Chicago River. A settlement follows two years later. |
| 1794 | General "Mad" Anthony Wayne defeats the British in the Battle of Fallen Timbers; the disputed Illinois Territory is finally ceded to the young American Republic by treaty a year later. |

- 1803** Garrison of Fort Dearborn is established in Chicago, commanded by the grandfather of artist James McNeill Whistler.
- 1812** Incited by the British in the War of 1812, Potawatomi Indians destroy Fort Dearborn and slay its residents.
- 1816** Fort Dearborn is rebuilt.
- 1818** Illinois is admitted to the Union as the 21st state.
- 1837** Chicago is incorporated as a city, with about 4,000 residents.
- 1847** The *Chicago Tribune* begins publishing.
- 1856** Chicago is chief railroad center in the United States.
- 1865** Chicago stockyards are founded.
- 1870** The city's population numbers almost 300,000, making it perhaps the fastest-growing metropolis in history.
- 1871** The Great Chicago Fire burns large sections of the city; rebuilding begins while the ashes are still warm.
- 1882** The ten-story Montauk Building, the world's first skyscraper, is erected.
- 1892** The city's first elevated train goes into operation.
- 1893** Completely recovered from the Great Fire, Chicago hosts its first World's Fair, the World's Columbian Exposition. The world's first Ferris wheel is a big draw.
- 1908** The Chicago Cubs win their second World Series. They haven't won one since!
- 1917** The Chicago White Sox win the World Series. They don't win again until the next century!
- 1919** "Black Sox" bribery scandal perpetrated by eight Chicago White Sox players stuns baseball.
- 1920–1933** During Prohibition, Chicago becomes a "wide-open town"; rival mobs battle violently throughout the city for control of distribution and sale of illegal alcohol.
- 1929** On St. Valentine's Day, Al Capone's gang murders seven members of rival George "Bugs" Moran's crew in a Clark Street garage.
- 1931** Al Capone finally goes to jail, not for bootlegging or murder, but for tax evasion.
- 1934** Bank robber and "Public Enemy Number One" John Dillinger is gunned down by police outside the Biograph Theater.

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|-------------|--|
| 1942 | Scientists, led by Enrico Fermi, create the world's first nuclear chain reaction under Stagg Field at the University of Chicago. |
| 1953 | Chicago native Hugh Hefner starts publishing <i>Playboy</i> (the original Playboy Mansion was located in Chicago's Gold Coast neighborhood). |
| 1955 | Richard J. Daley begins his first term as mayor; he is widely regarded as the "last of the big-city bosses." |
| 1960 | John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon hold the first televised presidential debate in WBBM-TV's studios. |
| 1966 | Civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., moves to Chicago to lead a fair housing campaign. |
| 1968 | After King's assassination, much of the West Side burns during heavy rioting. Anti-Vietnam War protests in conjunction with the Democratic National Convention end in a police riot and a "shoot to kill" order by Mayor Richard J. Daley. |
| 1974 | The 1,454-foot Sears Tower is completed, becoming the tallest building in the world. |
| 1979 | Jane Byrne becomes the first woman elected mayor of Chicago. |
| 1983 | Harold Washington becomes the first African-American mayor of Chicago. |
| 1986 | The Chicago Bears win their only Super Bowl to date. |
| 1989 | Richard M. Daley, the son of the long-serving mayor, is elected mayor. |
| 1999 | Michael Jordan, arguably the best basketball player ever, retires (for the second time) after leading the Chicago Bulls to six NBA Championships in the previous eight years. |
| 2000 | The Goodman Theatre opens its new \$46-million theater complex in the Loop, completing the revitalization of the downtown theater district. |
| 2001 | Chicago's second airport, Midway, opens a new \$800-million terminal, giving travelers more options for Chicago flights. |
| 2004 | Millennium Park, Chicago's largest public works project in decades, opens at the north end of Grant Park. The centerpiece is a modern, steel-sheathed band shell designed by famed architect Frank Gehry. |
| 2005 | The Chicago White Sox bring home the first World Series championship to the city since 1917, defeating the Houston Astros. |
| 2007 | Da Bears make it to Super Bowl XLI, but fall to Indianapolis. |

Building Blocks: Local Architecture

One advantage to having your city burn to the ground: You can rebuild it with style. Thanks to the Great Fire of 1871, Chicago's architects were able to start over and "make no small plans," as city planner and visionary Daniel Burnham said. Chicago is the birthplace of modern architecture and the skyscraper. Chicago is home to 45 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe buildings and 75 Frank Lloyd Wright buildings, plus dozens by the first Chicago school and the second Chicago school. Enough said? The **Chicago Architecture Foundation** helps visitors discover the city's architectural gems (see Chapter 11).

Taste of Chicago: Local Cuisine

If you have to eat while you're here, you're in luck. Food doesn't get much better than the Mexican cuisine at **Frontera Grill**, the ribs at **Twin Anchors**, the burgers at **Mike Ditka's Restaurant**, the sushi at **Mirai Sushi**, or the Italian at **Tuscany on Taylor** in Little Italy. And if that's not enough, how about steak and mammoth baked potatoes slathered in butter at **Gibson's** or deep-dish pizza at **Gino's East**? Oh, I can't neglect to mention Italian beef sandwiches and garlicky Chicago hot dogs. (See Chapter 10 for restaurants and light bites.) And don't forget to finish off your meal with a conch-shell sundae oozing with warm, homemade hot fudge (or, yum, homemade butterscotch) from **Margie's Candies**. Feeling hungry yet?

Word to the Wise: The Local Lingo

National news anchors aspire to the flat vowels and plain language of the Midwest. You should have no problem understanding the inhabitants of this, the most Midwestern of cities. With the exception of "Da Bears" and a few other local phrases, Chicago-ese is easy on the ears.

Background Check: Recommended Books and Movies

So many great American writers have come from Chicago, lived here during their productive years, or set their work within the city's confines that it's impossible to recommend a single book that says everything about Chicago. However, here are a few suggestions to get you started.

Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* tells the tale of a young immigrant encountering the filthy, brutal city. Its 1906 publication caused an uproar that led

Master builders: Sullivan, Wright, and Mies

Visitors from around the world flock to Chicago to see the groundbreaking work of three major architects: Sullivan, Wright, and Mies. They all lived and worked in the Windy City, leaving behind a legacy of innovative structures that still inspire architects today. Here's the rundown on each of them:

Louis Sullivan (1865–1924)

Quote: "Form ever follows function."

Chicago buildings: Auditorium Building, 430 S. Michigan Ave. (Adler & Sullivan, 1887–1889); James Charnley House, 1365 Astor St. (Adler & Sullivan, with Frank Lloyd Wright, 1892); and Carson Pirie Scott & Co., 1 S. State St. (1899, 1903, with later additions).

Innovations: Father of the Chicago school, Sullivan was perhaps at his most original in the creation of his intricate, nature-inspired ornamentation, examples of which cover the entrance to Carson Pirie Scott & Co.

Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959)

Quote: "Nature is my manifestation of God."

Chicago buildings: Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio, 951 Chicago Ave., Oak Park (1889–1911); Unity Temple, 875 Lake St., Oak Park (1905–1908); The Rookery, 209 S. LaSalle St. (interior renovation, 1907); and Frederick C. Robie House, 5757 S. Woodlawn Ave., Hyde Park (1909).

Innovations: While in Chicago, Wright developed the architecture of the Prairie School, a largely residential style combining natural materials, an intercommunication between interior and exterior spaces, and the sweeping horizontals of the Midwestern landscape. (For tours of Wright's home and studio, see Chapter 11.)

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969)

Quote: "Less is more."

Chicago buildings: 860–880 N. Lake Shore Dr. (1949–1951); S. R. Crown Hall, 3360 S. State St. (1956); and Chicago Federal Center, Dearborn Street between Adams Street and Jackson Boulevard (1959–1974).

Innovations: Mies van der Rohe brought the office tower of steel and glass to the United States. His stark facades don't immediately reveal his careful attention to details and materials.

to the passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act. James T. Farrell's trilogy *Studs Lonigan*, published in the 1930s, explores the power of ethnic and neighborhood identity in Chicago. Other novels set in Chicago include Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* and *Humboldt's Gift*, Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, and Richard Wright's *Native Son*.

For an engrossing overview of the city's history, read *City of the Century* by Donald Miller; an excellent PBS special based on the book is also available on video and DVD. For a contemporary look at life in Chicago, take a look at two books that give a human face to the city's shameful public-housing history: Daniel Coyle's *Hardball: A Season in the Projects*, the true story of youngsters on a Little League baseball team from Cabrini Green; and Alex Kotlowitz's *There Are No Children Here*, a portrait of children growing up in the Robert Taylor homes.

And, of course, no one has given a voice to the people of Chicago as have the estimable Studs Terkel, whose books *Division Street: America*, *Working*, and *Chicago* are based on interviews with Chicagoans from every neighborhood and income level; and the late newspaper columnist Mike Royko, author of perhaps the definitive account of Chicago machine politics, *Boss*. His columns have been collected in *One More Time: The Best of Mike Royko* and *For The Love of Mike: More of the Best of Mike Royko*.

Chicago became a popular setting for feature films and television shows in the 1980s and 1990s, and the trend continues today. For a look at Chicago on the silver screen, check out *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986), the ultimate teenage wish-fulfillment fantasy; *The Fugitive* (1993), which used the city's El trains as an effective backdrop; and *My Best Friend's Wedding* (1997).

For many Chicagoans, though, the quintessential hometown movie scene is the finale to *The Blues Brothers* (1980), which features a multicar pileup in the center of downtown Daley Plaza. Of course, others argue that the Oscar-winning musical *Chicago* (2002) sings the praises of Chicago — 1920s Chicago, that is — like no other. And don't forget *Barbershop* (2002) and its sequel, *Barbershop 2: Back in Business* (2004), both offering a view of contemporary South Side Chicago from a seat in a neighborhood barbershop. And millions of people visit Chicago (or at least its fictional "County General" hospital) each week on the long-running TV series *ER*.

Chapter 3

Deciding When to Go

In This Chapter

- Weighing the pros and cons of winter, spring, summer, and fall
- Checking out the facts and fallacies about Chicago weather
- Tracking a month-by-month schedule of special events

When should you go to Chicago? That depends. What kind of weather do you like? Chicago has it all — sometimes within a day! No doubt you've heard the wisecracks about Chicago's weather (that is, the city has only two seasons — winter and August) It's a bit of a cliché, but like many of those, there's some truth to it.

Chicago weather does hit the extremes. And it's oh-so-changeable. I've left my apartment on a sunny, summer day in jeans and a T-shirt only to witness the temperature drop 15°F in 15 minutes and find myself pining for a sweater. In this chapter, I tell you what you need to know about the city's ever-changing seasons, as well as its many festivals, so you can determine your ideal time to go.

Revealing the Secrets of the Seasons

Most Chicago visitors find the ideal times to visit are late spring and early fall. In the **spring**, you soak up blossoms, blooms, and equable temperatures. Spring in Chicago may be short, but it's invigorating and widely welcomed. Some Chicagoans, eager for warm weather, lie out on roof-deck lounge chairs in 55°F April weather. **Fall**, with its golds, reds, and browns, provides crisp, clear days with idyllic balmy interludes. Pleasant weather sometimes lingers into late November.

Chicago has a reputation for being extremely cold in the **winter**. Daunting days of subzero temperatures and -40°F wind chills do occur. Salt trucks rumble incessantly over Chicago's frozen streets, and potholes almost large enough to swallow cars bring rush-hour traffic to a halt. **Summer** isn't exactly a piece of cake, either: During the dog days, you may have whole strings of days when temperatures stay in the 90s and high humidity drains your energy.

But those are the extremes. Lake Michigan has a moderating effect on Chicago weather, air-conditioning the city in summer and warming the cold in the winter. (Of course, in the Windy City, the lake also has a negative effect — the same breeze that cuts the humidity in the summer can bite straight through the thickest down jacket in the winter.)



Table 3-1 gives you the lowdown on the average temperatures in Chicago. Remember, though, that these are only averages. You may want to pack an outfit or two for cooler or warmer weather, depending on when you plan to travel. For all of my tips on packing, see Chapter 7.

Table 3-1 Chicago's Average Temperatures and Precipitation

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
High (°F/°C)	29/ -1.5	34/ 11	46/ 7.5	59/ 15	70/ 21	80/ 26	84/ 29	82/ 28	75/ 24	63/ 17	48/ 9	34/ 1
Low (°F/°C)	13/ -10.5	17/ -8	28/ -2	39/ 4	48/ 9	58/ 14.5	63/ 17	62/ 16.5	54/ 12	42/ 5.5	32/ 0	19/ -7
Rainfall (in./cm.)	1.6/ 4.11	.4/ 3.6	2.7/ 6.9	3.6/ 9.1	3.3/ 8.4	3.7/ 9.4	4.2/ 10.7	3.8/ 9.7	2.4/ 6.1	2.9/ 7.4	2.8/ 7.1	2.5/ 6.4

What follows is a rundown of the pros and cons of each season.

Springtime in Chicago

Many of Chicago's 33 million annual visitors choose spring for their travels. What follows are the best reasons to go to Chicago in the springtime:

- ✓ It's warming up! Days are longer. The city begins to wake up after a long winter's nap.
- ✓ Chicago plants thousands of tulips and daffodils, which pop up optimistically during the season and brighten the streetscape.



But keep in mind the following springtime pitfalls:

- ✓ Just because the days are warming up doesn't mean that the weather is necessarily nice. Strong winds can blow, and buckets of rain can fall during long strings of gray days.
- ✓ Spring is the time of year (along with winter) when theater shows may close for a week. **Remember:** Performers need vacations, too.
- ✓ You're a bit in limbo as far as events go. Festivals don't start until June, and you're too late for the holiday season and the decorations.

Summer in the city

Ahhh, summer. Lazy days and quiet nights. . . . Well, not in Chicago! Summer is festival time. Knowing what lies on the other side of the calendar (winter!), Chicagoans jam-pack their summers full of outdoor activities — so much so that the choice of activities on weekends can be overwhelming. Consider these points:

- ✓ The air may be hot and humid, but you can usually count on a cool lake breeze. If you're venturing to the suburbs, however, the temperatures there can be 10°F higher.
- ✓ Everyone is outside, soaking up the good weather. People stay out late, eating and drinking at sidewalk cafes.
- ✓ The weather is often perfect for taking boat cruises, strolling along Navy Pier, and enjoying other activities on the lakefront.



But, again, keep in mind the following:

- ✓ Festivals can be hot and cramped. (Then again, that's the point, right?)
- ✓ Because of the heat, everyone is at the lake, making the area a contested free-for-all: inline skaters skating into bikers who are biking into runners who are running into Fido, who just broke off his leash!
- ✓ School is out, and the kid-oriented attractions are swarming. Be prepared to leave extra time for parking and standing in line at attractions such as the John G. Shedd Aquarium, Sears Tower Skydeck, and Museum of Science and Industry.

A fall to remember

In my opinion, fall is a beautiful time of year — no matter where you are. Here are some autumn bonuses for the Chicago scene:

- ✓ You get the best weather in the fall — still warm enough, but not so hot and humid that you're going to have a meltdown. You have the best shot at an uninterrupted string of beautiful days.
- ✓ The cultural scene is back in swing, with openings for the opera and symphony seasons.



You should look out for some things, however:

- ✓ Convention season is in full swing. Getting a hotel room or restaurant table can be a challenge. And if you do, you may find yourself surrounded by dozens of computer geeks . . . or dentists . . . or restaurant owners. Then again, you may enjoy that!
- ✓ Beware of unpredictable September or October Indian summer heat waves. (Don't forget the shorts and sunscreen — just in case.)

Winter in the Midwest

Winter brings visions of softly falling snowflakes, but the reality is that those lovely snowflakes result in slick roads and salt trucks. Consider the following when planning a winter vacation in Chicago:



- ✓ During the holidays, the city looks beautiful. All of Michigan Avenue is lit up. Chicago goes all-out with Christmas decorations.
- ✓ Hotel prices sink during the slowest weeks of the winter (post-holidays, that is), making the search for that good room at a great rate much easier.
- ✓ After Christmas, a peaceful hush settles over the city. You can have Michigan Avenue to yourself on the weekdays. After-holiday sales keep the stores busy on the weekends, but otherwise, you can pretend that the city is all yours.
- ✓ Mayor Daley has made an effort to make Chicago attractive to tourists in the winter with events such as WinterBreak Chicago, which fills the month of February with a series of blues concerts and more.



Winter does have its downsides, however. Consider the following:

- ✓ December is a bad month for crowds. Michigan Avenue is packed, literally — so much so that making your way down the street can be a challenge.
- ✓ Between conventions, family vacations, and savvy travelers, winter is rapidly becoming a more popular time to visit. Tourists are discovering that winter is Chicago's bargain season, but (so far) the cold months are still the least crowded.
- ✓ Did I mention winter's chilly temperatures?
- ✓ Because business is slow, hotels, restaurants, and stores take the opportunity to renovate, meaning that various areas that serve the public may be closed for maintenance purposes.
- ✓ Winter is the other time of year (along with springtime) when shows may close for a week.

Perusing a Calendar of Events



Chicago abounds with ethnic parades and other lively events — most of them free and packed with locals. You can choose from among a wide array of events, no matter what the month. The food, music, art, and flower fairs have established niches in the city's yearly schedule, along with the parades and street celebrations staged by many of Chicago's numerous ethnic groups. Pick your time, choose your interest, and enjoy.

The best way to stay on top of the current crop of events is to ask the **Chicago Office of Tourism** (☎ 312-744-2400) or the **Illinois Bureau of Tourism** (☎ 800-2CONNECT) to mail you a copy of *Chicago Calendar of Events*, an excellent quarterly publication that lists and describes special events, including museum exhibitions, concert and theatrical performances, parades, and street festivals. Also ask to be sent the latest material produced by the **Mayor's Office of Special Events** (☎ 312-744-3315) or the **Special Events Hot Line** (☎ 312-744-3370), which keeps current with citywide and neighborhood festivals. The Chicago and Illinois offices of tourism also jointly operate a useful Web site at www.877chicago.com.



Remember that new events may be added every year and that some events may be discontinued or rescheduled. Call ahead to the sponsoring organization, the Chicago Office of Tourism, or the Mayor's Office of Special Events to verify dates, times, and locations.

January

Opening Day seems far away, but those "wait-until-next-year" Cubbie fans never stop dreaming. The **Chicago Cubs Convention** (☎ 773-404-2827; http://chicago.cubs.mlb.com/chc/community/com_convention.jsp), held at the Chicago Hilton and Towers, hosts players signing autographs and collectors buying, selling, and swapping memorabilia.

Mid-January.

The **Chicago Boat, Sports, and RV Show** (☎ 312-946-6262; www.chicagoboatshow.com), held at McCormick Place, is for those who dream of spring. At the show, which has been held for over 70 years, you'll find boats, recreational vehicles, a climbing wall, and seminars on boating and fishing. Last week in January.

Just when you and the kids are going to go stark-raving nuts from cabin fever, the **Lincoln Park Conservatory** (☎ 312-742-7737; www.chicagoparkdistrict.com) and **Garfield Park Conservatory** (☎ 312-746-5100; www.garfield-conservatory.org) come alive with model trains winding their way through fields of poinsettias in the **Winter Flower and Train Show**. Early January.

February

A twisting dragon joins a fierce-looking lion dancer in the **Chinese New Year Parade** (☎ 312-326-5320; www.chicagochinatown.org) that winds its colorful way from Wentworth Avenue at 24th Place to Princeton Avenue and Cermak Road in Chinatown. Sunday following the Chinese New Year (between Jan 21 and Feb 19, depending on the lunar calendar). In 2008, the Year of the Rat begins on February 7.

In the dead of winter, come fantasize about convertibles and get your hands on the shiniest, newest automobiles for the coming year at the **Chicago Auto Show** (☎ 630-495-2282; www.chicagoautoshow.com).

Presented since 1901, this show at McCormick Place attracts close to a million car owners and wannabe owners. Mid-February.

Watch more than 10,000 American Kennel Club dogs strut their stuff at the **International Cluster of Dog Shows** (☎ 773-237-5100; www.ikcdogshow.com) held at McCormick Place South. Third week in February.

March

A Chicago tradition since the 1840s, the **St. Patrick's Day Parade** along Dearborn Street from Wacker Drive to Van Buren Street brings out a celebrity grand marshal, local pols, and union bosses. The Chicago River is dyed green for the big day. Saturday closest to March 17.

The **Spring Flower Shows**, held at Lincoln Park Conservatory (☎ 312-742-7737; www.chicagoparkdistrict.com) and Garfield Park Conservatory (☎ 312-746-5100), feature lilies, daffodils, tulips, pansies, and other flowering perennials. Usually begins the week before Easter.

April

Neither rain nor sleet nor snow nor hail (all very real possibilities in early spring) keeps eternally hopeful Cubs fans away from Wrigley Field or White Sox fans away from U.S. Cellular Field on **Opening Day**. Call ☎ 773-404-2827 (www.chicagocubs.com) for the Cubs, or ☎ 312-674-1000 (<http://chicago.whitesox.mlb.com>) for the White Sox. Generally during the first week of April.

May

Wright Plus Tour (☎ 708-848-1976; www.wrightplus.org), at the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio in Oak Park is an annual tour that allows for a glimpse inside the brilliant mind of the architect. The tour includes ten buildings, including Wright's home and studio, Unity Temple, and several other notable Oak Park buildings, in both Prairie and Victorian styles. Tickets go on sale March 1 and sell out quickly.

Art Chicago (☎ 312-266-4700; www.artchicago.com), at Butler Field in Grant Park, at Monroe Street and Lake Shore Drive, is one of the country's largest international contemporary art fairs, with more than 200 art galleries and 2,000 artists participating. First weekend in May.



"Sweet Home Chicago" is "sweet home" to the **Chicago Blues Festival** (☎ 312-744-3315; www.chicagobluesfestival.org), a huge blues event in Grant Park. Admission is free and the lineup of artists gets better every year. At festival time, a bus shuttles aficionados between the city's numerous blues clubs. End of May or early June.

The Ferris Wheel and Carousel and Pier Walk, at Navy Pier, 600 E. Grand Ave. (☎ 312-595-PIER; www.navypier.com). Give your kids a

bird's-eye view of Chicago from the Ferris wheel (those who are less fond of heights can stay closer to earth on the carousel), when they start spinning again after a long winter's sleep. Another seasonal event along the water is **Pier Walk**, a temporary installation of more than 150 large-scale sculptures displayed along the pier's South Dock. May through October.

June

The **57th Street Art Fair** (☎ 773-493-3247; www.57thstreetartfair.org), at 57th and Kimbark streets in Hyde Park, is the oldest juried art fair in the Midwest — in 2007, it celebrates its 60th anniversary. Even kids will enjoy the festival, which also features arts-and-crafts projects and rides. First weekend in June.

Chicago Gospel Festival (☎ 312-744-3315; www.chicagogospelfestival.com), based at the Petrillo Music Shell, at Jackson Drive and Columbus Drive in Grant Park, is the largest outdoor, free-admission event of its kind. Blues may be the city's more famous musical export, but Chicago is also the birthplace of gospel music: Thomas Dorsey, the "father of gospel music," and the greatest gospel singer ever, Mahalia Jackson, were Southsiders. This three-day festival offers music on three stages with more than 40 performances. Early June.

Entertainment, readings, food, and books galore abound at **Printers Row Book Fair** (☎ 312-222-3986; www.chicagotribune.com/extras/printersrow), one of the nation's largest free outdoor book fairs, which is located on Dearborn Street between Polk and Congress. The first weekend in June.

Ravinia Festival (☎ 847-266-5100 for ticket reservations; www.ravinia.org), at Ravinia Park in suburban Highland Park, north of Chicago, is the open-air summer home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and many visiting performers, from Lyle Lovett to Tony Bennett to B. B. King. Summer wouldn't be summer without Ravinia — it's a Chicago tradition. Basically, it's an outdoor concert venue with a covered pavilion and plenty of lawn seating. Offerings range from classical to pop. Pack a picnic, jump on the Metra commuter railroad, and join the crowds sitting under the stars on the lawn. **Warning:** Ravinia is so popular that many of the first-rate visiting orchestras, chamber ensembles, pop artists, and dance companies sell out in advance. June through September.

Fine art from more than 200 painters, sculptors, and jewelry designers, plus an art auction, garden walk, food and drink, and children's art activities can all be found at the **Old Town Art Fair** (☎ 312-337-1938; www.oldtowntriangle.com), in the Old Town neighborhood at Lincoln Park West and Wisconsin Street. Second full weekend in June.

The **Grant Park Music Festival** (☎ 312-742-7638; www.grantparkmusicfestival.com), in Millennium Park's Jay Pritzker Pavilion, hosts free

outdoor musical concerts. Bring your blanket, picnic basket, and maybe even a Frisbee. Last week in June through August.

Head for Broadway to see the creative floats and colorful marching units in the **Chicago Pride Parade** (☎ 773-744-3315; www.chicagopride.com), celebrating the GLBT community. The route is Halsted Street from Belmont Avenue to Broadway, south to Diversey Parkway, and east to Lincoln Park. Last Sunday in June at noon.

Sample Carson's ribs, Eli's cheesecake, and Pizzeria Uno's pizza at **Taste of Chicago** (☎ 312-744-3315; www.tasteofchicago.us). This festival at Grant Park has close to 100 food booths to feed 3 million hungry visitors. The busiest day is July 3, because of the Independence Day fireworks that evening over the lake. Late June to early July.

The **Chicago Country Music Festival** (☎ 312-744-3315; www.chicagocountryfestival.com), held in Grant Park, is less claustrophobic than the Taste of Chicago, and it's held at the same time — best of all, it's free. You'll see big-name entertainers of the country-music genre. Late June (during the first weekend of Taste of Chicago).

July

Fireworks (launched from barges in Monroe Harbor), concerts, and spirited marches mark the **Independence Day Celebration** (☎ 312-744-3315) in Grant Park. Running concurrently with Taste of Chicago, its crowds are enormous: Take public transportation. July 3.

The 33-year-old **Sheffield Garden Walk** (☎ 773-929-9255; www.sheffieldfestivals.org) allows you to snoop around the private gardens of Lincoln Park homeowners who live around Sheffield and Webster avenues. Food and drink vendors, live bands, and more make this a hopping event for Lincoln Park singles. Mid-July.

You won't believe the crowds — or the big-name bands — that the city's oldest church turns out for the **Old St. Patrick's World's Largest Block Party**, 700 W. Adams at Des Plaines Avenue (☎ 312-648-1021; www.worldslargestblockparty.com). The admission price is steep — around \$35 — but we're talking six bands over two nights on two stages, plus all the beer you can drink (and people do drink all they possibly can). Mid-July.

The **Venetian Night Boat Parade** (☎ 312-744-3315; www.cityofchicago.org/specialevents) of beautifully decorated and illuminated boats takes place to elaborate fireworks and music by the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, performing works by Italian composers. Events take place along the water at Monroe Harbor. End of July.



August

The **Chicago Air & Water Show** (☎ 312-744-3315; www.cityofchicago.org/specialevents) showcases action on, in, and over Lake Michigan, with stunt pilots and skydivers, wing walkers and precision flyers, plus water-skiing, windsurfing, and air-sea rescue. You'll have a hard time ignoring the show (unless you're oblivious to sonic booms, C-130 cargo planes, stealth bombers, and F-16 fighters roaring over your head). Hugely popular are the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds, who usually make an appearance. If you bring a portable radio, you can tune into WBBM (780 AM) to hear the show. Then, you can plant yourself on any beach up and down the lakefront and avoid the crowds at North Avenue Beach. Mid-August.

The **Chicago Jazz Festival** (☎ 312-744-3315; www.chicagojazzfestival.org), in Grant Park, attracts national names. Jam sessions at local jazz clubs stretch into the wee hours. Labor Day weekend.

September

Boulevard Lakefront Bike Tour (☎ 312-42-PEDAL; www.chicagobikefed.org) is a 10-mile leisurely tour that lets you explore the city, from neighborhoods and the lakefront to Chicago's historic link of parks and boulevards. It starts and ends at the University of Chicago in Hyde Park, which hosts the annual Bike Expo, with vendors and entertainment, the same day. A Sunday in mid-September.

Around the Coyote (☎ 773-342-6777; www.aroundthecoyote.org) hosts one of the nation's largest concentrations of artists. Tour hundreds of artists' studios and see music performances and fashion shows in the Wicker Park and Bucktown neighborhoods. Second weekend in September.

Chicago is home to the nation's second-largest Mexican-American population, and the **Mexican Independence Day Parade** (☎ 312-744-3315), along Dearborn Street between Wacker Drive and Van Buren Street, is always a big event. Another parade (☎ 773-521-5387), is held on the next day on 26th Street in the Little Village neighborhood. Mid-September.

A relative newcomer to the scene, **World Music Festival Chicago** (☎ 312-744-6630; www.ci.chi.il.us/WorldMusic) — the City's Department of Cultural Affairs' major undertaking — brings in top performers from Zimbabwe to Sri Lanka and Hungary and points in between. It's been hugely popular, so call early for schedules and tickets; many performances sell out. Shows are a mix of free and ticketed performances (most are \$10 or less). The Museum of Contemporary Art, the Chicago Cultural Center, the Old Town School of Folk Music, and the Hot House host many of the performances. Throughout September.

Celtic Fest Chicago (☎ 312-744-3315; www.cityofchicago.org/specialevents), at the Petrillo Music Shell in Grant Park, at Jackson

Drive and Columbus Drive, is the city's newest music festival, celebrating the music and dance of Celtic traditions from around the world. Mid-September.

October

One of Chicago's largest parades — the **Columbus Day Parade** (**312-828-0010**) — lasts two hours, includes more than 200 bands and floats, and features a celebrity grand marshal. (President George H. W. Bush and Barbara Bush have served, as did the late Joe DiMaggio.) The route is Columbus Drive from Balbo to Monroe streets. Closest Monday to October 12, at around noon.

The world-class **Chicago Marathon** (**312-904-9800**; www.chicagomarathon.com) begins and ends in Grant Park and usually attracts many elite runners who hope to attempt world-record times because the course is flat and, therefore, fast. Mid-October.

The **Chicago International Film Festival** (**312-332-3456**; www.chicagofilmfestival.org), the oldest competitive film festival in the country, has screenings for more than two weeks at theaters across the city. Mid-to late October.

November

State Street Thanksgiving Parade (**312-751-5681**; www.chicagofestivals.org) is an annual event that takes place on Thanksgiving morning beginning at 8:30 a.m. The parade marches up State Street, from Congress to Randolph. Fourth Thursday in November.



Disney sponsors the **Magnificent Mile Lights Festival** (**312-642-3570**; www.themagnificentmile.com), a colorful parade of characters that makes its way south on Michigan Avenue from Oak Street to the Chicago River. As the parade passes, lights are illuminated block by block. Carolers, elves, and minstrels appear with Santa along the avenue all day and into the evening. Saturday before Thanksgiving.

Chicago Humanities Festival (**312-661-1028**; www.chfestival.org) takes over locations all over downtown, from libraries to concert halls. Over 11 days, the festival presents performances, readings, and symposiums tied to an annual theme (recent themes included "Brains & Beauty" and "Crime & Punishment"). Expect appearances by major authors, scholars, and policymakers, all at a very reasonable price (\$5 per event). Early November.

The **Christmas Tree Lighting** (**312-744-3315**), at Daley Center Plaza in the Loop, is magical, as the switch is flipped around dusk. Day after Thanksgiving.

Colorful illuminated displays brighten long nights during the holidays at the **Zoo Lights Festival** (**312-742-2000**; www.lpzoo.com), at Lincoln

Park Zoo, 2200 N. Cannon Dr. Another special tradition is the annual Caroling to the Animals, a daylong songfest on a Saturday early in the month. Late November through the first week in January.

December

Performances of *A Christmas Carol*, an annual favorite for more than two decades, take place in the Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn St. (☎ 312-443-3800; www.goodmantheatre.org), in the North Loop theater district. Call early for tickets — the show sells out. Thanksgiving to the end of December.

The free tickets to Chicago's annual interactive choral event, the **Do-It-Yourself Messiah** (www.lasallebank.com/messiah), sponsored by LaSalle Bank, are much in demand. The choral director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducts this event, held at Orchestra Hall. Mid-December.

Don't miss *The Nutcracker*, performed by the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago, at the historic Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Congress Pkwy. (☎ 312-739-0120 or 312-559-1212; www.joffrey.com). The esteemed company performs its Victorian-American twist on this holiday classic. Late November to mid-December.

On **New Year's Eve**, Chicago stages a massive midnight fireworks display at Navy Pier, where you also find a big party with dancing into the wee hours. Call ☎ 312-595-7437 or go to www.navypier.com for information. December 31.

Part II

Planning Your Trip to Chicago

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Welcome to our nonstop flight to Chicago.
Will you be sitting in first class or a
bit nearer the stockyards?"

In this part . . .

Anticipation — it's one of the most enjoyable aspects of traveling. In this part, I help you plan your trip, starting with a review of the pros and cons of Chicago's two airports and moving on to budgeting and transportation. Should you rent a car or take the El? Should you join a tour or create your own itinerary? What assistance is available for those with special travel needs and interests? You find all the information you need right here.

Chapter 4

Managing Your Money

In This Chapter

- ▶ Figuring out how much money is enough
 - ▶ Budgeting like a pro: Where to splurge, where to save
 - ▶ Locating ATMs
 - ▶ Being streetwise with your wallet or handbag
 - ▶ Coping with a lost or stolen wallet
-

Chicago has a way of eating up your money: dinner at **Harry Caray's** (Chapter 10), cabs, admission fees, tips for the bellhop and housekeeping, the bottle of water at **Navy Pier** (Chapter 11), coffee at **Corner Bakery** (Chapter 13) — and all that wonderful shopping. To make matters worse, there are ATMs on practically every corner. With cash and credit so accessible, spending can get out of hand fast.

Before you go, come up with a realistic idea of how much you can spend. You don't want to worry constantly about every cent you spend, but you also don't want to faint when you get your credit card bills, either. The idea is to have fun and enjoy yourself without agonizing. For peace of mind and for the sake of your bank account, know when you can afford to splurge and when to economize (and plan to do both!).

This chapter gives you some ideas of how to allocate your funds. After all, you don't want to find yourself still paying for this trip when you set off on your next adventure!

Planning Your Budget

Budgeting a trip to Chicago — or to anywhere else for that matter — is a matter of give and take. Unless your bank account is bottomless, you'll need to make some trade-offs. Are you prepared to sacrifice some hotel comforts to pay for tickets to a hit musical? Can you eat hot dogs for lunch in exchange for splurging on a couple of dinners at restaurants owned by superstar chefs? Are you just as happy taking home photos as expensive souvenirs? Then maybe you can have cocktails downtown on North Michigan Avenue in the **Signature Room at the 95th** at the top of the **John Hancock Center Observatory** (Chapter 11). It's all a matter of your priorities.

Taxes and fees

These expenses aren't usually paid in cash, so they're easy to overlook. When you arrange any commercial transaction — booking a hotel room or renting a car, for example — be sure to ask for the *total* cost, which will inevitably be more than the great-sounding price you find on the Web site, in the ad, or over the phone.



Here's how taxes and fees can expand the price:

- ✓ Chicago sales tax is **9 percent**. Restaurants in the central part of the city add another **1 percent** tax to your bill.
- ✓ Hotel room tax totals **15.39 percent**.
- ✓ Many restaurants add a **15 percent to 18 percent** gratuity to the bill if your party is larger than five people.

Gratuities

The average tip for most service providers, such as waiters and cab-drivers, is 15 percent, rising to 20 percent for particularly good service. If you're looking for an easy way to calculate the tip in a restaurant, doubling the tax equates to 18 percent of the bill. A 10 percent to 15 percent tip is sufficient if you just have a drink at a bar. Bellhops get \$1 or \$2 a bag, hotel housekeepers should receive at least \$1 per person per day, and valet parking and coat-check attendants expect \$1 to \$2 for their services.

Hotel phones

Your hotel may charge you \$1 or more per call from your room — even if you're just calling a toll-free number or contacting a long-distance operator to use your telephone credit card or calling card. If you have a mobile phone with unlimited (or a large number of included) minutes, you may want to use it rather than the hotel phone. But make sure to check with your provider to find out if you have to pay roaming charges outside your home calling zone.

Incidentals

You may not notice the little costs each time they occur, but if you're stopping for coffee twice a day, buying bottled water, or purchasing a second map because you left the first one in your hotel room, you could easily be spending \$20 to \$30 more per day than necessary. Buy water at a drugstore or supermarket, stash it in your hotel room, and take a bottle with you each time you head out. Have your morning cup of coffee from the coffeemaker in your hotel room and stop once at a coffee shop as a treat during the day (it's also a good opportunity to use the restroom; they can be hard to find in downtown Chicago). Make some trail mix from nuts and raisins and put it in a resealable plastic bag, or

throw some energy bars into your purse or backpack. Try to not waste too much on incidentals, and you'll have more to spend on entertainment and the like.



For tips on budgeting, see “Cutting Costs — But Not the Fun” at the end of this chapter. For information on Chicago’s taxes, some of which are quite significant (like our 9 percent sales tax), see the appendix.

Table 4-1 offers some average costs for you to get started.

Table 4-1 What Things Cost in Chicago

Cab from O’Hare to downtown hotel	\$40
Cab from Midway to downtown hotel	\$30
Shuttle from O’Hare to downtown hotel	\$25
Shuttle from Midway to downtown hotel	\$20
Subway or bus ride	\$2
Transfer (good for two additional rides)	25¢
Ticket to John Hancock Center Observatory	\$11
Ticket to Sears Tower Skydeck	\$12
Sightseeing boat tour (two hours)	\$20
Hot dog at Gold Coast Dogs	\$2.40
Dinner for one at Boston Blackie’s	\$16
Steak dinner at Saloon Steakhouse	\$40
Weekday <i>Chicago Tribune</i>	50¢
Movie ticket	\$9.50

Transportation

You don’t need a car in Chicago. (Hey, when I lived in the heart of the city, I didn’t even *own* a car.) You can get around easily, and usually safely, on Chicago’s relatively efficient public transportation system and on foot. A bus or subway ride costs only \$2, and a transfer that provides two additional rides (if taken within a two-hour window) is only an additional 25¢. Cabs are plentiful and relatively inexpensive. The average cab ride in the downtown area costs \$7 to \$10. All of which means that you won’t need a rental car, even if you’re not staying downtown. So, assuming you spend \$25 a day on cabs and public transportation, you save a sizable chunk of the \$40 to \$50 that you may otherwise spend on a car.

rental, plus valet parking at your hotel, which runs as high as \$36 a day. That could amount to more than \$60 a day to apply to other expenses. (For more information about getting around the city, see Chapter 8.)



Watch the meter. Taxis cost \$2.25 as soon as the driver starts the meter, and then \$1.80 for each mile. The driver adds \$1 for each additional passenger aged 12 to 65. At press time, there was talk of raising the fare, so don't be surprised if you jump into a cab and it costs you a bit more.

Lodging

Lodging is pretty easy to figure out. The cost is set after you book your accommodations and is less flexible than other areas of your budget, such as attractions. You have to have a place to stay. So, as in other real-estate matters, location, location, and location determine the cost of your lodgings. The more central you are to Chicago's **Magnificent Mile**, the more expensive the hotel. If you're prepared to stay a little bit away from downtown, you can save on lodging. But if being in the middle of the action is valuable to you, you can find other areas for economizing. For me, location is most important. I will take a smaller room in a hotel that's centrally located over a larger room in a hotel that's far from the main attractions. I like to walk everywhere and would rather spend more on the room and less on cab fare. But that's me. You need to decide if the time spent traveling on public transportation or the expense of taking cabs is worth the money you save by staying in a hotel away from the center of the city.

According to the Hotel/Motel Association of Illinois, the average hotel room rate in 2006 was about \$118 for the Chicago metropolitan area, up 7 percent from 2005. Downtown rates are higher than metropolitan averages, so when you figure in room tax, you're going to be spending (at the very least) \$130 for a room — although you can shave off a few dollars by staying at the downtown Red Roof Inn or on the Near North Side, for example. If you're able to spend \$160, you can figure in a few extra comforts and conveniences. Push this up to \$220 a night and you can get a comfortable and well-located hotel room. (See Chapter 9 for the low-down on the Chicago hotel scene.)

Dining



Because Chicago has so many restaurants, inexpensive and moderately priced eateries are easy to find. Many have the equivalent of blue-plate specials. When you splurge at a top-tier restaurant, consider a multi-course tasting menu to keep costs down. In most cases, these fixed-price menus, which often showcase the chef's best efforts, are a much better deal than ordering à la carte.

You can save on breakfast if you choose a hotel with room rates that include continental breakfast or, in some cases, a full buffet. Otherwise, look for a coffee shop where you can get a roll or bagel, plus juice or other beverage, for about \$7. With careful choices (especially if you opt



for soup and salad), you can eat lunch for \$10. You can have a decent dinner in a non-franchise restaurant for \$25 or less.

Hit **Lou Mitchell's** (Chapter 10) in the Loop for breakfast, and you won't need lunch. The hearty portions and low prices make this spot a favorite with locals. You get free doughnut holes while you wait in line, and for about \$10 you can get a gigantic omelet that will keep you — and maybe a travel companion, too — going 'til dinner. (P.S. Ladies also get a free box of Milk Duds when they finish!)

Sightseeing

Admission fees for museums, observation decks, and other attractions can add up quickly. To figure out how much to budget, refer to the chapters on sightseeing (Chapters 11 and 13), compile a list of must-see attractions, and total the price of admissions. For ways to trim your budget, see "Cutting Costs — But Not the Fun" at the end of this chapter.

Shopping

This category is, of course, *highly* flexible. Budgeting often involves at least one four-letter word: *sale*. Check the daily newspapers, such as the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times* (especially the Sunday editions), for announcements. To be sure of hitting the city's most spectacular sales, plan to visit in January. And when it comes to Chicago souvenirs, why not be creative? Instead of bringing home overpriced Chicago Cubs jerseys from the souvenir store, you can buy something unique, such as a package of money from your free tour of the **Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago**. The bills are shredded, of course, but it makes a fun gift.

Nightlife

Entertainment can be a tough category in which to economize. If you enjoy a cocktail or a glass of wine, figure on spending about \$12 a pop at a downtown bar. If you're headed for a jazz or blues club, allow for a cover charge plus drinks (perhaps with a minimum drink requirement). However, some lively neighborhood bars serve reasonably priced drinks (see Chapter 16). And some entertainment won't cost you a dime, such as noontime "**Under the Picasso**" concerts at Daley Plaza, and free movies at the **Chicago Cultural Center** (on South Michigan Avenue just north of the Art Institute of Chicago) and **Oriental Institute Museum** in suburban Hyde Park. In the summer, most music festivals in Grant Park are free, and the people-watching alone can keep you entertained all night long. (See Chapter 11 for information on these activities.)

Generally, you can see a show in Chicago for much less than you'd pay on Broadway, and tickets are cheaper still if you take advantage of discounts that are up to 50 percent the day of the show at **Hot Tix** booths. Locations include 163 E. Pearson St. (the Chicago Waterworks Visitor Center), just off Michigan Avenue, and 78 W. Randolph St., in the Loop.

Check out www.hottix.org for current information. (See Chapter 15 for details on plays and the performing arts).

Cutting Costs — But Not the Fun



Let's say you tallied up your expected expenses and tried to make some trade-offs, but the grand total still seems too high. Now is the time to think about some serious ways to economize.

Planning tips

When you pull your trip together, consider

- ✓ **Asking for discount rates:** Membership in AAA, frequent-flier plans, trade unions, AARP, or other groups may qualify you for discounted rates on car rentals, plane tickets, hotel rooms, even meals. Ask about everything; you may be pleasantly surprised.
- ✓ **Going in the off season:** If you can travel during non-peak months, airline tickets are much cheaper. And during the low season (the depth of winter), you can find hotel prices that are as much as half of what they are during peak months.
- ✓ **Traveling on off days of the week:** If you can travel on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, you may find cheaper airfares. When you inquire about airfares, ask if you can obtain a lower rate by flying a different day. Also remember that, for some airlines, staying over a Saturday night can cut your airfare significantly.
- ✓ **Reserving your flight well in advance:** Fares that require a 21- or 14-day advance purchase can be a great deal.
- ✓ **Trying a package tour:** For many destinations, one call to a travel agent can net you airfare, hotel, ground transportation, and even some sightseeing, all for much less than if you tried to put the trip together yourself. (See Chapter 5 for specific suggestions.)

Lodging tips

To trim your hotel bill, think about

- ✓ **Reserving a hotel room with a kitchen:** Doing your own cooking and dishes may not feel like a vacation, but you save a lot of money by not eating in restaurants three times a day. Even if you only make breakfast and an occasional bag lunch in the kitchen, you still save in the long run. And you won't be shocked by a hefty room-service bill.
- ✓ **Checking into a hotel that includes meals or drinks in its room rate.** Embassy Suites, for example, includes a hot breakfast buffet and an evening cocktail gathering. Two Kimpton hotels — Hotel Monaco and Hotel Allegro — offer guests wine and cheese each

evening. Three Near North hotels — City Suites, Majestic, and Willows — serve breakfast featuring legendary Ann Sather cinnamon rolls. (See Chapter 9 for hotel listings.)

- ✓ **Asking if your kids can stay in your room for no charge:** A room with two double beds usually doesn't cost more than a room with one queen-size bed. And many hotels won't charge you the additional-person rate if the additional person is pint-size and related to you. Even if you have to pay \$20 for a rollaway bed, you save hundreds by not taking two rooms.
- ✓ **Avoiding the hotel minibar:** If you have midnight cravings, stock up on beverages and snacks at a supermarket. Even premium prices at a grocery store are cheaper than the minibar.
- ✓ **Not paying for amenities you won't use:** If you don't expect to have time for a swim in the pool or a workout in the health club, choose a hotel that doesn't have (and charge for) those facilities.

Transportation tips

When planning your trips around town, I suggest

- ✓ **Not renting a car:** Unless you're traveling to the suburbs and beyond, a car can be a liability and an unnecessary cost, especially when you add the high cost of parking — over \$30 a day at most major hotels. Buses, trains, and cabs can save you big bucks.
- ✓ **Studying the public transit system and street pattern:** You can find plenty of advice in this book about riding the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA). Know in advance where taking a bus or train is advisable, and remember that the 25¢ transfer is a great deal. Chicago is a good walking city, and many of the attractions that you want to see can be explored on foot. Be sure to pick up a free public transit map at any CTA station, download maps from the CTA Web site at www.transitchicago.com, or call ☎ 888-968-7282. (For the lowdown on public transportation, see Chapter 8.)
- ✓ **Taking advantage of the CTA Visitor Pass:** Passes are a good investment for visitors who plan to spend much time sightseeing around the city. (For details, see Chapter 8.)

Dining tips

Before you dive into your next Chicago meal, consider

- ✓ **Trying expensive restaurants at lunch rather than dinner:** Lunch tabs are usually a fraction of what dinner would cost at most top restaurants, and the menu often boasts many of the same specialties.
- ✓ **Keeping an eye on the time:** Breakfast specials may end at 10 a.m. or the early-bird dinner menu may run only until 6:30 p.m. — just when you realize that you're hungry.

- ✓ **Not drinking in hotel bars:** The exceptions are bars such as the Palm Court at **The Drake Hotel** and the Salon in the **InterContinental Chicago**, where the price of a drink includes excellent jazz.

Sightseeing tips

When penny-pinching matters, try

- ✓ **Buying a Chicago CityPass:** The CityPass includes admission to Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum, the Field Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Science and Industry, the John G. Shedd Aquarium, the Museum of Science and Industry, and the John Hancock Center Observatory (see Chapter 11). The adult rate is \$50, and the youth rate (3–11 years) is \$39. The value of an adult pass is \$90, so you’re saving loads if you plan to hit most of Chicago’s attractions. After you present your CityPass at the first attraction, booklets are valid for nine days. You can purchase a CityPass at any of the six locations or online at www.citypass.com.
- ✓ **Taking advantage of freebies:** On certain days, some major museums, such as at the **Art Institute of Chicago**, waive admission. Chicago also has many some free museums, such as the **Oriental Institute Museum** (see Chapter 11).

Handling Money

With the proliferation of ATMs, getting cash away from home — even from your credit card — is rarely a problem. But if you’re visiting the ATM every day, you may start racking up significant fees. In that case, you may want to consider using traveler’s checks. Here’s the lowdown on the pros and cons of using various forms of payment.

Choosing traveler’s checks or the green stuff

Traveler’s checks are something of an anachronism from the days before the ATM. The only sound alternative to traveling with dangerously large amounts of cash, traveler’s checks were as reliable as currency. Unlike personal checks or cash, traveler’s checks could (and still can) be replaced if lost or stolen.

These days, traveler’s checks seem less necessary because all U.S. cities, including Chicago, have 24-hour ATMs. Generally, carrying the smallest amount of cash possible — enough to pay for cabs, tips, and other incidentals — is wise.

Two major ATM networks are **Cirrus** (800-424-7787; www.mastercard.com) and **Plus** (800-843-7587; www.visa.com). Check the back of your card for the name of your bank’s network. You may be linked to two or three networks.

Of course, as with anything else, you pay for the convenience of instant cash. Many banks impose a fee (\$1, \$1.50, or even \$2) every time a card is used at an ATM owned by another bank. If you're withdrawing money every day, you may be better off with traveler's checks — if you don't mind showing identification every time you want to cash a check.

You can get traveler's checks at almost any bank. **American Express** offers denominations of \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100, \$500, and \$1,000. You pay a service charge of 1 percent to 4 percent. You can also get American Express traveler's checks over the phone by calling **800-221-7282**; by using this number, Amex gold and platinum cardholders are exempt from the 1 percent fee. AAA members can obtain checks without a fee at most AAA offices.

Visa offers traveler's checks at Citibank locations nationwide, as well as several other banks. The service charge is 1.5 percent to 2 percent; checks come in denominations of \$20, \$50, \$100, \$500, and \$1,000. Call **800-732-1322** for information. **MasterCard** also offers traveler's checks; call **800-223-9920** for a list of vendors near you.



Be vigilant when using ATMs. Whenever possible, choose machines in well-lighted locations where plenty of people are about. And stay alert while processing your request for cash. Robberies (and worse) can and do occur around ATMs.

Doting on debit cards

Another way of working with money you have — as opposed to the theoretical money of credit cards — is by using a debit card (an ATM card with a credit card logo). In many cases, your debit and ATM card are the same piece of plastic. Instead of getting cash, however, the debit card pays for purchases anywhere a credit card is accepted. The advantage? The money comes out of your checking account instead of pushing up against your credit card limit. Plus, you never pay an additional fee to use it, and you have less cash to carry around.

Using plastic

Invaluable when traveling, credit cards are a safe way to carry money and provide a convenient record of all your expenses. You can also withdraw cash advances from your credit cards at any bank (although you start paying hefty interest on the advance the moment you receive the cash, and you won't receive frequent-flier miles on an airline credit card). At most banks, you don't even need to go to a teller; you can get a cash advance at the ATM if you know your personal identification number (PIN). If you forget your PIN or didn't even know you had one, call the phone number on the back of your credit card and ask the bank to send it to you. It usually takes five to seven business days though, so make a note to do this at least a week before you travel.

Finding Chicago's ATMs

In Chicago, **Chase** has a large network of ATMs. On Michigan Avenue, you'll find Bank One ATMs in the John Hancock Center Observatory building and in the Chase building at Ontario Street (near the northwest corner of the intersection with Michigan Avenue). If you aren't a Chase customer, the charge to use the ATM is \$1.50. If you're a Chase customer, you won't get charged. Chase is a member of the MAC, Cash Station, and Cirrus networks.



When using an ATM, exercise the same caution that you would at home (for example, protect your password). Don't be complacent just because you're in a busy foot-traffic area — that makes running off with your money easier, not harder.

Dealing with a Lost or Stolen Wallet

Most credit card companies have toll-free numbers to call if your wallet or purse is stolen. Your card issuer may be able to get you a cash advance and provide an emergency replacement card in a day or two.

Check the back of your card for the issuing bank's number before you leave home. Keep the number separate from your wallet. You also can call **toll-free directory assistance** (**800-555-1212**) to find your bank's number.

Visa and MasterCard have global service numbers: for **Visa**, **800-847-2911**; for **MasterCard**, **800-307-7309**. (Both suggest you contact your card issuer directly.) **American Express** cardholders and traveler's check holders should call **800-221-7282**.



If you carry traveler's checks, keep a record of the serial numbers (separate from the checks). Keeping a record of your credit card numbers and the companies' emergency numbers also is a good idea. Be sure to keep a copy of all your travel papers separate from your wallet or purse, and leave a copy with someone at home in case you need it faxed in an emergency.

Always notify the police if your wallet is stolen. You probably won't get the wallet back, but you will most probably need a copy of the police report for your insurance or credit card company. In Chicago, **311** is the **non-emergency police number**.

Chapter 5

Getting to Chicago

In This Chapter

- ▶ Flying to Chicago for the best price
- ▶ Discovering other ways to get here from there
- ▶ Debating the merits of a package tour

It seems that all roads lead to Chicago: The city is a major hub in the interstate highway system and remains connected to the rest of North America with passenger rail service. In the center of the country, Chicago is an easy destination to access by plane, trains, or automobile.

In this chapter, I show you how to go about making your travel arrangements, no matter what mode of transportation you choose.

Flying to Chicago

Most people get here via O'Hare International Airport — *the* passageway to Chicago. If most travelers to Chicago are going to share a single experience, it's O'Hare. One of the world's busiest airports, O'Hare is often a stopover for both domestic and international travelers (mostly because American and United airlines use O'Hare as a major hub). O'Hare boasts its own police force, zip code, medical center, cemetery, and chapel. Some 68 million people pass through O'Hare annually. If you come to Chicago, you may well do the same. (For info on surviving O'Hare, see Chapter 8.)

But O'Hare isn't the only airport in town: Don't forget Chicago's smaller airport, Midway International Airport, which has doubled its public spaces to accommodate more travelers. And political debate continues over where and whether to build a third airport. Air service into the Windy City offers a wide range of choices, from major domestic and international carriers to small, no-frills airlines (not that many airlines have an overabundance of frills these days).

Airfares demonstrate capitalism at work — passengers in the same cabin on the same airplane rarely pay the same fare. Rather, they each pay what the market will bear. Business travelers pay for the flexibility to buy their tickets at the last minute, change their itineraries, or get home

before the weekend. Passengers who can book their tickets far in advance, stay over Saturday night, or are willing to travel on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday pay the least, usually a fraction of the full fare. On most flights, even the shortest hops, the full fare can reach \$1,000 or more, but a 7-day or 14-day advance-purchase ticket may cost only \$200 or \$300. Planning ahead pays.

Finding out which airlines fly there

Because O'Hare is one of the country's busiest airports, almost every airline flies through Chicago, many with direct flights. Elk Grove Village, a suburb of Chicago, houses the headquarters of **United Air Lines**.

Although this airline giant is going through hard times, it remains one of the largest carriers in the nation and has one of the most extensive offerings of flights from overseas. In fact, O'Hare handles so many international flights that it has its own international terminal (Terminal 5). **American**, **Northwest**, and **Continental** also offer large numbers of flights into both O'Hare and Midway. **Southwest Airlines** and other discount carriers have made extensive investments in facilities at the newly expanded Midway airport. If you're flying **ATA**, **AirTran**, or **Frontier** (as well as the aforementioned Southwest), you'll likely be heading into Midway. (See the appendix for the toll-free numbers of all these carriers.)

Getting the best deal on your airfare

Competition among the major U.S. airlines is unlike that of any other industry. Every airline offers virtually the same product (basically, a coach seat is always a coach seat), yet prices can vary by hundreds of dollars.

Because Chicago has two airports — O'Hare and Midway — you have more options and chances to lock in a lower fare. Midway is a little closer to downtown Chicago and a slightly cheaper ride by cab or shuttle. Because of varying traffic and road conditions, however, predicting which airport offers a faster ride into the central city or back is difficult. Under optimum conditions, the journey between both airports and the city by car takes around 40 minutes — sometimes less for Midway. But keep in mind that conditions are rarely optimum. During rush hour, the same journey can take one to two hours. Both airports are served by CTA trains, which are oblivious to traffic conditions.



Compared to O'Hare, Midway is smaller, has fewer restaurants and shops, and is served by fewer airlines. However, you may be able to find a cheaper fare to Midway. Definitely check flights to both airports before buying your ticket.



Business travelers who need the flexibility to buy their tickets at the last minute and change their itineraries at a moment's notice — and who want to get home before the weekend — pay (or at least their companies pay) the premium rate, known as the *full fare*. For some airlines, if you can book your ticket far in advance, stay over Saturday night, and are

willing to travel midweek (Tues, Wed, or Thurs), you can qualify for the least expensive price — usually a fraction of the full fare. The airlines also periodically hold sales, in which they lower the prices on their most popular routes. These fares have advance-purchase requirements and date-of-travel restrictions, but you can't beat the prices. As you plan your vacation, keep your eyes open for these sales, which tend to take place in seasons of low travel volume. You almost never see a sale around the peak summer-vacation months of July and August, or around Thanksgiving or Christmas, when many people fly, regardless of the fare they have to pay.

Consolidators, also known as *bucket shops*, are great sources for international tickets, although they usually can't beat the Internet on fares within North America. Start by looking in Sunday newspaper travel sections; U.S. travelers should focus on the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Miami Herald*.



Bucket-shop tickets are usually nonrefundable or have stiff cancellation penalties, often as high as 50 percent to 75 percent of the ticket price, and some put you on charter airlines with questionable safety records.

Several reliable consolidators are worldwide and available on the Net. **STA Travel** (☎ 800-781-4040; www.statravel.com), the world's leader in student travel, offers good fares for travelers of all ages. **Flights.com** (☎ 800-872-8800; www.flights.com) has excellent fares worldwide and "local" Web sites in 12 countries. **FlyCheap** (☎ 800-359-2432; www.1800flycheap.com) is owned by package-holiday megalith MyTravel and so has especially good access to fares for sunny destinations. **Air Tickets Direct** (☎ 800-778-3447; www.airticketsdirect.com) is based in Montreal and leverages the currently weak Canadian dollar for low fares.

Booking your flight online

The "big three" online travel agencies — **Expedia** (www.expedia.com), **Travelocity** (www.travelocity.com), and **Orbitz** (www.orbitz.com) — sell most of the air tickets bought on the Internet. (Canadian travelers should try www.expedia.ca and www.travelocity.ca; U.K. residents can go for expedia.co.uk and opodo.co.uk.) Each has different business deals with the airlines and may offer different fares on the same flights, so shopping around is wise. Expedia and Travelocity will also send you an **e-mail notification** when a cheap fare becomes available to your favorite destination. Of the smaller travel-agency Web sites, **SideStep** (www.sidestep.com) receives good reviews from users. It purports to "search 140 sites at once," but in reality only beats competitors' fares as often as other sites do.

Great **last-minute deals** are available through free weekly e-mail services provided directly by the airlines. Most of these deals are announced on Tuesday or Wednesday and must be purchased online. Most are only valid for travel that weekend, but some (such as Southwest's) can be booked weeks or months in advance. Sign up for weekly e-mail alerts at

airline Web sites or check megasites that compile comprehensive lists of last-minute specials, such as **Smarter Travel** (www.smartertravel.com). For last-minute trips (including flight/hotel/car packages), www.site59.com in the United States and www.lastminute.com in Europe often have better deals than the major-label sites.

If you're willing to give up some control over your flight details, use an *opaque fare service* like **Priceline** (www.priceline.com) or **Hotwire** (www.hotwire.com). Both offer rock-bottom prices in exchange for travel on a "mystery airline" at a mysterious time of day, often with a mysterious change of planes en route. The mystery airlines are all major, well-known carriers — and the possibility of being sent from Philadelphia to Chicago via Tampa is remote. But your chances of getting a 6 a.m. or 11 p.m. flight are pretty high. Hotwire tells you flight prices before you buy; Priceline usually has better deals than Hotwire, but you have to play their "name our price" game. **Note:** These days, Priceline also offers non-opaque service. You now have the option to pick exact flights, times, and airlines from a list of offers — or opt to bid on opaque fares as before. Check out *Priceline.com For Dummies*, by Sascha Segan (Wiley), an excellent resource for getting the lowest airfares, hotel rooms, and car rentals.



Great last-minute deals are also available directly from the airlines themselves through a free e-mail service called *E-savers*. Each week, the airline sends you a list of discounted flights, usually leaving the upcoming Friday or Saturday and returning the following Monday or Tuesday. You can sign up for all the major airlines at one time by logging on to **Smarter Travel** (www.smartertravel.com), or you can go to each individual airline's Web site. Airline sites also offer schedules, flight booking, and information on late-breaking bargains.

Driving to Chicago

Chicago is easier to get to by road for more people than almost any other city in the nation. Within a 300-mile radius of the heart of the city (or a comfortable one-day drive) lies one of the most densely populated areas of the country. The Windy City also is a major crossroads of the interstate highway system. East-west highways I-80, I-88, I-90, and I-94 run through Chicago. The city is connected to north-south interstate routes I-55, I-57, and I-65.



If you're traveling as part of a group, you may want to save money by driving. However, don't forget to budget the cost of parking, which can run as high as \$30 a day in downtown Chicago.



If you plan to drive to Chicago but don't intend to use your car while in the city, consider perimeter parking lots. For bargain perimeter parking, check with the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA). For only \$1.50, CTA's **Park and Ride lots**, located near many train-line terminals, allow visitors

to stow their cars for up to 24 hours. For long-term parking, CTA's Cumberland lot, ten minutes east of O'Hare, costs \$11 for 24 hours. (Call ☎ 888-968-7282 for locations and restrictions.)

Also consider parking in a lot within walking distance of the Loop. **Millennium Park** has four lots. Rates vary, but expect to pay from \$10 to \$20 for 1 to 24 hours. For the Grant Park North lot, enter on Michigan Avenue at Madison or Randolph streets. For the Millennium Park lot, enter on Columbus Drive at Monroe or Randolph avenues. For the East Monroe Street lot, enter on Columbus Drive at Monroe or Randolph avenues. And for the Grant Park South lot, enter on Michigan Avenue at Van Buren Street.



Traffic on Chicago expressways can be brutal. Avoid arriving or departing during the heart of morning and evening rush hours (about 6:45–9:30 a.m. and 3:45–6:30 p.m.). All the major arteries, including the Dan Ryan (I-90 and I-94), Edens (I-94), Eisenhower (I-290), Kennedy (I-90), and Stevenson (I-55) expressways, can gridlock. Don't be lured into rush-hour driving by the prospect of *reverse commuting* (coming into town in the afternoon and leaving in the morning): It's a myth. Once upon a time, traffic may have been lighter outbound in the morning and inbound in the evening — but today, that has been negated by the large number of people who live in Chicago and commute to jobs in the suburbs.

Arriving by Other Means

Thanks to Amtrak, about 50 intercity trains with classic names like *The California Zephyr* still pull into and out of Union Station (at Adams and Canal streets, just west of the Loop across the Chicago River) on a daily basis. You can get to or leave town on trains such as the *Lakeshore Limited*, the *Capitol Limited*, the *Empire Builder*, and the *Southwest Chief*. For example, the *City of New Orleans* leaves each evening for an overnight trip to the Big Easy via Memphis. It's about eight hours by train from, say, Pittsburgh to Chicago; about 15 hours to New Orleans and it'll take you two days (and nights) to get to or from Los Angeles.

For specific fares, schedules, and reservations (which vary according to season, along with all kinds of discounts and vacation packages), check with a travel agent or contact Amtrak (☎ 800-872-7245; www.amtrak.com).

Joining an Escorted Tour

You may be one of the many people who love escorted tours. The tour company takes care of all the details and tells you what to expect. You know your costs upfront and, in the case of the tame ones, you don't get many surprises. Escorted tours can take you to the maximum number of sights in the minimum amount of time with the least amount of hassle.



If you decide to go with an escorted tour, I recommend purchasing travel insurance, especially if the tour operator asks you to pay upfront. But don't buy insurance from the tour operator! Get travel insurance through an independent agency. (I tell you more about the ins and outs of travel insurance in Chapter 7.)

When choosing an escorted tour, along with finding out whether you have to put down a deposit and when final payment is due, ask a few simple questions before you buy:

- ✓ **What is the cancellation policy?** Can the tour operator cancel the trip if it doesn't get enough people? How late can you cancel if you're unable to go? Do you get a refund if you cancel? If the tour operator cancels?
- ✓ **How packed is the schedule?** Does the tour schedule try to fit 25 hours into a 24-hour day, or does it give you ample time to relax at the hotel or shop? If getting up at 7 a.m. every day and not returning to your hotel until 6 or 7 p.m. at night sounds like a grind, certain escorted tours may not be for you.
- ✓ **How large is the group?** The smaller the group, the less time you spend waiting for people to get on and off the bus. The tour operator may be evasive about this, because it may not know the exact size of the group until everybody has made reservations, but it should be able to give you a rough estimate.
- ✓ **Is there a minimum group size?** Some tours have a minimum group size and the tour operator may cancel the tour if it doesn't book enough people. If a quota exists, find out what it is and how close the tour operator is to reaching it. Again, a tour operator's answers may be evasive, but the information may help you select a tour that's sure to happen.
- ✓ **What exactly is included?** Don't assume anything. You may have to pay to get yourself to and from the airport. A box lunch may be included in an excursion, but drinks may be extra. Beer may be included but not wine. How much flexibility do you have? Can you opt out of certain activities, or does the bus leave once a day, with no exceptions? Are all your meals planned in advance? Can you choose your entree at dinner, or does everybody get the same chicken cutlet?

For listings of various packages (including some that have specific themes, like architecture, cruising the lake, and which cover more of the Midwest along with Chicago), I recommend Online Agency Deals (www.oladeals.com). At the company's Web site, you can search out deals and information on tours and vacation packages from over 3,500 travel companies — just select Chicago as your destination.

If you're a structure-loving traveler, your local travel agent can help you hook up with a guided tour of Chicago. You may want to check **City**

Escapes (www.cityescapes.com), tours that are booked exclusively through travel agencies.

Choosing a Package Tour

For lots of destinations, package tours can be a smart way to go. In many cases, a package tour that includes airfare, hotel, and transportation to and from the airport costs less than the hotel alone on a tour you book yourself. That's because packages are sold in bulk to tour operators, and tour operators resell the tours to the public. It's kind of like buying your vacation at a buy-in-bulk store — except the tour operator is the one who buys the 1,000-count box of garbage bags and resells them 10 at a time at a cost that undercuts the local supermarket.

Package tours can vary as much as those garbage bags, too. Some offer a better class of hotels than others; others provide the same hotels for lower prices. Some book flights on scheduled airlines; others sell charters. In some packages, your choice of accommodations and travel days may be limited. Some let you choose between escorted vacations and independent vacations; others allow you to add on just a few excursions or escorted day trips (also at discounted prices) without booking an entirely escorted tour.

To find package tours, check out the travel section of your local Sunday newspaper or the ads in the back of national travel magazines such as *Travel + Leisure*, *National Geographic Traveler*, and *Condé Nast Traveler*. **Liberty Travel** (☎ 888-271-1584; www.libertytravel.com) is one of the biggest packagers in the Northeast and usually boasts a full-page ad in Sunday papers.

Another good source of package deals is the airlines themselves. Most major airlines offer air/land packages, including **American Airlines Vacations** (☎ 800-321-2121; www.aavacations.com), **Continental Airlines Vacations** (☎ 800-301-3800; www.covacations.com), **Delta Vacations** (☎ 800-221-6666; www.deltavacations.com), **Southwest Airlines Vacations** (☎ 800-243-8372; www.swavacations.com), and **United Vacations** (☎ 888-854-3899; www.unitedvacations.com). Several big **online travel agencies** — Expedia, Travelocity, Orbitz, Site59, and Lastminute.com — also do a brisk business in packages. If you're unsure about the pedigree of a smaller packager, check with the Better Business Bureau in the city where the company is based, or go online to www.bbb.org. If a packager won't tell you where it's based, don't fly with that company.

Package prices vary based on availability, dates, and hotel properties. For example, at press time, American Airlines Vacations offered a high-season rate that included round-trip airfare from Las Vegas and five nights at the upscale Fairmont Hotel for \$1,250 per person. A sample package from United Vacations during low season included round-trip

airfare from New York and three nights at Hotel Allegro, for \$650 per person. From Los Angeles in high season, Delta Vacations offered airfare to O'Hare and seven nights at various Chicago-area hotels starting from \$1,200 per person. Continental Airlines Vacations offered a package from Miami to Chicago in June, with six nights at a suburban hotel, for \$1,250 per person.



The Chicago Office of Tourism (**877-244-2246**; www.877chicago.com) offers online travel packages to entice visitors into the city. So-called Immersion Weekends have included such packages as "Paint the Town Blues," with two nights at the House of Blues Hotel, blues concerts, some drinks, and one dinner. Prices are between \$350 and \$500 per person. Other packages bundle hotel stays with tickets to hot musicals or art exhibits.

Chapter 6

Catering to Special Travel Needs and Interests

In This Chapter

- ▶ Making the most of your family vacation
 - ▶ Traveling as a senior
 - ▶ Finding the best places for travelers with disabilities
 - ▶ Locating resources for gay and lesbian travelers
-

Chicago offers something for everyone, whatever the interest, need, or inclination. This chapter points you toward both national and Chicago-only resources for families, seniors, disabled visitors, and gay and lesbian travelers.

If you have mobility issues, whether you're traveling with kids, a senior, or are in a wheelchair, you'll find that maneuvering around Chicago is pretty manageable. Chicago isn't as congested as New York or as sprawling as Los Angeles. And thanks to a slightly slower pace, Chicago's hustle and bustle isn't so frantic that you have to be on constant alert lest the crowds run over you.

Traveling with the Brood: Advice for Families

If you have trouble getting your kids out of the house in the morning, heading hundreds or thousands of miles away may seem like an insurmountable challenge. But family travel can be immensely rewarding, giving you new ways of seeing the world through smaller pairs of eyes.

Several resources offer tips to help you travel with kids:

- ✓ ***How to Take Great Trips with Your Kids***, by Sanford Portnoy, is full of good general advice that can apply to travel anywhere.
- ✓ ***Family Travel Times*** (☎ 888-822-4FTT; www.familytravel-times.com) is an excellent online newsletter updated twice monthly. Subscriptions are \$39 a year, \$49 for two years. Sample articles are available on the newsletter's Web site.

- ✓ **Family Travel Forum** (www.familytravelforum.com) is a comprehensive site that offers customized trip planning.
- ✓ **Family Travel Network** (www.familytravelnetwork.com) is an award-winning Web site that offers travel features, deals, and tips.
- ✓ **Family Travel Files** (www.thefamilytravelfiles.com) offers an online magazine and a directory of off-the-beaten-path tours and tour operators for families.

Preparing for your vacation

One of the best ways to get kids excited about an upcoming trip is to involve them in the planning. Start by sharing this book with your kids — go through the attractions listed in Chapters 11 and 13. Next, have your kids list the places they want to visit. Older kids can check out attractions online. Finally, work with your kids to create an itinerary that appeals to the whole family. You may want to rent a movie filmed in Chicago, such as *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* or *The Blues Brothers*. In either, you'll see shots of Chicago — the canyons of the Loop, the bridges spanning the Chicago River, all of it scenery the kids will recognize when they arrive.

Before you leave, try to adjust to a new time zone if necessary. Put kids to bed half an hour later each night for a couple of nights if Chicago is west, and you'll gain time. Or, if you're traveling east, put them to bed half an hour earlier.

Go over safety issues with your children. Make sure to create a plan so children know what to do if they get lost. Put your child's name and some kind of identification inside a jacket.

Traveling to Chicago — and arriving happy and healthy

Want your whole family to arrive in Chicago in a good mood? Follow the steps in this section to improve your plane or car trip.

On the plane

How do you avoid becoming the person everyone hopes won't sit next to him on a plane? Follow these tips for flying with little ones:

- ✓ **Call ahead to order kids' meals and confirm seating arrangements.** Some airlines offer bassinets for babies traveling in the bulkhead row — parents may prefer the bulkhead row, with the extra room for changing and letting toddlers sit on the floor. Other parents prefer regular seating for the extra under-chair baggage storage.
- ✓ **When you're packing, try not to overpack, but definitely do not underpack on necessities.** If you know the number of diapers your child wears, add three in case of emergency. Bring a changing pad in case the tiny restroom has no pullout changing table.

On the other hand, one coloring book — not five — is sufficient. Two toy cars — not the entire collection of 30 — is all you'll want to carry. Pick one stuffed animal and one blanket. **Remember:** You're not relocating your entire nursery.

- ✓ **Use a stroller in the airport for non-walking or barely-walking children, and check it at the gate.** The stroller will be waiting for you on the gangway when you deplane.

In the car

Traveling by car presents a different set of challenges: those long stretches of open road with the kids asking “Are we there yet?” for the 10,000th time. Here are tips for keeping kids entertained — and adults sane — on the Great American Road Trip:

- ✓ Pack a cooler with drinks, snacks, fruits, and veggies.
- ✓ Stop every few hours for air, bathroom breaks, and diaper changes.
- ✓ Try to stick to a regular feeding and sleeping schedule for babies.
- ✓ Look at your map for interesting things to visit on the way.
- ✓ Prepare to stretch your arm time and time again to reach all the toys and bottles that have fallen out of your children’s hands for the tenth time in the last five minutes. A flashlight can help locate those items that roll under the seat.
- ✓ Use window shades to block the sun.
- ✓ Bring audiotapes of stories or children’s songs. If your car doesn’t have one, you may want to bring a portable DVD player so the kids can watch movies. Because a kids’ video lasts 30 minutes to an hour, it’s a great help for long stretches with nothing to do.
- ✓ Carry a first-aid kit, a box of wipes for cleanups, a roll of paper towels, extra blankets, plastic bags for motion sickness, a change of clothes, and a cellphone in case of road emergencies.

Choosing sleeps and eats

Your choice of hotel probably isn’t only a matter of budget. Choosing a hotel may also depend on the ages of the children who accompany you, and — face it — how well they generally behave. Nothing is more embarrassing to parents, or annoying to other guests, than noisy children running amok through an upscale hotel. Find out if the hotel has a pool (many downtown Chicago hotels don’t have one); ask if a video arcade is nearby. Hotels in River North, for example, are near ESPN Zone, a sports-themed attraction with dozens of games (see Chapter 11). Some hotels offer play areas and kids’ programs. Make sure to ask about these services when you call for a reservation.



After you check into your hotel, childproof the room. Remove small and breakable objects from children's reach and check electric and computer cords. You may also want to plug in a nightlight. Find out from the concierge where to go if you need medical attention or to buy necessities, such as diapers, formula, and medicines.

Chicago is home to many kid-friendly restaurants. There are the obvious choices, such as the **Hard Rock Cafe**, 63 W. Ontario St. at North State Street (☎ 312-943-2252); the **Rainforest Cafe**, 605 N. Clark St. at Ohio Street (☎ 312-787-1501); and '50s-themed **Ed Debevic's**, 640 N. Wells St. at Ontario Street (☎ 312-664-1707). Then you have places such as **Harry Caray's** restaurant, with its showcases packed with baseball memorabilia. Youngsters also have fun in the wacky New Orleans-style environment of **Heaven on Seven** on Michigan Avenue; at the original location on Wabash Avenue, kids can skip the exotic gumbo and jambalaya and order a hamburger and chocolate pudding from a luncheon-counter menu. Also along Michigan Avenue, try **foodlife**, where pizza, burgers, and more await kids in the giant food court, or **Billy Goat Tavern**, the real-life inspiration for the famous *Saturday Night Live* skit that features John Belushi and "Cheeburger, cheeburger, chip, chip. No Coke — Pepsi." (See Chapter 10 for more information on these restaurants.)

For more tips on pleasing pint-size tourists, see Chapter 13.

Finding baby-sitting services

If you want to schedule some adults-only R & R, don't leave finding a baby sitter to chance. Make prior arrangements — giving you time to check references — and add to your budget the amount that you'll need to cover baby-sitting. Expect to pay around \$14 an hour, with a four-hour minimum. Most agencies require at least 48 hours' notice. For recommendations, check with the concierge or front desk at your hotel. Many hotels maintain lists of reputable baby-sitting agencies. One of the agencies that many of the top hotels work with is **American Childcare Service** (☎ 312-644-7300), a state-licensed and insured service that can match you with a sitter. This agency requires that its caregivers undergo background checks, furnish multiple references, and are trained in infant and child CPR.

Making Age Work for You: Advice for Seniors

Mention the fact that you're a senior when you make your travel reservations. Although all the major U.S. airlines except America West have canceled their senior-discount and coupon-book programs, many hotels still offer discounts for seniors. In most cities, including Chicago, people over 60 qualify for reduced admission to theaters, museums, and other attractions, as well as discounted fares on public transportation. For information on discounts on citywide programs, call the Chicago Park District (☎ 312-742-7529).

Seniors age 65 and over with a discounted pass get a reduced fare of 85¢ per ride and 15¢ for transfers on Chicago's **public transportation**. Unfortunately, short-term visitors aren't able to take advantage of these discounts, because you must apply for the pass in person and it takes at least a week to obtain one. To obtain the pass, head to the Regional Transit Authority offices, 175 W. Jackson Blvd., 2nd floor (☎ **888-968-7282**). Bring a driver's license or passport. Explain that you're from out of town so you can receive the pass within a week (otherwise, processing takes three weeks). However, there is a cash-only reduced fare of \$1 per ride on the bus and 85¢ for trains, exact change only, and no transfers will be issued. At rail turnstiles, you'll have to see a rail-station customer assistant to take advantage of this fare.



Many of the El (elevated train) stations are difficult to navigate because of stairs or out-of-order escalators. Call the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) (☎ **312-836-7000**) for a list of stations that have elevators. If mobility is an issue, you may be better off riding the bus.

Members of **AARP** (formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons), 601 E St. NW, Washington, DC 20049 (☎ **888-687-2277** or 202-434-2277; www.aarp.org), get discounts on hotels, airfares, and car rentals. AARP offers members a wide range of benefits, including *AARP: The Magazine* and a monthly newsletter. Anyone over 50 can join.

Many reliable agencies and organizations target the 50-plus market. **Elderhostel** (☎ **877-426-8056**; www.elderhostel.org) arranges study programs for those age 55 and over (and a spouse or companion of any age) in Chicago and other destinations. Most courses last five to seven days, and many include airfare, accommodations in university dormitories or modest inns, meals, and tuition.

Recommended publications offering travel resources and discounts for seniors include the quarterly magazine *Travel 50 & Beyond* (www.travel50andbeyond.com); *Travel Unlimited: Uncommon Adventures for the Mature Traveler*, by Alison Gardner; *101 Tips for Mature Travelers*, available from Grand Circle Travel (☎ **800-221-2610** or 617-350-7500; www.gct.com); and *Unbelievably Good Deals and Great Adventures That You Absolutely Can't Get Unless You're Over 50*, by Joan Rattner Heilman.

Accessing Chicago: Advice for Travelers with Disabilities

Most disabilities shouldn't stop anyone from traveling. More options and resources exist than ever before.

Chicago information and resources

Many Chicago hotels provide special accommodations and services for visitors in wheelchairs, such as ramps and large bathrooms, as well as telecommunications devices for visitors with hearing impairments; inquire when you make your reservation.

Visitors to Chicago find that most attractions are completely accessible. Public museums such as the **Art Institute of Chicago**, **Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum**, and the **Field Museum of Natural History** observe Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines, as does the **Sears Tower Skydeck**.

For specific information on facilities for people with disabilities, call or write the **Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities**, 121 N. LaSalle St., Room 1104, Chicago, IL 60602 (☎ 312-744-6673 [voice] or 312-744-4780 [TTY]). The office is staffed from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Horizons for the Blind, 2 N. Williams St., Crystal Lake, IL 60014 (☎ 815-444-8800), is a social-service agency that can provide information about hotels equipped with Braille signage, as well as attractions that offer Braille signage and special tours. The **Illinois Relay Center** enables hearing- and speech-impaired TTY callers to call individuals or businesses without TTYS 24 hours a day. Call ☎ 800-526-0844 (TTY) or 800-526-0857 (voice). The city of Chicago operates a 24-hour information service for hearing-impaired callers with TTY equipment; call **800-526-0844** (TTY). Or ☎ 312-744-8599 (voice).

Chicago streets and public transit

Pedestrians with disabilities find that downtown Chicago is pretty good about curb cuts and other basics. Unfortunately, though, the Windy City's notoriously unpredictable weather and a challenging public transportation system for those with disabilities (see later), often compel Chicagoans and visitors to catch a ride. You can call **CTA Paratransit** (☎ 312-432-7025) for a description of special services and taxi access programs available in the city. The same service also offers door-to-door lift services to and from O'Hare for travelers with disabilities. One week's notice is required, and visitors must be registered with a similar program in their home city. For information, call ☎ 312-432-7025.

Several CTA El stations on each line have elevators. Call the CTA (☎ 312-836-7000) for a list of accessible stations. All city buses are equipped to accommodate wheelchairs. For other questions about CTA special services, call ☎ 312-432-7025.

Many travel agencies offer customized tours and itineraries for travelers with disabilities. Among them are **Flying Wheels Travel** (☎ 507-451-5005; www.flyingwheelstravel.com); **Access-Able Travel Source** (☎ 303-232-2979; www.access-able.com); and **Accessible Journeys**

(**800-846-4537** or 610-521-0339; www.disabilitytravel.com). **Avis Rent a Car** has an Avis Access program that offers such services as a dedicated 24-hour toll-free number (**888-879-4273**) for customers with special travel needs; special car features such as swivel seats, spinner knobs, and hand controls; and accessible bus service.

Organizations that offer assistance to disabled travelers include **MossRehab** (www.mossresourcenet.org); the **American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)** (**800-232-5463**; www.afb.org); and **Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality (SATH)** (**212-447-7284**; www.sath.org). **AirAmbulanceCard.com** is now partnered with SATH and allows you to preselect top-notch hospitals in case of an emergency. SATH also provides access information for major airlines and travel tips. Also check out **Open World** magazine (published by SATH) and the quarterly magazine **Emerging Horizons** (www.emerginghorizons.com).



Despite efforts in recent years to improve its accessibility, Chicago's public transportation system lags behind those of other urban centers in meeting ADA standards. Although the Regional Transit Authority (**847-364-7223**; www.pacebus.com), which operates the city's buses and trains, and Metra (**312-322-6777**; www.metrarail.com), the commuter-rail line to the suburbs, claim to be accessible, a trip can be arduous and frustrating. Only one in five buses is equipped with a lift, and fewer than half of all train stations have elevators. Riders with disabilities need to plan public-transit trips carefully. Call the CTA (**312-836-7000**) for information about accessible bus routes and train stations.



By calling the CTA in advance of their trip, people with disabilities can receive an application for a pass that allows holders to ride buses and trains for half-price. Passes take about three weeks to process.

Following the Rainbow: Resources for Gay and Lesbian Travelers

Chicago has a large gay and lesbian population, supported by numerous resources. The **Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce** (**312-303-3167**; www.glcchamber.org) is an excellent resource for imparting information about restaurants, bars, and neighborhoods where the gay and lesbian communities gather. The **Windy City Times** and other gay publications are available at many shops and bars in neighborhoods with large gay and lesbian populations.

Among Chicago's gay-friendly neighborhoods are Lakeview, New Town, and Andersonville. Lakeview's main thoroughfare is Belmont, between Broadway and Sheffield. Within Lakeview is a smaller neighborhood known as New Town (or, colloquially, Boys Town). Andersonville centers around the half-dozen or so blocks of North Clark Street north of Foster

Avenue and features the feminist bookstore **Women and Children First**, 5233 N. Clark St. (☎ 773-769-9299).

The **International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA)** (☎ 800-448-8550 or 954-776-2626; www.iglta.org) is the trade association for the gay and lesbian travel industry, and offers an online directory of gay-and-lesbian-friendly travel businesses; go to its Web site and click on Members.

Many agencies offer tours and travel itineraries specifically for gay and lesbian travelers. **Above and Beyond Tours** (☎ 800-397-2681; www.abovebeyondtours.com) is the exclusive gay and lesbian tour operator for United Airlines. **Now, Voyager** (☎ 800-255-6951; www.nowvoyager.com) is a well-known San Francisco-based gay-owned and -operated travel service.

Gay.com Travel (☎ 800-929-2268 or 415-644-8044; www.gay.com/travel or www.outandabout.com), is an excellent online successor to the popular **Out & About** print magazine. It provides regularly updated information about gay-owned, gay-oriented, and gay-friendly lodging, dining, sightseeing, nightlife, and shopping establishments in every important destination worldwide.

The following travel guides are available at many bookstores, or you can order them online: **Spartacus International Gay Guide** (www.spartacusworld.com/gayguide); **Odysseus: The International Gay Travel Planner** (www.odyusa.com); and the **Damron** guides (www.damron.com), with separate, annual books for gays and lesbians.

Chapter 7

Taking Care of the Remaining Details

In This Chapter

- Considering whether to rent a car
 - Buying travel insurance
 - Packing wisely
 - Knowing what to expect at airport security
-

The little things mean a lot: from knowing what to bring (or not) in your carry-on, to determining how you'll get around when you get there, to having the right clothing so you're not constantly freezing or sweating can be details that make a difference in the comfort and ease of your trip.

Taking care of a few details before you go can save you time in Chicago — time otherwise spent waiting in line; trying to get tickets; calling around town; buying the socks, long underwear, or sweater you forgot to bring; and dealing with all the other annoyances that plague the unprepared. This chapter covers everything from buying travel insurance and packing comfortable walking shoes to preparing for airport security.

Renting a Car — Not!

Do you need to rent a car in Chicago? The answer is a qualified “No.” A car can be a liability. Parking can be expensive, while street parking and metered parking are scarce. If you drive Chicago’s expressways, you’ll start to understand why many complain that the road system no longer handles the increased volume of traffic and will be less equipped to do so as time passes. Gridlock is becoming more frequent and intense.

That said, traffic-wise, Chicago is not as congested as, for example, New York or London. Anyone who has sat fuming in Manhattan’s snarled crosstown traffic or on London’s ancient and narrow streets may find driving in downtown Chicago a breeze. More often than not, traffic *does* move, even in the heart of the Loop or along the Magnificent Mile. Still,

the major arteries in and out of the city are usually jammed during the misnamed *rush hour*, which is more like three hours. All of which brings me to that qualified “No.”



You don’t need a car if you plan to stay downtown and confine your touring to the outlying neighborhoods. Public transit — bus, El (an abbreviation of *elevated*) train, and subway — is fairly comprehensive and reliable. As long as you stick to busy routes during the day, you should be safe. (Avoid long rides into unfamiliar areas at night.) Beyond that, taxis are plentiful and pretty much affordable for short runs. On the other hand, if you want to explore the outlying suburbs (including driving along the scenic lakeshore — see Chapter 14), a car is a must.

Daily costs for a midsize car average about \$70, or about \$200 per week. For telephone numbers and rental-car companies with offices in Chicago, see the appendix.

Identifying additional charges

In addition to the daily rental rate, rental-car companies in Chicago charge **18 percent sales tax** and, for rentals at the airport, a **\$2.75 daily transaction fee**.

You’ll also encounter a few optional charges. The Collision Damage Waiver (CDW), which covers any damage to the car in the event of a collision, is covered by many credit card companies. Check with your credit card company before you go, so you can avoid paying this hefty fee (as much as \$20 a day).

The car rental companies also offer additional **liability insurance** (if you harm others in an accident), **personal accident insurance** (if you harm yourself or your passengers), and **personal effects insurance** (if your luggage is stolen from your car). Your insurance policy on your car at home probably covers most of these unlikely occurrences. However, if your own insurance doesn’t cover you for rentals or if you don’t have auto insurance, definitely consider the additional coverage (ask your car-rental agent for more information). Unless you’re toting around the Hope Diamond (and you don’t want to leave that in your car trunk anyway), you can probably skip the personal effects insurance, but driving around without liability or personal accident coverage is never a good idea. Even if you’re a good driver, other people may not be, and liability claims can be complicated.

Some companies also offer **refueling packages**, in which you pay for your initial full tank of gas upfront and can return the car with an empty gas tank. If you reject this option, you pay only for the gas you use, but you have to return the car with a full tank or face charges of \$3 to \$4 a gallon for any shortfall, though with the price of gas soaring, especially in the summer, as it has in the last couple of years, what the rental company charges may not be that much higher than the local gas station. So

consider that when you decide yes or no. In my experience, gas prices in the refueling packages are at the high end, and I always find myself trying to drive the car in on fumes so I don't pay for an extra drop of fuel. So, I prefer to forego the refueling package and always allow plenty of time for refueling en route to the car-rental return. However, if you usually run late and a fueling stop may make you miss your plane, you're a perfect candidate for the fuel-purchase option.

Getting the best deal



Car-rental rates vary even more than airline fares. The price depends on the size of the car, the length of time you keep it, where and when you pick it up and drop it off, where you take it, and a host of other factors. Asking a few key questions may save you hundreds of dollars:

- ✓ **Ask if the rate is the same for a morning pickup as it is for a pickup at night — these rates can vary.** Weekend rates may be lower than weekday rates. If you're keeping the car five or more days, a weekly rate may be cheaper than the daily rate.
- ✓ **Ask what the rate would be if you picked up the car from a downtown location rather than at the airport.** Rates sometimes are considerably lower downtown.
- ✓ **Find out whether age is an issue.** Many car-rental companies add on a fee for drivers under 25, while some don't rent to them at all.
- ✓ **If you see an advertised price in your local newspaper, ask for that specific rate.** If you don't, you may be charged the standard (higher) rate. Don't forget to mention membership in AAA, AARP, and trade unions. These memberships usually entitle you to discounts ranging from 5 percent to 30 percent.
- ✓ **Ask to use your frequent-flier account when booking.** Not only are your favorite (or at least most-used) airlines likely to have sent you discount coupons, but most car rentals add at least 500 miles to your frequent-flier account.

As with other aspects of planning your trip, using the Internet can make comparison shopping for a car rental much easier. You can check rates at most of the major agencies' Web sites. Plus, all the major travel sites — **Frommer's** (www.frommers.com), **Travelocity** (www.travelocity.com), **Expedia** (www.expedia.com), **Orbitz** (www.orbitz.com), and **Smarter Travel** (www.smartertravel.com), for example — have search engines that can dig up discounted car-rental rates. Just enter the car size you want, the pickup and return dates, and the location, and the server returns a price. You can even make the reservation online. Priceline and Hotwire work well for rental cars, too; the only "mystery" is which major rental company you get, and for most travelers the difference between Hertz, Avis, and Budget is negligible.



WGN: World's Greatest Newspaper

Tune in to one of Chicago's most popular radio stations, **WGN-720 AM**, which is owned by the Chicago Tribune Company and has a studio in the showcase window of the Tribune Tower, 435 N. Michigan Ave., just north of the Michigan Avenue Bridge. The company publishes the daily *Chicago Tribune* and is especially proud of the station's call letters — WGN (short for "World's Greatest Newspaper").

The Tribune Shop (☎ 312-222-3080), on the building's street level, sells reproductions of newspapers with famous headlines — "War Ends," "Bulls Repeat," and the like. Ask for a copy of the 1948 newspaper with the bold (and incorrect) headline "Dewey Defeats Truman." Democrats especially love this souvenir.

Playing It Safe with Travel and Medical Insurance

Three kinds of travel insurance are available: trip-cancellation insurance, medical insurance, and lost-luggage insurance. The cost of travel insurance varies widely, depending on the cost and length of your trip, your age and health, and the type of trip you're taking, but expect to pay between 5 percent and 8 percent of the vacation itself. You can get estimates from various providers through **InsureMyTrip.com**. Enter your trip cost and dates, your age, and other information for prices from more than a dozen companies.

Here is my advice on the three types of travel insurance:

- ✓ **Trip-cancellation insurance** helps you get your money back if you have to back out of a trip, if you have to go home early, or if your travel supplier goes bankrupt. Allowed reasons for cancellation can range from sickness to natural disasters.

For more information, contact one of the following recommended insurers: **Access America** (☎ 866-807-3982; www.accessamerica.com); **Travel Guard International** (☎ 800-826-4919; www.travelguard.com); **Travel Insured International** (☎ 800-243-3174; www.travelinsured.com); and **Travelex Insurance Services** (☎ 888-457-4602; www.travelex-insurance.com).

- ✓ For domestic travel, buying **medical insurance** for your trip doesn't make sense for most travelers. Most existing health policies cover you if you get sick away from home — but check your policy to be sure.
- ✓ **Lost-luggage insurance** is not necessary for most travelers. On domestic flights, checked baggage is covered up to \$2,500 per ticketed passenger. If you plan to check items more valuable than the

standard liability, see if your valuables are covered by your homeowner's policy, or get baggage insurance as part of your comprehensive travel-insurance package. Don't buy insurance at the airport; it's usually overpriced. Be sure to take any valuables or irreplaceable items with you in your carry-on luggage, because many valuables (including books, money, and electronics) aren't covered by airline policies.

If your luggage is lost, immediately file a lost-luggage claim at the airport, detailing the luggage contents. For most airlines, you must report delayed, damaged, or lost baggage within four hours of arrival. The airlines are required to deliver luggage, when found, directly to your house or destination free of charge.

For more information, contact one of the following recommended insurers: **Access America** (**866-807-3982**; www.accessamerica.com), **Travel Guard International** (**800-826-4919**; www.travelguard.com), **Travel Insured International** (**800-243-3174**; www.travelinsured.com), or **Travelex Insurance Services** (**888-457-4602**; www.travelex-insurance.com).

Staying Healthy when You Travel

Getting sick will ruin your vacation, so I *strongly* advise against it. (Of course, last time I checked, the viruses weren't listening to me any more than they probably listen to you.)



For domestic trips, most reliable healthcare plans provide coverage if you get sick away from home. For information on purchasing additional medical insurance for your trip, see the previous section.

If you suffer from a chronic illness, consult your doctor before your departure. Pack **prescription medications** in your carry-on luggage, and carry them in their original containers with pharmacy labels, otherwise they won't make it through airport security. Visitors from outside the United States should carry generic names of prescription drugs.

Talk to your doctor before leaving on a trip if you have a serious and/or chronic illness. For conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, or heart problems, wear a **MedicAlert identification tag** (**888-633-4298**; www.medicalert.org), which immediately alerts doctors to your condition and gives them access to your records through MedicAlert's 24-hour hot line. The U.S. **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (**800-311-3435**; www.cdc.gov) provides up-to-date information on health hazards by region or country and offers tips on food safety.

If you're staying in downtown Chicago, the closest hospital will likely be **Northwestern Memorial Hospital**, 251 E. Huron St. (**312-926-2000**; www.nmh.org), off North Michigan Avenue. The number for its physician-referral service is **312-926-8400**. The emergency department (**312-926-5188**) is at 250 E. Erie St. near Fairbanks Court.

Packing It Up

The classic packing advice is to start your packing by laying out on your bed everything you think you need — then getting rid of half of it. I hate this advice because I always wind up needing something I left behind. To me, the key is to check out the Weather Channel's Web site (www.weather.com) and see the long-range forecast. Then imagine what you would wear in your city in that weather, and pack it. Leave room in the suitcase, because you'll undoubtedly buy things while traveling.



If you want to bring only a small bag, you may not be able to leave space for purchases. If that's the case, a good trick is to pack an empty nylon duffel bag. On the way home, you can stuff it with your souvenirs and other loot.

Preparing for sun, rain, and wind

Chicago's famously changeable weather calls for these packing tips:

- ✓ **Always pack a sweater.** Even in summer, you can run into a cool evening by the lake or a theater or restaurant where the air-conditioning reaches polar levels.
- ✓ **If you're visiting in the winter, pack warm headgear.** You may be concerned about looking unstylish, but believe me, you'll appreciate this advice later. Don't worry about fashion. When temperatures drop in Chicago, no one goes without head covering.
- ✓ **If you're comfortable wearing shorts, you'll want to pack them for a spring or fall trip, as well as for a summer visit.** Some folks tend to rush the season, and you may see people strolling along the Mag Mile in shorts during a February mild spell.
- ✓ **Even in summer, a lightweight jacket is always a good idea.** The Windy City can get breezy at any time of year.

Unless you're planning a formal night out, you can leave the high heels and suits at home. Most restaurants, even pricier ones, have become more casual. For men, a dress shirt, a jacket, and a tie will more than suffice for any night out. (In fact, dress pants and a shirt with a sweater are acceptable almost anywhere.) For women, a long skirt with a nice sweater or blouse can work as well.

A few of the top restaurants and clubs (the Pump Room at the Omni Ambassador East Hotel is a notable example) enforce a dress code. If you plan to visit these spots, you need at least one dressy outfit.



Gift shops carry lots of clothes — from cheesy-logo fare to designer-label fashions. They also have raincoats, umbrellas, swimwear, and other weather-related items that you may have forgotten to pack. But be aware that you're likely to pay a premium!

Choosing and packing your suitcase

When choosing your suitcase, think about the kind of traveling you'll be doing. A bag with wheels is handy if you'll be mostly on hard floors but not on uneven surfaces or stairs. A fold-over garment bag helps keep dressy clothes wrinkle-free, but a garment bag may be unnecessary on a casual vacation. Hard-sided luggage protects breakable items better but weighs more than soft-sided bags.

When packing, start with the biggest, hardest items (usually shoes), and then fit smaller items in and around them. Pack breakable items between several layers of clothes, or keep them in your carry-on bag. Put things that can leak — shampoo, sunscreen, moisturizer — in plastic zipper bags, and throw in a few extra plastic bags for dirty laundry. Put identification tags on the inside and outside of your suitcase.

In your carry-on bag, pack anything breakable or irreplaceable, such as your return ticket, passport, expensive jewelry, contact lenses or glasses, and prescription medication. Also consider packing a book or magazines, a personal stereo with headphones, and a snack in the event that you don't like the airline food (or they don't give you more than a pack of peanuts or chips). Leave a little space for a sweater or jacket in case the airplane gets cold. See "Keeping Up with Airline Security Measures," later in this chapter, for information on what you can't pack in your carry-on bag.

Staying Connected by Cellphone or E-mail

Just because your cellphone works at home doesn't mean it'll work elsewhere in the country (thanks to our nation's fragmented cellphone system). It's a good bet that your phone will work in major cities, such as Chicago. But take a look at your wireless company's coverage map on its Web site before heading out — T-Mobile, Sprint, and Nextel are particularly weak in rural areas. If you need to stay in touch at a destination where you know your phone won't work, **rent a phone** that does from **InTouch USA** (**800-872-7626**; www.intouchglobal.com) or a rental-car location, but beware that you'll pay \$1 a minute or more for airtime.

If you're not from the United States, you'll be appalled at the poor reach of our **Global System for Mobiles (GSM) wireless network**, which is used by much of the rest of the world. Your phone will almost certainly work in Chicago; it may not work in many of Chicago's outlying areas. (To see where GSM phones work in the United States, check out www.t-mobile.com/coverage/national_popup.asp.) You also may not be able to send SMS (text messaging) home. Assume nothing — call your wireless provider and get the full scoop. In a worst-case scenario, you can always rent a phone; InTouch USA delivers to hotels.

Accessing the Internet away from Home

You have any number of ways to check your e-mail and access the Internet on the road. Of course, using your own laptop — or a personal digital assistant (PDA) — gives you the most flexibility. But even if you don't have a computer, you can still access your e-mail and even your office computer from cybercafes.

Finding a city that *doesn't* have a few cybercafes is difficult. Although there's no definitive directory for cybercafes — these are independent businesses, after all — three places to start looking are at www.cybercaptive.com and www.cybercafe.com. Likely neighborhoods to find a nearby cafe are those populated by college students — for example, around the DePaul University campus in the Lincoln Park neighborhood (roughly Halsted Avenue at Belmont Street); in Hyde Park, home to the University of Chicago; and even the streets just west of Michigan Avenue at Chicago Avenue that are home to Loyola University and its law school. In Chicago, try **Screenz**, 2717 N. Clark St., 1 block south of Diversey Ave. in Lincoln Park (**773-348-9300**; www.screenz.com), a computing center where you can check e-mail, burn CDs of your digital photos, and print out your favorite pictures.

Aside from formal cybercafes, most **public libraries** across the world offer Internet access free or for a small charge. Avoid **hotel business centers** unless you're willing to pay exorbitant rates (or unless access is included in your room rate).

Most major airports now have **Internet kiosks** scattered throughout their waiting areas. These kiosks, which you'll also see in shopping malls, hotel lobbies, and tourist-information offices around the world, give you basic Web access for a per-minute fee that's usually higher than cybercafe prices. The kiosks' clunkiness and high price mean you should avoid them whenever possible.

To retrieve your e-mail, ask your **Internet service provider (ISP)** if it has a Web-based interface tied to your existing e-mail account. If your ISP doesn't have such an interface, you can use the free **mail2web** service (www.mail2web.com) to view and reply to your home e-mail. For more flexibility, you may want to open a free, Web-based e-mail account with **Yahoo! Mail** (<http://mail.yahoo.com>). (Microsoft's Hotmail is another popular option, but Hotmail has severe spam problems.) Your home ISP may be able to forward your e-mail to the Web-based account automatically.

If you need to access files on your office computer, look into a service called **GoToMyPC** (www.gotomypc.com). It provides a Web-based interface for you to access and manipulate a distant PC from anywhere — even a cybercafe — provided your "target" PC is on and has an always-on connection to the Internet. The service offers top-quality security, but if you're worried about hackers, use your own laptop rather than a cybercafe computer to access the GoToMyPC system.

More and more hotels, cafes, and retailers are signing on as Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity) hotspots. Mac owners have their own networking technology: Apple AirPort. **T-Mobile Hotspot** (www.t-mobile.com/hotspot) serves up wireless connections at more than 1,000 Starbucks coffee shops nationwide. **Boingo** (www.boingo.com) and **Wayport** (www.wayport.com) have set up networks in airports and high-class hotel lobbies. iPass providers (see later in this section) also give you access to a few hundred wireless hotel-lobby setups.

In downtown Chicago, both **Starbucks** and the sandwich chain **Così** have numerous locations with Wi-Fi access. In the southern part of the Loop, the **Harold Washington Library Center**, 400 S. State St. (☎ **312-747-4300**), also has wireless access. Wireless hotspots in Lincoln Park include **Panera Bread**, 616 W. Diversey Pkwy. (☎ **773-528-4556**), and **Argo Tea**, 958 W. Armitage Ave. (☎ **773-388-1880**). To locate other hotspots that provide **free wireless networks** in cities around the world, go to www.personalitelco.net/index.cgi/WirelessCommunities.

Most business-class hotels in the United States offer dataports for laptop modems, and a few thousand hotels in the United States and Europe now offer free high-speed Internet access. In addition, major ISPs have **local access numbers** around the world, allowing you to go online by placing a local call. The **iPass** network also has dial-up numbers around the world. You'll have to sign up with an iPass provider, who will then tell you how to set up your computer for your destination(s). For a list of iPass providers, go to www.ipass.com and click on Individuals Buy Now. One solid provider is **i2roam** (☎ **866-811-6209** or 920-235-0475; www.i2roam.com).

Wherever you go, if you don't have a Wi-Fi equipped computer, bring a **connection kit** with the right power source, a spare phone cord, and/or a spare Ethernet network cable (if you'll be logging on via dial-up or cable) — or find out whether your hotel supplies them to guests.

Keeping Up with Airline Security Measures

With the federalization of airport security, security procedures at U.S. airports are more stable and consistent than ever. Generally, you'll be fine if you arrive at the airport **one and a half hours** before a domestic flight and **two hours** before an international flight.

Bring a **current, government-issued photo ID** such as a driver's license or passport. Keep your ID at the ready to show at check-in, the security checkpoint, and sometimes even the gate. (Children under 18 do not need government-issued photo IDs for domestic flights, but they do for international flights to most countries.)

In 2003, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) phased out **gate check-in** at all U.S. airports. And **E-tickets** have made paper tickets

nearly obsolete. If you have an E-ticket, you can beat the ticket-counter lines by using airport **electronic kiosks** or even **online check-in** from your home computer. Online check-in involves logging on to your airline's Web site, accessing your reservation, and printing out your boarding pass — and the airline may even offer you bonus miles to do so! If you're using a kiosk at the airport, bring the same credit card you used to book the ticket or your frequent-flier card. Print out your boarding pass from the kiosk and proceed to the security checkpoint with your pass and a photo ID. If you're checking bags or looking to snag an exit-row seat, you'll be able to do so using most airline kiosks. Even the smaller airlines are employing the kiosk system, but always call your airline to make sure these alternatives are available. **Curbside check-in** is also a good way to avoid lines, although a few airlines still ban curbside check-in; call before you go. Some airlines are now charging a flat fee of about \$2 a bag for curbside check-in.

Security-checkpoint lines can still make for a long wait. If you have trouble standing for long periods of time, tell an airline employee; the airline will provide a wheelchair. Speed up security by **not wearing metal objects** such as big belt buckles. If you have metallic body parts, a note from your doctor can prevent a long chat with the security screeners. Keep in mind that only **ticketed passengers** are allowed past security, except for folks escorting disabled passengers or children.

Federalization has stabilized **what you can carry on** and **what you can't**. Currently, the general rule is that sharp things are out, and only toiletries of 3 fluid ounces or less packed in a resealable plastic bag can pass through security. You can now take with you on the aircraft any beverages you purchase in the boarding areas (past security). Travelers in the United States are allowed one carry-on bag, plus a "personal item" such as a purse, briefcase, or laptop bag. Carry-on hoarders can stuff all sorts of things into a laptop bag; as long as it has a laptop in it, it's still considered a personal item. Of course, all regulations are subject to change at a moment's notice. Check the TSA Web site (www.tsa.gov/public/index.jsp) for up-to-the-minute details.

Airport screeners may decide that your checked luggage needs to be searched by hand. You can purchase luggage locks that allow screeners to open and relock a checked bag if hand-searching is necessary. Look for Travel Sentry-certified locks at luggage or travel shops and Brookstone stores (you can buy them online at www.brookstone.com). These locks, approved by the TSA, can be opened by luggage inspectors with a special code or key. For more information on the locks, visit www.travelsentry.org. If you use something other than TSA-approved locks, your lock will be cut off your suitcase if a TSA agent needs to hand-search your luggage.

Part III

Settling into Chicago

The 5th Wave By Rich Tennant

©RICH TENNANT



"I'd give you a hot dog with everything but I'm out of Fruit Loops."

In this part . . .

Getting your bearings in a new place is difficult: Distances are longer or shorter than they appear on the map, and north, south, east, and west can get mixed up easily. This part is designed to help orient you in the Windy City and give you a lay of the land. After you've gotten acquainted with our neighborhoods, you're ready to get the lowdown on Chicago's hotels. I discuss the best options for families, for luxury, for bargain hunters, and more.

Finally, whether you're into tried-and-true restaurants or table-hopping in see-and-be-seen spots, this part includes a good introduction to Chicago's restaurants. I describe Chicago's best restaurant areas, specialties, and deals, and I offer complete reviews of my favorite places for snacks and meals.

Chapter 8

Arriving and Getting Oriented

In This Chapter

- Traveling from the airport to your hotel
 - Getting to know the city's layout and neighborhoods
 - Finding information while you're in Chicago
-

Finding your way around the Windy City is a breeze. For openers, whenever you spot Lake Michigan dead ahead — and it's pretty hard to miss — you know you're facing east. In this part of the book, you'll find out how to reach the city from the airports, pick up the finer points of orienting yourself, and get the scoop on Chicago's neighborhoods.

Making Your Way to Your Hotel

Because Chicago is at the hub of the interstate highway system, many visitors arrive by car. In addition, Amtrak serves Chicago relatively well, even in this era of diminished train travel. Nonetheless, Chicago's airports provide most of the city's visitor activity. Each day, several hundred thousand air travelers fly in and out of Chicago.

In the following sections, I give you the scoop on how to get to your hotel no matter how you arrive.

Arriving by plane

Chicago has two major airports: O'Hare and Midway. Despite their combined vast capacity, the city has outgrown them both. For years, the creation of a third airport has been a political football, with plans afoot to locate an airfield in Chicago's far-south suburbs, in neighboring Indiana, and even offshore on a pod in Lake Michigan.

Sometime in the new millennium, Chicago will get a third airport. Until then, the city must struggle with what it has. Although it can be frustrating and daunting, O'Hare is fairly user-friendly, thanks to a revitalization in the last decade. At the same time, Midway has gone from a virtually

The time-honored tradition of being stuck at O'Hare

If you find yourself spending significant time at O'Hare, planned or unexpected, check out the **visitor services**. Information booths are available on the lower levels of Terminals 1, 2, and 3, outside the lower-level customs area, and on the upper level of Terminal 5. (By the way, there's no Terminal 4.) The information booths are open daily from 8:15 a.m. to 8 p.m. Stop by for an airport map, or dial ☎ 773-686-2200 for an extensive menu of airport information.

Travelers with youngsters head for the interactive **Kids on the Fly Children's Museum** in Terminal 2, near the security checkpoint. Hand-on exhibits focus on aviation, travel, and geography.

Some of the Windy City's signature food and drink is available at O'Hare. **Pizzeria Uno**, **Gold Coast Dogs**, and **Lou Mitchell's Express** (a satellite of Chicago's best breakfast spot) are in Terminal 5; **Goose Island**, the city's best-known microbrewery, is in Terminal 3.

abandoned facility to a bustling airport, expanding exponentially to accommodate the growing number of travelers.

If you fly into O'Hare

Sprawling O'Hare International Airport has the dubious distinction of being one of the world's busiest air-travel hubs. Although traffic at Midway has grown spectacularly over the last decade, O'Hare is by far the city's major airport. In fact, it handles more passengers and aircraft operations than any other airport in the *world*.

Many visitors grumble that they're greeted by unprotected luggage carousels, lines for cabs, grouchy cops, loudspeaker threats to tow illegally parked cars, and bus rides to rental-car lots in the hinterland.

Good things take place at O'Hare, too. A link to Chicago's subway system dodges gridlocked traffic, shuttling you downtown in about 45 minutes for only \$2. If you prefer a cab (lines are not always long), an airport employee who's in charge of making sure the cab line moves efficiently will pair strangers willing to share rides and cut costs. And should weather unexpectedly lock you in, a pedestrian tunnel means that good food, comfortable accommodations, and an array of services are only a short walk away at the excellent on-site O'Hare Hilton Hotel.

The trek between terminals can be long, but an elevated people-mover system, opened in 1993 as part of \$2 billion in improvements, whisks passengers at 35 mph between the terminals and long-term Parking Lot E. Stations are located at each terminal and at the remote parking lot.



If you leave O'Hare for another U.S. destination, you often encounter long lines that wind up to the ticket counters like a conga line at a wedding reception. Avoid them with curbside check-in, available for most domestic flights only.

A cab ride downtown from O'Hare costs about \$40. The number for **Yellow Cab** is **312-829-4222**; for **Checker Cab**, **312-243-2537**.

Airport buses, operated by **Continental Airport Express** (**800-654-7871** or 312-454-7800; www.airportexpress.com), cost \$21 one-way and stop at most downtown hotels.



If you're willing to share your taxi from the airport to downtown, you can save almost 50 percent on the fare. Join the queue (if there is one) at the cabstand, and when you reach the head of the line, tell the airport employee that you want to share a ride. In a limousine, a ride for three people from O'Hare Airport into downtown runs about \$75. Call **My Chauffer Limousine** (**800-762-6888** or 630-920-8888) in advance if this appeals to you.

The **Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)** (**312-836-7000**) subway (called the *El*, short for "elevated" train) is the cheapest and often fastest way downtown, but not necessarily the safest. Avoid the subway late at night. Rush hours and daylight hours are safe enough. To reach the *El*, follow the signs displayed near baggage-claim areas and in arrival halls. The signs guide you through a series of ped-ways (served by escalators, elevators, and moving walkways) to the CTA Blue-Line train stop.

Another option for getting into the city is renting a car. Most major car-rental companies have counters at O'Hare, but their lots are remote. You can pick up a shuttle bus outside the baggage-claim area to take you to your rental car.

Early to bed, early to rise

Hilton Chicago O'Hare Airport (**800-445-8667** or 773-686-8000), within the airport, couldn't be more convenient for travelers with early flights. The 858 guest rooms are both well appointed *and* soundproof, despite being virtually on the runways.

Even if you're not a guest, you can work out at the 10,000-square-foot health club, which has a pool, whirlpool, steam room, and sauna. The fee of \$11 a day includes towels, shampoo, conditioner, and hair dryers.

The Hilton is also home to the **Gaslight Club**, an establishment in the Playboy Club genre. **Andiamo** is a full-service restaurant that serves three meals daily and supplies the Hilton's "**Food on the Fly**" program (**773-601-1733**). Hot sandwiches and entrees, mostly priced under \$10, are a great alternative to airline food.

If you fly into Midway

Midway Airport ( **773-838-0600**) almost died in the 1980s, but the addition of flights by ATA and Southwest Airlines revived the facility, which once looked like a strip mall. Today, the airport has undergone a major reconstruction. A new terminal including restaurants and baggage carousels was built to accommodate the increased traffic.

Midway is closer to downtown than O'Hare, and under optimum conditions, the trip from downtown via highways (car, cab, or shuttle bus) can take less than half an hour. But due to traffic, the journey often takes as long as the trip from O'Hare.

Cab rides to Midway are about \$5 cheaper than to O'Hare from downtown. Cab sharing from the airport is available, but only if you're going downtown. The airport shuttle van to downtown hotels is cheaper, too, at \$16 one-way.

Like O'Hare, most major car-rental companies have counters at Midway, but their lots are remote. Most parking is in distant lots served by shuttles, which you can pick up outside of the baggage-claim area.

The CTA (the El) also serves Midway. The Orange Line trip from Midway is much shorter than the Blue Line ride from O'Hare. But the walk from the terminal to the stop at Midway is long (even without luggage). To get from the terminal to the El, walk from the terminal toward baggage claim, but do *not* take the escalators down to baggage claim. Instead, continue walking up the ramp toward the parking garage. Along the way you'll spot signs marked TRAINS TO CITY. There is one section of moving sidewalk, but most of the way, you'll have to hoof it.

Arriving by car

All roads lead to Chicago, or so it seems. From the east, I-80 and I-90 cross the northern sector of Illinois. I-90 splits off and turns into Chicago via the Skyway and the Dan Ryan Expressway. From there, I-90 runs through Wisconsin, and beyond as far west as Seattle. If you're coming from the south, you can enter Chicago on I-55, which winds its way up the Mississippi Valley and enters Chicago from the west, along with the Stevenson Expressway. I-57 originates in southern Illinois and connects in Chicago on the west leg of the Dan Ryan. From the east, I-94 links Detroit and Chicago, and leaves the city heading northwest via the Kennedy Expressway.

Arriving by train

Nearly every transcontinental Amtrak route runs through or to Chicago's sprawling Union Station, which is also a hub for Metra commuter train service to the south and southwest suburbs. The loading and unloading area lies below street level near the heart of the Loop. During the day, you should have no problem hailing a cab curbside. At night, you may want to call for one from inside the station.

North on Canal Street from Union Station is Northwestern Station (now officially called the Ogilvie Transportation Center), the hub of Metra train service to the north and northwest suburbs.

Figuring Out the Neighborhoods

Remember this easy way to keep yourself oriented in Chicago: The lake is always to the east. “The lake,” of course, is Lake Michigan, which disappears into the horizon like some huge inland sea. As my friend from London said while staring trancelike at the lake, “You . . . can’t . . . see . . . across it.”

The Chicago River forms a *Y* that divides the city into three sections: North Side, West Side, and South Side (the east side, of course, is the lake). The Loop, the business and financial center of the city, is located just south of the Chicago River. The main shopping district is North Michigan Avenue, also known as the Magnificent Mile, which stretches north of the Chicago River, not too far west of the lake. On the West Side is Bucktown/Wicker Park, the Randolph Street Market District, and many outlying residential neighborhoods.

As a former part of the Northwest Territories, Chicago is laid out in a grid system, with point zero located at the intersection of State and Madison streets, within the Loop. State Street divides east and west addresses and Madison divides the north and south. Complicating this straightforward layout are a few diagonal streets and streets that end unexpectedly, only to take up again a block or two farther along. Here are some key points to remember:

- ✓ **The focal point of the city’s numbering system is the intersection of State and Madison streets, in the heart of the Loop.** Madison Street runs east-west and is the north-south divider. State Street runs north-south and is the east-west divider.
- ✓ **The Loop is the heart of downtown.** Its approximate boundaries are the Chicago River to the north, Congress Street to the south, Halsted Street to the west, and Wabash Avenue to the east.
- ✓ **Numbered streets always run east-west.**
- ✓ **All north-south streets have names, not numbers.**
- ✓ **The first few streets south of Madison are named for American presidents in the order of their terms:** Madison, Monroe, Adams, Jackson, Van Buren, Harrison, Polk, and Taylor.
- ✓ **Streets north of Madison follow a grid system.** Division Street, for example, is an east-west street approximately 12 blocks north of Madison and is numbered 1200 North. The same system applies to north-south streets. For example, Halsted Street, approximately 8 blocks west of State Street, is numbered 800 West.

Yes, Virginia, that is a lake

Lake Michigan is 22,300 square miles in size and reaches depths of over 900 feet. The other Great Lakes are Erie, Superior, Ontario, and Huron. Chicago honors each of the lakes with a street on the east-west corridor intersecting the Michigan Avenue shopping district. The U.S.-Canada international boundary runs through all the Great Lakes except Lake Michigan, which lies wholly in U.S. territory.

Chicago is a city of neighborhoods, many with large ethnic populations. Prominent Chicago neighborhoods, from south to north, include

- ✓ **Chinatown:** The city's Chinese enclave is compact, and the main thoroughfares are along Cermak Road (also known as 22nd Street) and Wentworth and Archer avenues. Here you find good restaurants, such as **Three Happiness**, 209 W. Cermak Rd. (☎ 312-842-1964), interesting tearooms, and shops.
- ✓ **The Loop:** Chicago's downtown is named after the elevated train track that loops around the financial district. The main attractions include riding the El and visiting the Mercantile Exchange, where you can watch traders in the pit doing their thing, whatever that is. (It's always been beyond me!)
- ✓ **Near West:** Former warehouses have been converted to living and working space just west of the Kennedy Expressway. The area includes Greektown and Oprah's workplace, Harpo Studios, plus a host of hip restaurants and bars.
- ✓ **Magnificent Mile:** The northern length of Michigan Avenue is Chicago's version of Fifth Avenue, Oxford Street, and Rodeo Drive. The Mag Mile stretches from the Chicago River to the Oak Street Beach. Anchoring the south end are the distinctive Wrigley Building and Gothic Tribune Towers; at the north end is The Drake Hotel. Highlights include the John Hancock Center Observatory, Millennium Park, Fourth Presbyterian Church, Water Tower Place, Chicago Place Mall, and Westfield North Bridge Mall.
- ✓ **Streeterville:** Adjoining the Magnificent Mile, Streeterville is a booming neighborhood of trendy restaurants, bars, and tucked-away boutiques and galleries. Streeterville is bounded by Michigan Avenue to the west, Lake Michigan to the east, the Chicago River to the south, and Oak Street to the north.
- ✓ **River North:** Go gallery hopping and visit the site of some of the city's hippest restaurants and clubs. Some 70 galleries are located in an area dubbed "SuHu" (two of its major east-west streets are Superior and Huron). The neighborhood is bounded by Chicago Avenue to the north, the Chicago River to the west and south, and State Street to the east.

- ✓ **Near North:** This feast of restaurants, bars, and boutiques just west and north of the Magnificent Mile includes the famous rows of bars on Rush and Division streets. You can find great goings-on for going out.
- ✓ **Gold Coast:** The bastion of Chicago's old money, this beautiful neighborhood has many 19th-century homes and runs along Lake Shore Drive north of Michigan Avenue.
- ✓ **Bucktown/Wicker Park:** An area thick with artists, in recent years, it has become somewhat gentrified, with waves of hot new restaurants, alternative culture, and loft-dwelling yuppies rolling in. In fact, *Bon Appétit* magazine has recognized Wicker Park as the new mecca for the best neighborhood restaurants in Chicago. The focal point of the neighborhood is the intersection of Milwaukee and North avenues.
- ✓ **Lincoln Park:** The young and the restless, families just starting out, and anyone who can afford the high prices inhabit Chicago's most popular neighborhood. On its far eastern edge is the neighborhood's namesake park containing the nation's oldest zoo and two museums. Come to this neighborhood for some of Chicago's most popular bars, restaurants, theater companies, and retail shops.
- ✓ **Wrigleyville:** Named after Wrigley Field, the neighborhood surrounding the ballpark is filled with "three flats" and "five flats" — apartment buildings with three or five floors of apartments — and sports bars. Many young people just launching their careers in Chicago choose to live here.
- ✓ **Andersonville:** This formerly Swedish enclave stretches along 3 or 4 blocks of North Clark Street north of Foster Avenue. On Saturdays, a bell ringer makes his rounds as storekeepers ceremonially sweep sidewalks with corn brooms. Highlights include the Swedish-American Museum, a pair of Scandinavian delis, a Swedish bakery, and two good Swedish restaurants.
- ✓ **Hyde Park:** Home of the University of Chicago, Hyde Park is an oasis of liberal thinking and intellectualism, hemmed in on all sides by some of Chicago's most crime-ridden neighborhoods. The Museum of Science and Industry is the main attraction, with Rockefeller Chapel at the University of Chicago a close second.



For the locations of these neighborhoods, and many others, see the color map inside the front cover of this book.

Finding Information after You Arrive

The best source of information is the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau (**877-CHICAGO**; www.877chicago.com). The **Chicago Office of Tourism**, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St., Chicago, IL

60602 (**312-744-2400** or 312-744-2947 [TTY]; <http://egov.cityofchicago.org>), will mail you a packet of materials with information on upcoming events and attractions. The **Illinois Bureau of Tourism** (**800-2CONNECT** or 800-406-6418 [TTY]; www.enjoyillinois.com) will also send you a packet of information about Chicago and other Illinois destinations.

When you're in Chicago, one of the easiest ways to gather information is to visit the **Chicago Office of Tourism** in the Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St. (**877-244-2246** or 312-744-2400). It's open weekdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Printed materials, including the ***Chicago Visitor's Guide***, are available free. While you're at this historic building, take a free, guided tour and admire the marble, mosaics, and Tiffany stained glass. You can also enjoy free entertainment, such as movies, music, art exhibitions, and guest speakers. In summer, tours of Chicago's diverse neighborhoods depart from the center.

Another walk-in visitor center operated by the Chicago Office of Tourism is in the historic **Water Tower Pumping Station**, 186 E. Pearson St. (**312-744-8783**). Open daily from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., the tourist office distributes printed materials and is a primary stop for trolley and bus tours. **Hot Tix**, where theatergoers can purchase discounted tickets, is here, too (see Chapter 15).

The **Illinois Marketplace at Navy Pier**, 600 E. Grand Ave. (**312-595-5400**), stays open somewhat late to accommodate visitors to Chicago's most popular tourist attraction. Hours are Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. The marketplace has guidebooks and maps, and sells tickets for Lake Michigan boat rides and dinner cruises that depart from the pier.

Geared to business travelers, the **Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau** office at McCormick Place on the Lake, 2301 S. Lake Shore Dr. (**312-567-8500**), has information on Chicago's major points of interest. It's open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Getting Around Chicago

When in Chicago, do as Chicagoans do and take the train or the bus. CTA subway and elevated trains connect most of the city's key attractions and provide fast, cheap transportation between downtown and O'Hare and Midway airports. Although subject to the same gridlock as cars during rush hours, buses are also ideal for getting around.

For tips on sightseeing by public transportation, see Chapter 11.

Traveling to the 'burbs on Metra

Metra operates commuter trains on 12 lines between the suburbs and several downtown terminals. The system is separate from the CTA, with its own fares. Service is frequent during rush hours, and lines run every one to three hours otherwise. Most routes run daily. On some lines, Metra offers heavily discounted weekend passes to encourage leisure travelers to use the system. Trains leave for the suburbs from Union Station (where Amtrak is also based) and Northwestern Station (also known as the Ogilvie Transportation Center) in the Loop. If you're taking a Metra train, make sure to ask from which station your train leaves. For information, contact Metra Passenger Services (☎ 312-322-6777; www.metrarail.com) during regular business hours or RTA travel information (☎ 312-836-7000) after-hours.

By the "El" — Chicago's subway

The CTA rail system, also referred to as the *El* (short for “elevated”), has elevated tracks, surface tracks, and underground tracks — often all on the same line. The fare is \$1.75, and you need a pass because tokens have been eliminated. All stations sell passes during open hours. There’s no central station, but the Loop is the center of the system. Stations are named for the streets where they’re located.

For a couple of useful maps of Chicago’s subway and El lines, see the Cheat Sheet at the front of this book. All the lines are color-coded. The Blue Line runs between O’Hare and downtown; the Orange Line runs between Midway and downtown. Here are the main subway and El lines:

- ✓ **Blue Line:** Runs west-northwest to O’Hare airport
- ✓ **Brown Line:** Zigzags on a north-northwest route
- ✓ **Green Line:** Runs along Wabash and Lake streets and travels west-south
- ✓ **Orange Line:** Runs southwest and serves Midway Airport
- ✓ **Purple Line:** Provides express service north-south to and from Evanston
- ✓ **Red Line:** Runs along State Street and heads on a north-south route

Most trains run daily every 5 to 25 minutes through late evening. The Red and Blue lines run 24 hours. For information, call the CTA at ☎ 312-836-7000 or go to www.yourcta.com.

By bus

CTA buses are a convenient, cheap way to explore downtown and many of its ethnic neighborhoods. Buses stop about every 2 blocks — look for blue CTA bus-stop signs that list bus numbers and routes. On most

Sky train: Chicago's El

Watch any Hollywood movie or TV series set in Chicago, and chances are they'll feature at least one scene set against our screeching elevated train system, more commonly known as the **El** (witness *The Fugitive*, *ER*, and others). The trains symbolize Chicago's gritty, "city-that-works" attitude, but they actually began as a cutting-edge technology.

After the Great Fire of 1871, Chicago made a remarkable recovery; within 20 years, the downtown district was swarming with people, streetcars, and horses (but no stop-lights). To help relieve congestion, the city took to the sky, building a system of elevated trains 15 feet above all the madness. The first El trains were steam-powered, but by the end of the century, all the lines — run by separate companies — used electricity. In 1895, the three El companies collaborated to build a set of tracks into and around the central business district that all the lines would then share. By 1897, the "Loop" was up and running.

Chicago's El wasn't the nation's first. New York City started running its elevated trains in 1867. But the New York El has almost disappeared, moving underground and turning into a subway early last century. With 289 miles of track, Chicago has the biggest El in the country and the second-largest public transportation system.

routes, buses run every day, every 10 to 20 minutes through late evening. For exact times, call the CTA at **312-836-7000**.

Chicago buses and trains accept dollar bills but do not give change. A ride costs \$2; a 25¢ transfer is good for two additional rides on any route within a two-hour period. Feed bills into a machine next to the driver, drop coins into a fare box, or insert transfer cards and transit passes into another machine alongside the driver. The fare for children ages 8 to 11 and seniors is 85¢, plus 15¢ for a transfer. Children 7 and under ride free.



CTA visitor passes are a convenient budget-stretching idea. For \$5, a one-day pass offers unlimited rides on CTA buses and trains for 24 hours from the first time you use it. You can also buy passes good for two, three, and five days (\$18). Passes are sold at visitor centers, Hot Tix booths, select museums, both airports, Union Station, and other locations. Although the passes save you the trouble of feeding the fare machines, remember that they're economical only if you plan to make at least three distinct trips at least two or more hours apart. For advance sales, call **888-968-7282** or go to www.yourcta.com.

Be sure to equip yourself with one of the excellent free route maps available at all CTA stations. The maps pinpoint major attractions and hotels in relation to bus and train routes. If you're unsure which bus or train runs to your destination, call the **CTA information line (312-836-7000)**. Tell the attendant your point of origin and destination, and he'll give you a route. The line is staffed daily from 5 a.m. to 1 a.m.

CTA buses (routes 1–204) run in the city and nearby suburbs. Pace buses (**847-364-7223**; www.pacebus.com) run throughout the suburbs; connect with the CTA; and accept CTA transfer cards, transit cards, and passes.

By taxi

In areas with plenty of pedestrian traffic, such as the Loop, North Michigan Avenue, and River North, taxis are easy to hail. If you can't find one, head for the nearest major hotel; if the doorman finds one for you, a \$1 or \$2 tip is in order.

Outside downtown and late at night, cabs are fewer and harder to flag down. To call ahead for a ride, try **Yellow Cab** (**312-820-4222**) or **Checker Cab** (**312-243-2537**).



Taxi fares are \$2.25 for meter start-up, plus \$1.80 for each additional mile, and \$1 per additional passenger ages 12 to 65.

By car

You don't need a car to explore Chicago. In fact, you're likely better without one. Parking is expensive, street parking is tough to find, and the volume of traffic is at its limit. Public transit is pretty far-reaching. And even better news: Your own two feet are the best way to get up close and check out Chicago from street level.

On foot

You can cover plenty of ground on foot while avoiding gridlock and crowded subway trains. Chicago is a great walking city, with several attractions within relatively short distances, wide sidewalks, and tempting window-shopping — depending on your willpower, maybe that last one's not so good.



Taking the free trolley

Want to take a ride on the giant Ferris wheel at Navy Pier and then perhaps head to River North to grab a burger at Rock-N-Roll McDonald's? Forget about parking and take the free trolley shuttle that operates along the Illinois Street–Grand Avenue corridor between Navy Pier and State Street. The trolley runs every 10 to 20 minutes from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily, year-round, making about a dozen stops along the way. The service was started to relieve traffic congestion at Navy Pier.

During the summer, the city also operates free trolleys daily between Michigan Avenue and the Museum Campus (site of the Adler Planetarium, the Field Museum of Natural History, and the Shedd Aquarium); the trolleys run on weekends in the fall and spring.

How to get to McCormick Place Conference Center

BY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Although many trade shows at McCormick Place, at 23rd Street and Lake Shore Drive ( **312-791-7000**; www.mccormickplace.com), arrange transportation from hotels downtown and along North Michigan Avenue, you can also get there from Michigan Avenue by taking the **no. 3 King Drive bus**, which deposits passengers at the foot of McCormick Place's South Building, at 23rd Street and Martin Luther King, Jr., Drive. The no. 3 runs from early morning to about 11 p.m.

You can also take a **Metra Electric** commuter train to McCormick Place North. Catch the train in the Loop at the Randolph Street Station at Randolph Street and Michigan Avenue. For more info, call the RTA/CTA Travel Information hot line at  **312-836-7000**.

BY CAR

From the Loop and North Michigan Avenue: Take Lake Shore Drive South and follow the signs to McCormick Place.

From O'Hare Airport: Take the Northwest Tollway (I-90) to the Kennedy/Dan Ryan Expressway (I-94) to the Stevenson Expressway North (I-55). Take the Stevenson Expressway north to Lake Shore Drive, and follow the signs to McCormick Place.

From Midway Airport: Take the Stevenson Expressway (I-55) north to Lake Shore Drive South. Follow the signs to McCormick Place.

PARKING

You'll find two main parking lots: one at 31st Street and Lake Shore Drive, and the other across the street from the South Building, at 2215 S. Prairie Ave.

Some of my favorite walks are right in the heart of downtown. The Magnificent Mile, for example, is a window-shopper's delight that also offers some architectural gems. On the lakefront, you can stroll past a long string of high-rise apartment buildings on one side and a sandy beach on the other. Just north of downtown, you can walk through the excellent, free Lincoln Park Zoo.



Chicago is as safe as most major cities. Always use common sense. If you don't feel safe, you probably aren't — get into a taxi immediately. Generally safe areas include North Michigan Avenue (and the intersecting streets), Streeterville, River North, Rush Street, Gold Coast, and Lincoln Park. During the day, the Loop is crowded with businesspeople and safe. At night, most of the Loop tends to empty out with the exception of the North Loop Theater District, where plenty of people and cabs still congregate.

Chapter 9

Checking In at Chicago's Best Hotels

In This Chapter

- ▶ Selecting the hotel or bed-and-breakfast that's right for you
 - ▶ Choosing the right neighborhood
 - ▶ Scoping out the best hotels in the city
 - ▶ Knowing your options if you can't get your main pick
 - ▶ Indexing hotels by location and price
-

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ou may be the kind of traveler who thinks a hotel room is simply a place to sleep and stow your luggage. In that case, you don't need two pools, a half-dozen restaurants and lounges, a grand ballroom, and a health club. Nor do you need to shell out for those nonessential extras.

On the other hand, if you enjoy taking full advantage of a hotel's amenities — afternoon tea with harp music, a day at the spa, arcades packed with shops — you can find hotels with those, too. But you usually pay extra for the privilege. You can enjoy the best of both worlds by staying at a no-frills property and visiting other hotels to enjoy tea and jazz, and to relax with a cocktail by the fountain in a fancy lobby bar with a piano. In Chicago, you can find rooms at both ends of the price and comfort spectrum, and a great many in between.

Because you need a place in Chicago to hang your hat and rest your head, the most important part of planning a trip is nailing down where you're going to stay. Four crucial factors come into play: price, location, roominess, and amenities.

Getting to Know Your Options

When it comes to accommodations, Chicago *does* have something for everyone in terms of style, size, price, and location. You can suit both your personality and your pocketbook.

If you want luxury, you can find it at properties such as the **Four Seasons**, the **Ritz-Carlton**, or **The Peninsula**. Boutique-style luxury hotels made

their mark in Chicago with the splashy 2006 opening of **The James Chicago**. If you're interested in combining history and upscale accommodations, look no further than **The Drake Hotel** and the venerable **InterContinental Chicago**.

If you're comfortable with chains — or have a favorite — you can find the **Hilton, Hyatt, Sheraton, Radisson, Embassy Suites, Doubletree Guest Suites**, and others. Even **Red Roof Inn** and **Comfort Inn** have classy hotels (by those chains' no-frills standards) close to the heart of the Magnificent Mile. If you prefer a suite and want to pay a little less for the space, travel less than 5 miles north to the **City Suites Hotel**. The Hampton Inn chain made an interesting move by creating a boutique hotel atop the LaSalle Bank Theatre — if a Loop location is what you're seeking, you can check out the **Hampton Majestic**.

Music lovers can immerse themselves in the funky atmosphere at the **House of Blues Hotel** in Marina City, or the **Hard Rock Hotel**, just south of the Chicago River off of Michigan Avenue, a rehab of the famous Carbon and Carbide skyscraper.

For European-style digs, look into accommodations at small boutique hotels, such as the **Whitehall** and **Tremont**. Or try the **Hotel Allegro** and **Hotel Burnham**, stylish hostelleries converted from historic buildings in Chicago's revitalized Loop.

Bed-and-breakfasts

Chicago may not seem like a bed-and-breakfast (B&B) kind of town. Nonetheless, B&Bs are a viable option for visitors. Many locals share their homes, offering B&B accommodations in the European style.

You'll also find a wide range of unhosted B&B accommodations. These consist of a suite or an apartment that you have all to yourself — a home away from home. Sometimes the host is there to greet you and then leaves you with a set of keys and breakfast items in the fridge.

One of the best ways to locate either kind of B&B accommodations is through a reservation service, such as **At Home Inn Chicago, Inc.** (☎ 800-375-7084 or 312-640-1050; www.athomeinnchicago.com). This service represents about 50 establishments, all within the city, from the South Loop to the Lakeview neighborhood (with a few farther north). These are a mix of hosted guest rooms in houses and apartments and unhosted accommodations in self-contained apartments. For example, \$275 a night gets you a three-bedroom, one-and-a-half-bathroom condo in a Lincoln Park Victorian home. For about \$185 a night, you can unpack in a one-bedroom apartment in the Loop.

Stand-alone inns are also a nice option. **Windy City Urban Inn** (☎ 773-248-7091; www.windycityinn.com) is a Victorian-era B&B in the Lincoln Park area with five rooms in the main house plus three apartments in a carriage house. **The Wheeler Mansion** (☎ 312-945-2020; www.wheelermansion.com) an exquisitely restored 1870s Second Empire-style B&B,

is just two blocks from McCormick Place and a convenient option for those traveling on business.

Lodgings for families with kids



Families won't want to pick the kind of hotel where parents find themselves cringing at every sound a child makes. When you have kids in tow, big and bustling can be better. You may want to avoid small boutique hotels, where a certain "hush" pervades the atmosphere, and go for the hustle and bustle of a 2,000-room behemoth such as the Hyatt Regency, where the noise of kids blends right in. If you opt for an all-suites hotel, you'll have an extra room with a separate TV. That may help adults and youngsters better coexist in the relative confinement of a hotel. All-suites hotels typically have kitchens with refrigerators and microwaves (for economizing with a dine-in meal) and a dining area.

Location can also be an important consideration for families traveling with children. Pick a property in River North and you're just steps away from such kid-pleasers as **Rock-N-Roll McDonald's** (Chapter 10), the **Hard Rock Cafe**, 63 W. Ontario St. at North State Street (☎ 312-943-2252), and the **Rainforest Cafe**, 605 N. Clark St. at Ohio Street (☎ 312-787-1501).

Hotels for travelers with disabilities

Finding wheelchair-accessible accommodations in Chicago can be something of a challenge. Many of the city's storied hotels are old and not designed for guests with disabilities. Many older hotels (such as the **InterContinental Chicago**) have been renovated to include a small number of wheelchair-accessible guest rooms. The problem is that the tiered floors and sweeping staircases that made these hosteries famous aren't tailored to meet the needs of patrons with mobility impairments. The best bets for travelers with disabilities are the newer hotels, such as the **Courtyard by Marriott**. Unfortunately, accessibility and low cost are not typically found together. Most inexpensive digs don't offer wheelchair-accessible rooms at all. Remember to be explicit about your needs when you make your reservation.

Location, location, location

Chicago's core is relatively compact. If shopping along North Michigan Avenue is the primary objective of your visit, you want to stay at a hotel along or near the **Magnificent Mile**. If you don't mind a short commute, you can stay in the **North Loop** and walk or take the 151 bus north along Michigan Avenue. Likewise, if you have business in the financial district along South LaSalle Street, a hotel in the **Gold Coast** won't put you too far away. Public transportation is plentiful, and cab rides around downtown are relatively swift. Streets don't gridlock as often or as intensely as they do in, say, New York. However, beware of the bridges: In the summer, traffic can be held up for ten minutes as bridges are raised to allow private yachts egress along the Chicago River.



Finding convenient lodgings in the neighborhood where you spend the bulk of your time is most helpful. Having a couple of first-rate restaurants nearby, or a museum or gallery or two, makes sense. To make this easy, I recommend hotels and list the neighborhood where each is located in the following sections; check these against the maps to see where the hotel is in relation to the attractions you want to see.

My hotel listings concentrate on the Magnificent Mile, the Gold Coast, the Loop, and Streeterville. Other neighborhoods you may want to look at include

- ✓ **Near North:** Away from the mainstream but near interesting neighborhoods and Lincoln Park
- ✓ **River East:** Fairly close to the Loop and the Magnificent Mile, but with a tendency to empty out after dark
- ✓ **River North:** An immensely popular tourist area, with the inevitable sprinkling of tourist traps, but it also has some lower-priced hotels

The Magnificent Mile

If your mission is shopping, shops aplenty stretch along North Michigan Avenue from the Michigan Avenue Bridge across the Chicago River and north to Oak Street. This retail bounty includes four high-rise malls, upscale shops along Oak Street just west of Michigan Avenue, and bargain stores. (See Chapter 12 for shopping.) You can also find many of Chicago's priciest hotels, along with a bargain or two.

In a nutshell:

- ✓ Chicago's premier shopping is right here.
- ✓ Many major bus routes include North Michigan Avenue.
- ✓ Convenient access to the numerous boat trips and bus tours that begin at the Michigan Avenue Bridge are available.

But . . .

- ✓ You can often find yourself in jostling crowds.
- ✓ Traffic can get snarled during evening rush hour.
- ✓ Michigan Avenue can be noisy, with horns, sirens, and crews of street musicians banging on garbage cans.

The Gold Coast

This high-rent district is north of the Magnificent Mile. You can find yourself within an easy walk of the lakefront and not far from prime shopping. Hotels are near the nightlife of Rush and Division streets.

In a nutshell:

- ✓ The Gold Coast has easy access to Oak Street Beach, lakefront walking, and biking.
- ✓ The location is ideal for sampling nightlife.
- ✓ Leafy streets and handsome brownstones adorn the residential sections of the district.

But . . .

- ✓ Out-of-towners in search of action pack the area around Rush and Division streets.
- ✓ Noisy bars and clubs can be a turnoff.
- ✓ Many high-end restaurants have long waits, even with reservations.

The Loop

The traditional heart of Chicago, its downtown, is home to one of Chicago's most famous thoroughfares — "State Street, that great street." With the opening of Millennium Park, Chicago has made a commitment to the Loop, and the downtown core is rebounding. New hotels are opening, shops are returning, and a revitalized theater district is drawing evening crowds. Loop hotels, in fierce competition with those north of the river, offer some attractive rates and package deals.

In a nutshell:

- ✓ This area has a good mix of theaters, shops, and hotels, and excellent proximity to Millennium Park.
- ✓ The Loop offers an unbeatable location for doing business in the LaSalle Street corridor.
- ✓ The location offers easy access to the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago Mercantile Exchange, State Street, and the best of the city's public art.

But . . .

- ✓ The Loop is still relatively empty after dark — although the scene is no longer comatose as it once was.
- ✓ Despite improvements, State Street still looks a bit dowdy in parts.
- ✓ You can expect to be solicited by panhandlers.

Streeterville

A handy location combined with an influx of residents into converted loft spaces and high-rises makes Streeterville a great place to stay. Streeterville contains many good restaurants and faces Lake Michigan. Despite its proximity to high-end real estate, Streeterville offers a number of modestly priced hotel options.

In a nutshell:

- ✓ Streeterville offers an incredibly diverse selection of restaurants to fit a wide range of budgets.
- ✓ The enormously popular Navy Pier is near.
- ✓ It's adjacent to the prime shopping of the Magnificent Mile.

But . . .

- ✓ Many of the streets are narrow and easily blocked.
- ✓ Navy Pier can be a zoo, with boisterous crowds and difficult parking that spill into the east side of the neighborhood.
- ✓ Although the neighborhood has become gentrified, a few sleazy pockets remain in its southeast corner.

Finding the Best Room at the Best Rate

Travelers accustomed to spending big bucks for a hotel room the size of a closet are in for a surprise in Chicago. Certainly, the city has glitzy upscale hotels that start at \$400 a night. But enough variety exists to satisfy just about every taste and pocketbook. How do you get the most hotel for your money? This chapter lets you in on the city's best secrets.

Finding the best rate

The *rack rate* is the maximum amount that a hotel charges for a room. The desk clerk will quote the rack rate if you walk in off the street and ask for a room for the night. You sometimes see the rate printed on the fire/emergency exit diagrams posted on the back of hotel-room doors.



Hotels are happy to charge you the rack rate, but you don't have to pay it! Hardly anybody does. Perhaps the best way to avoid paying the rack rate is simple: Just ask for a cheaper rate. You may be pleasantly surprised. For my tips on beating the rack rate, see the next section.

Price depends on many factors, not the least of which is how you make your reservation. A travel agent may be able to negotiate a better deal with certain hotels than you can get by yourself. (That's because the hotel gives the agent a discount in exchange for steering business toward that hotel.) Reserving a room through the hotel's toll-free number, or the city's (**877-244-2246**), may result in a lower rate than if you call the hotel directly. On the other hand, the central reservations number may not know about discounts at specific locations. For example, local franchises may offer a special group rate for a wedding or family reunion but may neglect to tell the central booking line. Your best bet is to call both the local number and the central number and see which one gives you a better deal.



If you're smart, you never have to pay the rack rate. Consider the following when you're searching for a good deal:

- ✓ **All-in-one/inclusive packages:** Packages can include lodging, meals, transportation, sightseeing, or some combination of these. If you were planning to do these things anyway, a package may save you money. Beyond the practical, you may find some fun bonuses, such as shopping vouchers, champagne brunches, and carriage rides. (See Chapter 5 for more on package tours.)
- ✓ **Family rates:** Deals for families vary from hotel to hotel and from weekday to weekend. Ask what's available, and be sure to find out *exactly* how many kids at what age can stay free.
- ✓ **Weekend rates or packages:** Some business hotels offer discounts to keep volume up during the weekend. Hotels in the heart of the Loop's business district will most likely offer these promotions.
- ✓ **Off-season specials:** Consider visiting during the heart of winter or the tail end of autumn. See the sidebar "When is the off season?" for more on these deals.
- ✓ **Holiday rates:** If you travel during a holiday, ask if the hotel offers a special rate.
- ✓ **Corporate discounts:** Many hotels, especially branches of the large chains, offer corporate rates. Find out whether these rates apply to you.
- ✓ **Senior and AARP rates:** If you're 65 or over (or a member of AARP; you have to be 50 to join AARP) you may be eligible for a senior discount.
- ✓ **Online specials:** See "Surfing the Web for hotel deals," later in this chapter, for details on finding the best price on the Web.

For more ways to cut lodging costs, see Chapter 4.



When is the off season?

Chicago is becoming a year-round, seven-days-a-week destination. Still, you can usually find a few good buys from January through March — providing a mega-convention is not swallowing up huge numbers of hotel rooms. In the winter, the Chicago Office of Tourism Web site (www.877chicago.com) features hotel specials, some as low as \$69 per night with some blackout dates and minimum-night stays. Most of the more centrally located hotels (but not those in the highest price bracket) may be priced from \$99 to \$139 per night before taxes. Late fall, when the weather can be mild and pleasant, is also a time to snare lower room rates, particularly on weekends when the business travelers have left.

Surfing the Web for hotel deals

Although the major travel booking sites (Frommer's, Travelocity, Expedia, and Orbitz; see Chapter 5 for details) offer hotel booking, you may be better off using a site devoted primarily to lodging. You can often find properties not listed with more general online travel agencies. A few of the sites worth checking are

- ✓ **All Hotels on the Web** (www.all-hotels.com): Although the name is something of a misnomer, the site does have tens of thousands of listings throughout the world, including Chicago. Bear in mind that each hotel has paid a small fee (\$25 and up) to be included, so the list isn't objective and is more like a book of online brochures.
- ✓ **hoteldiscount!com** (www.hoteldiscounts.com): This site lists bargain room rates at hotels in more than 50 U.S. and international cities, including Chicago. Because these folks prebook blocks of rooms, you can sometimes reserve rooms at hotels that are otherwise sold out. Select a city and input your dates, and you get a list of the best prices for a selection of hotels. The toll-free number (**800-364-0801**) is given on the Web site. Call if you want more options than those hotels that are listed online.
- ✓ **InnSite** (www.innsite.com): InnSite has B&B listings in all 50 U.S. states. Find an inn at your destination, see pictures of the rooms, and check prices and availability. This extensive directory of B&Bs includes listings only if proprietors submit them; inns don't pay to get listed. The innkeepers write their own descriptions, and many listings link to the inns' own Web sites.
- ✓ **TravelWeb** (www.travelweb.com): Listing more than 26,000 hotels in 170 countries, TravelWeb focuses mostly on chains (both upper and lower end), and you can book almost 90 percent of these online. TravelWeb's Click-It Weekends, updated each Monday, offers weekend deals at many leading hotel chains.

Reserving the best room

Somebody has to get the best room in the house, and that somebody may as well be you! Here are a few tips for landing a room you'll love:

- ✓ **Always ask for a corner room.** They're usually larger, quieter, and close to the elevator. Corner rooms often have more windows and light than standard rooms, and they don't always cost more.
- ✓ **Ask if the hotel is renovating.** If it is, request a room away from the renovation work.
- ✓ **Pick your smoking preference.** Most hotels offer nonsmoking rooms; if smoke bothers you, by all means ask for one.
- ✓ **Inquire about the location of the hotel's restaurants, bars, and clubs.** These places can be a source of irritating noise.

If you aren't happy with your room when you arrive, talk to the front-desk staff. If they have another room, they should be happy to accommodate you, within reason.

Arriving without a Reservation

If you show up in Chicago without a reservation, shame on you! But you have options other than sleeping on a park bench. If you're not successful during the day, call hotels after 6 p.m., when rooms that are reserved but not secured with a credit card may become available.



When booking a room at the last minute, you can usually negotiate a better rate if you phone (even from around the corner) instead of showing up with luggage in hand and a look of desperation.

Another option is to check with reservation bureaus, which buy rooms in bulk and resell them. They usually offer sizeable discounts off rack rates. Often, these bureaus are able to find space when other hotels in the city are sold out. So you may luck out with one of the following:

- ✓ **Accommodations Express** (**800-950-4685**): Eighty percent of Chicago hotels participate in this service; discounts are 10 percent to 40 percent off rack rates.
- ✓ **Hotels.com** (**800-96-HOTEL**; www.hotels.com): Forty hotels participate; 20 percent to 50 percent off rack rates.
- ✓ **Hot Rooms** (**800-468-3500**; www.hotrooms.com): This Chicago-based service is the best source for discounted rooms at all of Chicago's best hotels.
- ✓ **Quikbook** (**800-789-9887**; www.quikbook.com): Twenty hotels participate; 10 percent to 40 percent off rack rates.

Chicago's Best Hotels

Chicago has been on a building binge. Even with a downtown inventory of more than 30,000 rooms, an estimated 3,000 more are scheduled for completion by 2009. (By comparison, the city's hotel inventory grew by about 5,000 rooms over the past ten years.) In addition to the new construction (especially of upscale and luxury hotel units), a growing trend is condo conversion — the sale of individual hotel rooms to independent owners. Two examples are Hotel 71 and the Amalfi Hotel.

What does this mean to the intrepid traveler, other than construction cranes on the horizon and scaffolding on the streets? It's good news! In the past, conventioneers told tales of sleeping on cots in hotel hallways because there was, literally, no room at the inn. Now travelers have more lodging options than ever before. Increased competition means wiggle room on prices is more likely, too.



When a major convention is in town, look out. Even with all the construction going on, getting a room can be difficult, so book early. To find out if an upcoming convention coincides with the dates you plan to visit Chicago, call the **Chicago Convention & Tourism Bureau** at **312-567-8500**, or check its Web site at www.choosechicago.com (click on Meeting Professionals and then Convention Calendar).

Each hotel listing in this chapter includes a price rating between one and four dollar signs. The number of dollar signs reflects the average *rack rate* (the maximum rate a hotel charges for a room) for a standard double room for one night, excluding taxes. The more dollar signs under the name, the more you pay. Table 9-1 has the breakdown.

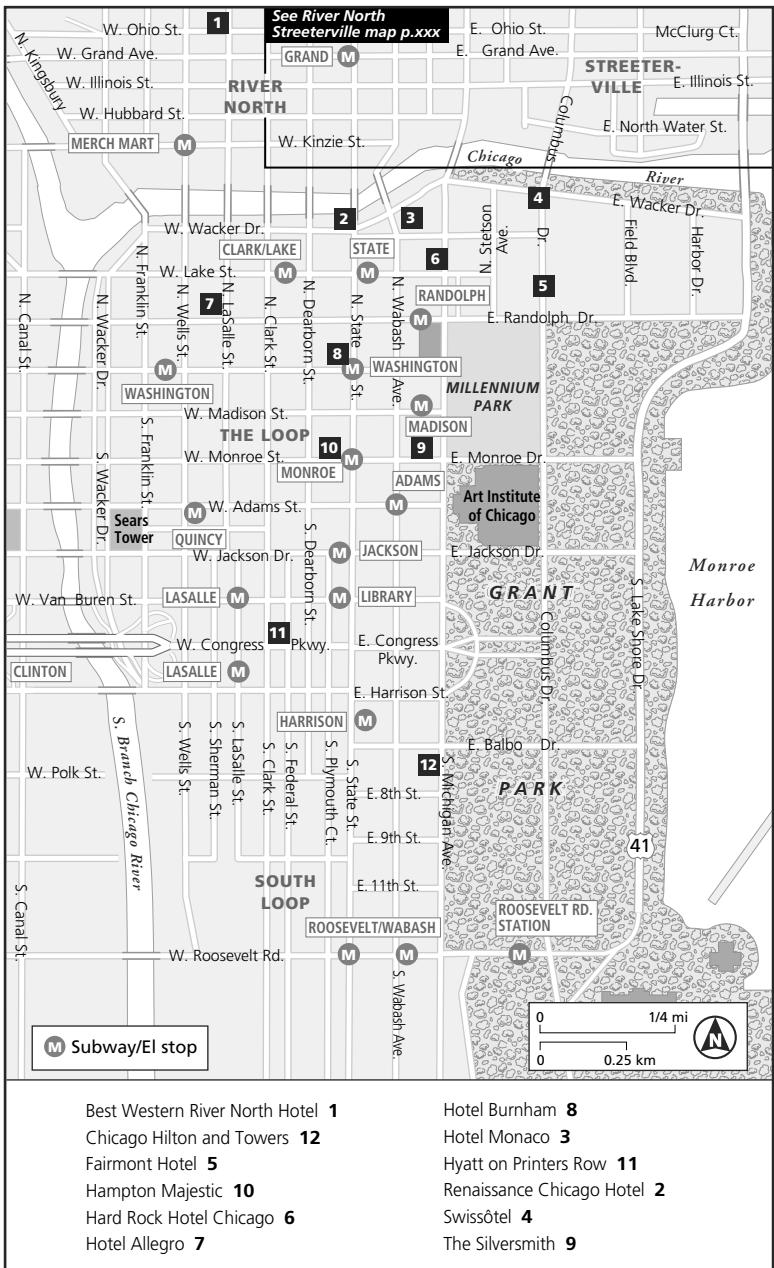
Table 9-1 **Key to Hotel Dollar Signs**

Dollar Sign(s)	Price Range	What to Expect
\$	\$125 and under	These accommodations are relatively simple and inexpensive. Rooms will likely be small, and televisions are not necessarily provided. Parking is not provided but rather catch-as-you-can on the street.
\$\$	\$126–\$200	A bit classier, these midrange accommodations offer more room, more extras (such as irons, hair dryers, or a microwave), and a more convenient location than the preceding category.
\$\$\$	\$201–\$300	Higher-class still, these accommodations begin to look plush. Think chocolates on your pillow, a classy restaurant, underground parking garages, maybe even expansive views of the water.
\$\$\$\$	\$301 and up	These top-rated accommodations come with luxury amenities such as valet parking, on-premise spas, and in-room hot tubs and CD players — but you pay through the nose for 'em.



The Kid Friendly icon designates hotels that are especially good for families. These hotels may offer play areas, kids' menus in the restaurants, or swimming pools, and all have an open (not stuffy) atmosphere that makes families feel at ease. (Nothing stresses a parent more than Junior knocking over an antique Chinese vase in the lobby, right?) Bear in mind that every hotel in town accommodates children's needs; a listing without this icon does not mean "kid unfriendly." Most properties allow kids to stay free with their parents, but the cut-off age varies. Always ask when you're booking.

Loop Area Accommodations



For locations of my recommended hotels, see the “Central Chicago Accommodations” and “Near North and River North Accommodations” maps in this chapter.

Ambassador East Hotel

\$\$\$ Gold Coast

Traditionalists breathed a sigh of relief when a major renovation in the late 1990s left this hotel and its famous restaurant, the Pump Room, vastly improved but basically unaltered. Opened in 1926, the 285-room hotel, in a residential neighborhood 2 blocks west of Lake Michigan’s famed beaches, features custom furnishings and marble bathrooms. Rooms are clean and tidy. Standard rooms have two-line phones and minibars, and the 54 suites, each with a separate bedroom, two bathrooms, a small kitchen, and a dining room, include 13 ultraplush “celebrity” units named after famous former guests. Most extravagant is the Presidential Suite, which boasts a canopied terrace and marble fireplace. On the tiny floor alongside the Pump Room bar, guests can dance to live entertainment.

1301 N. State Pkwy. (2 blocks north of Division Street). ☎ 800-843-6664 or 312-787-7200. www.omnihotels.com. CTA: Buses stop on North Lake Shore Drive (2 blocks east); Red Line goes to Clark/Division. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$34. Rack rates: \$160–\$200 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Belden-Stratford Hotel

\$\$\$ Lincoln Park

This Northside hotel is one of Chicago’s best-kept lodging secrets. This gracious apartment building offers 25 large hotel rooms. The doorman greets you as if you were a resident, and one of Chicago’s finest French restaurants, **Ambria** (Chapter 10), is off the lobby. If you prefer a neighborhood atmosphere and doing as the natives do, this is the place. Be sure to ask for a room with a view of Lincoln Park, so you can watch runners pass and walkers stroll as you sip your coffee in the morning.

2300 N. Lincoln Park W. (just north of Fullerton Avenue). ☎ 800-800-6261 or 773-281-2900. www.beldenstratford.com. CTA: Bus no. 151 to Fullerton in Lincoln Park, then walk west to the hotel. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$25. Rack rates: \$209–\$299 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



Chicago Hilton and Towers

\$\$\$\$ South Loop

Big is not necessarily a bad thing in a hotel. Sprawling over several city blocks, this massive hotel, with 1,545 rooms, is like a city within a city. Public areas abound with shops, bars, restaurants, and artwork. Rooms feature cherrywood furnishings and feel spacious, thanks to high ceilings. Many rooms have two bathrooms — a bonus for families with kids. A club level in the tower provides a higher degree of pampering and has its own check-in. Kitty O’Shea’s pub recruits chefs, bartenders, and waitstaff under an Irish government exchange program. Buckingham’s, the hotel’s fine-

Beware the one-armed man

Movie fans who stay at the Chicago Hilton and Towers should keep their eyes peeled for the one-armed man. Numerous scenes for the movie *The Fugitive* were filmed in the hotel and its Conrad Hilton Suite. For those who want to stay in style, the 5,000-square-foot suite comes with its own butler, maid, limousine service, and helipad — and goes for about \$5,000 a night. In addition to Harrison Ford, other celebs who have stayed in it include presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Bill Clinton, as well as film star John Travolta.

dining restaurant, specializes in steaks and is known for its selection of single-malt Scotch whisky. This hotel is ideally located for sightseers — across from Grant Park, 5 blocks south of the Art Institute of Chicago and Millennium Park, and a 20-minute walk from the Field Museum of Natural History, John G. Shedd Aquarium, and Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum.

See map p. 95. 720 S. Michigan Ave. (at Balbo Drive). ☎ 800-HILTONS or 312-922-4400. www.chicagohilton.com. CTA: Buses stop in front of the hotel, or Red Line to Harrison/State. Parking: Valet \$32, self-parking \$29. Rack rates: \$124–\$324 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Chicago Marriott Downtown

\$\$ Magnificent Mile

You can't go wrong at the Marriott, in the heart of the Magnificent Mile near the North Bridge shopping and entertainment complex. Fine rooms of above-average size are more than comfortable. Concierge floors are available for a bit more money. An indoor pool and sun deck, health club, and basketball courts round out the amenities. Although it is large, at 1,192 rooms, you feel at home here. You can play at nearby ESPN Zone and shop 'til you drop in the adjacent Westfield North Bridge Mall.

See map p. 99. 540 N. Michigan Ave. (at Grand Avenue). ☎ 800-228-9290 or 312-836-0100. www.marriotthotels.com. CTA: Buses stop in front of the hotel. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$35. Rack rates: \$249 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Conrad Chicago

\$\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile

Tucked into the back of Westfield North Bridge mall, the Conrad Chicago (formerly Le Méridien) maintains a low profile. A quick elevator ride connects you with stores such as Nordstrom and Kenneth Cole or Chicago's Magnificent Meal food court, where you can grab anything from a Fluky's hot dog to Italian fare at Tuscany Cafe. This property — part of the Hilton hotel group's upscale "boutique" brand — is determined to compete with the city's more established luxury properties (with room rates to match).

New on the Chicago hotel horizon

Five major hotel projects were underway in Chicago in 2006, and two more began in 2007. The new kids on the block will include **Hampton Majestic** (22 W. Monroe St.), **Elysian Hotel & Private Residences** (Walton and Rush streets), and **Trump Tower Chicago** (401 Wabash Ave.). New chain-hotel offerings will include a **Springhill Suites** (Dearborn and Kinzie streets) and **Staybridge Suites** (LaSalle and Ontario streets). Farther down the line will be the premiers of several luxury hotels, including the **Mandarin Oriental** (215 N. Michigan Ave.) and the **Shangri-La Hotel** (111 W. Wacker Drive).

Rooms are a bit small (especially the least expensive ones on the north side), but amenities are top-of-the-line: The safes come with chargers for cellphones and laptop computers, and the in-room phones are cordless. A few of the suites even come with private terraces, something few hotels in this city can offer. The Conrad can't quite compete with the Park Hyatt or The Peninsula in the glamour department, but its cozy style should appeal to travelers looking for something a little more personal.

See map p. 99. 521 N. Rush St. (at Grand Street). ☎ 800-HILTONS or 312-645-1500. <http://conradhotels1.hilton.com>. CTA: Red Line to Chicago/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$35. Rack rates \$325–\$530 double, from \$500 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

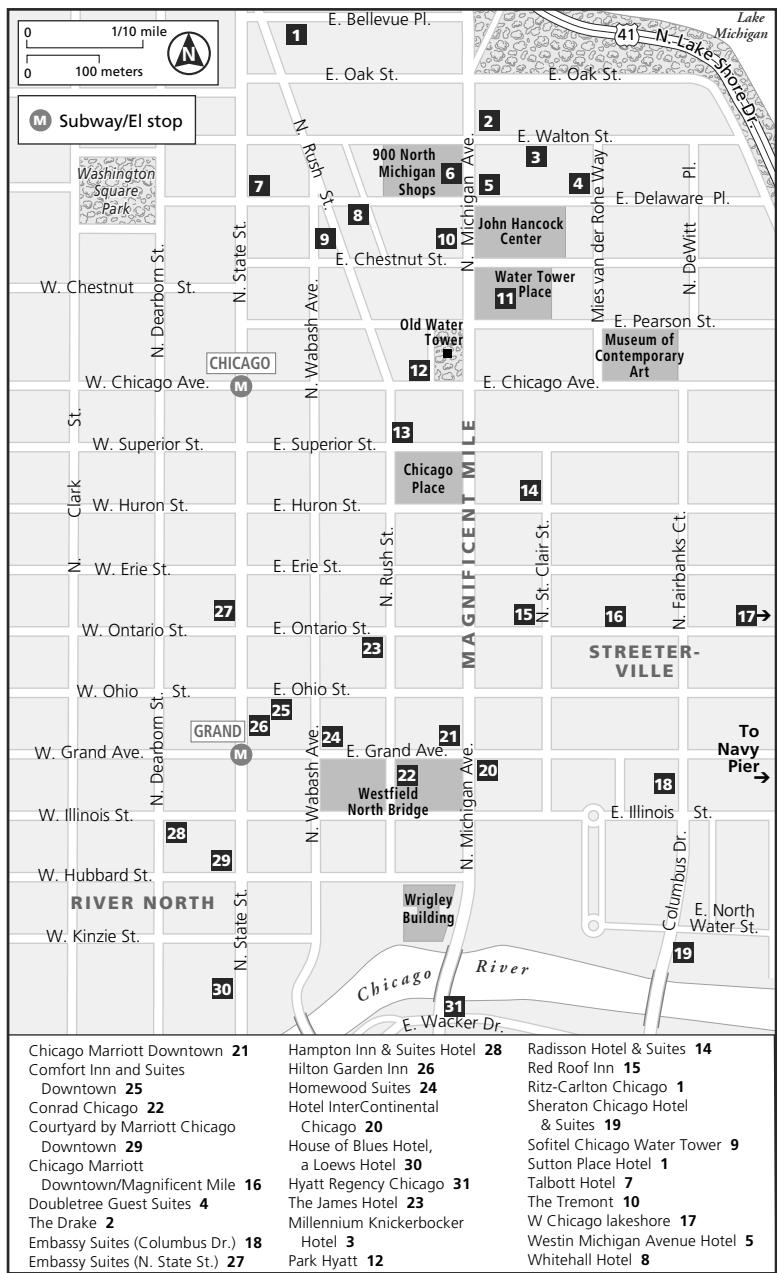
Courtyard by Marriott Chicago Downtown

\$\$\$\$ River North

This chain offers good deals in the heart of River North, one of Chicago's flashiest tourist areas. Here you're a short walk from the shops of Michigan Avenue, the Loop, and River North's main strip, and the free trolley to Navy Pier stops nearby. The newly renovated rooms have large desks and two-line phones with high-speed Internet access, granite vanities and sofas (some with pull-out beds). Coffee and newspapers (included in the room rate) are available in the lobby, and the hotel has an exercise room, pool, and sun deck. The 30 East Cafe & Lounge offers a breakfast buffet, lunch, dinner, and room service. As another bonus, you're close to numerous restaurants, the legendary jazz club Andy's and the jazz club Pops for Champagne (Chapter 16), and a number of galleries and antiques shops.

See map p. 99. 30 E. Hubbard St. (at State Street). ☎ 800-321-2211 or 312-329-2500. <http://marriott.com/hotels/travel/chiwb-courtyard-chicago-downtown>. CTA: Red Line to Grand (at State Street), then walk 2 blocks south. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$33, self-parking \$21. Rack rates: \$119–\$209 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

River North & Streeterville Accommodations



Courtyard by Marriott Chicago Downtown/Magnificent Mile**\$\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile**

This confusingly named (it's easy to get it mixed up with its River North counterpart) but newer hotel sits in a prime location a half-block east of Michigan Avenue. You'll pay a little more to stay at this hotel than the Courtyard in River North, and that's partly due to the location, and partly due to the room size, which tends to be a little larger. Double rooms offer two queen-size beds — a nice change from the standard two double beds — and king suites make this a comfortable choice for families. Add to that the lovely swimming pool on the tenth floor and a large fitness room with great views, and you may want to up the ante and stay here. The lobby décor is Art Deco, and the room décor is pretty standard, but everything is clean and new. An on-site American cafe, Viand Bar & Kitchen, is kid-friendly and also provides room service. And when you need a pick-me-up, you can visit the Starbucks in the lobby.

See map p. 99. 165 E. Ontario St. (just east of Michigan Avenue). ☎ 312-573-0800. www.courtyardchicago.com. CTA: Red Line to Grand (at State Street). Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$35, self-parking (no in-out privileges) \$25. Rack rates: \$249 double, \$309 king suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

**DoubleTree Guest Suites****\$\$\$\$\$ Streeterville**

A step up in elegance from other all-suite hotels, the DoubleTree offers comfort in one of Chicago's best neighborhoods. A casual attitude characterizes the hotel, which is tucked into an elegant street in Streeterville a couple blocks east of Michigan Avenue, near The Drake Hotel. Here you get a warm, inviting, immaculate room, plus a separate living room and bedroom and a deluxe bathroom. Surrounded in glass, in summertime, the pool deck on the 30th floor is a great place to watch the twice-weekly fireworks at Navy Pier. Families will feel welcome at Mrs. Park's Tavern, an American bistro. The small but adequate workout room will keep you fit after that meal! You'll find huge floral arrangements in the lobby and freshly baked chocolate-chip cookies at check-in.

See map p. 99. 198 E. Delaware Place (at Mies van der Rohe Street). ☎ 800-222-8733 or 312-664-1100. www.doubletree.com. CTA: Red Line to Chicago (at State Street). Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$34. Rack rates: \$109–\$309 double suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

**The Drake Hotel****\$\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile**

The Drake Hotel has always been a symbol of civilization at its finest. Although now a link in the Hilton chain, this grande dame of Chicago hotels still displays gracious style and boundless charm. Rooms have high ceilings, polished woodwork, marble bathrooms, and every amenity you'd expect, from terry robes to fresh fruit and Swiss chocolates at turndown. Elevators even have velvet seats. Coffee lounges on each floor offer lake

views. Besides being a great place to stay, The Drake Hotel is a great place to play. A shopping arcade is ideal for browsing. Dining spots include the Cape Cod Room, a Chicago institution since 1933. The Coq d'Or piano bar (Chapter 16) is known for its well-made martinis. In the Palm Court, you can enjoy afternoon tea around a fountain with harp music to accompany your finger sandwiches. There's also live jazz on Saturdays.

See map p. 99. 140 E. Walton Place (at Michigan Avenue). ☎ 800-553-7253 or 312-787-2200. www.thedrakehotel.com. CTA: Buses stop on Michigan Avenue (½ block west), or Red Line to Chicago/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$32. Rack rates: \$179–\$295 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



Embassy Suites \$\$-\$\$\$\$ River North

The spacious units at this all-suites hotel, with a huge atrium and waterfall, offer plenty of room for kids and adults. Youngsters enjoy in-room Nintendo games and the proximity to Gino's Pizza, Hard Rock Cafe, Rainforest Cafe, and other kid-friendly, high-profile dining spots. Parents like the extras that make a stay easy on the pocketbook, such as cooked-to-order breakfasts free every morning, and evening cocktails. Suites have well-equipped kitchens and TVs in both the living room and bedroom. Osteria Via Stato, a super-yummy new Italian restaurant, is on the street level. You may also check out the recent addition of another Embassy Suites at 511 N. Columbus Dr., Streeterville (☎ 312-836-5900), conveniently located near Navy Pier and Michigan Avenue.

See map p. 99. 600 N. State St. (at West Ohio Street). ☎ 800-362-2779 or 312-943-3800. www.embassysuites.com. CTA: Red Line to Grand (at State Street). Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$36. Rack rates: \$139–\$279 king suite, \$169–\$319 double suite. Rates include full breakfast and evening cocktails. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Fairmont Hotel \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ River East

Business travelers frequent the Fairmont for its location, a few blocks north of the Loop, and the large rooms. Your room may have a dressing room, walk-in closet, and marble bathroom with a separate shower, enclosed toilet, telephone, and mini-TV. Rooms are no more than four

You're in good company at the Coq d'Or

Marilyn Monroe, Joe DiMaggio, Jack Benny, and Vince Lombardi carved their initials into the tiny wooden bar of the Coq d'Or. Management once announced plans to replace the bar, causing such a furor among patrons that it was left in place. Introduce yourself to manager Patrick Bredin, another Drake institution, and take time for a bowl of signature Bookbinder's red snapper soup or oysters at the raw bar.

doors away from an elevator. One unit on each of the 37 floors is accessible to travelers with disabilities. Public spaces, clad with marble, are decked out with fine artwork and arrangements of fresh flowers. In the lobby lounge, waiters in tails serve afternoon tea. Aria Ristorante, with its American and “culturally inspired” cuisine, is a welcome addition. An underground walkway leads fitness buffs to “Mount Chicago,” a 110-foot-high climbing wall in the well-equipped Lakeshore Athletic Club — hotel guests can use the facilities for a fee.

See map p. 95. 200 N. Columbus Dr. (at Lake Street). ☎ 800-526-2008 or 312-565-8000. www.fairmont.com. CTA: Buses stop on Michigan Avenue (2 blocks west), or Brown, Orange, or Green line to Randolph. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$41. Rack rates: \$129–\$389 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



Four Seasons Hotel

\$\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile

Chicago's Four Seasons Hotel is not only one of the best in town, but one of the best in the *world*. Spacious guest rooms are packed with extras and served by twice-daily maid service (including delivery of a carafe of water at turndown). Italian marble, crystal, intricate woodwork, and plush carpeting lavishly accent the hotel's attractive public areas. Chandeliers are as common as light bulbs are at Motel 6. The 70 shops of 900 North Michigan Avenue, the Magnificent Mile's most upscale mall (also known as “Bloomingdale's mall”) are connected to the hotel. Still, you may never venture beyond the hotel's seventh-floor lobby, which holds the Seasons lounge and restaurant. The lounge offers afternoon tea and views of the Magnificent Mile. The restaurant features cutting-edge American cuisine. The hotel's clublike bar, off the lobby, accommodates cigar smokers. The spa holds a pool, huge whirlpool, sun deck, and outdoor jogging track.

120 E. Delaware Place (at Michigan Avenue). ☎ 800-332-3442 or 312-280-8800. www.fourseasons.com. CTA: Buses stop on Michigan Avenue (½ block east), or Red Line to Chicago/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$36, self-parking \$26. Rack rates: \$435–\$535 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



Hampton Inn & Suites Hotel

\$-\$-\$ River North

Near the Merchandise Mart and Michigan Avenue shops, the Hampton Inn brings welcome relief to the escalating hotel prices in trendy River North. The hotel has a combination of guest rooms, two-room suites, and studios. The residential, warm atmosphere of the hotel puts you close to tourist hot spots, such as Rainforest Cafe, Rock-N-Roll McDonald's, and Hard Rock Cafe. A second-floor skywalk also connects the hotel to a branch of Ruth's Chris Steak House. Children under 18 and third and fourth guests are free. You get a minicourse in Chicago history with a great display of photographs and architectural artifacts.

See map p. 99. 33 W. Illinois St. (at Dearborn Street). ☎ 800-426-7866 or 312-832-0330. www.hamptoninn.com. CTA: Buses stop at the corner of Grand and State streets, or Red Line to Grand (at State Street). Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges)

\$38, self-parking (with no in-out privileges) \$25. Rack rates: \$119–\$199 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Hampton Majestic

\$\$\$ Loop

You'd be hard-pressed to recognize this new boutique offering as part of the Hampton Inn chain. Above the refurbished LaSalle Bank Theater in the heart of the Loop, and near State Street shops, as well as Millennium and Grant parks, the Hampton is a find for those looking for a unique boutique hotel with a Loop location. It's small (135 rooms), and the décor is sophisticated, with gold tiles on the ceiling and walls clad with marble — not typical Hampton Inn fare (room rates are higher than typical Hampton rates, too!). Although the building dates from 1906, the amenities are modern, including free wireless high-speed Internet access and 32-inch flat-screen, high-definition TVs. A high-end fitness room features Life Fitness equipment (each piece with its own TV), and room service comes from nearby Loop favorite Italian Village. Families will want to book a suite, which offers a sleeper sofa, under-the-counter refrigerator, and microwave. Bathrooms are above par, and feature showerheads with multiple massage settings. Ceilings are high, giving the rooms a spacious feel, and original windows are beautiful. Plus, there's the regular Hampton amenity of a complimentary hot breakfast buffet.

See map p. 99. 22 W.Monroe St. (between State and Dearborn). ☎ 312-332-5052. www.hamptonmajestic.com. CTA: Buses stop at the corner of State and Monroe; Red Line to Monroe and State, or Blue Line to Monroe and Dearborn. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$38. Rack rates: \$199–\$299 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Hard Rock Hotel Chicago

\$\$\$ Loop

The good news: This hotel is *not* on top of the super-touristy Hard Rock Cafe, which is about a mile away in River North. In fact, the hotel is a relatively restrained rehab of one of the city's historic skyscrapers, the 40-story Carbide and Carbon Building. As expected, the theme here is music: Pop tunes echo through the lobby, TV monitors show videos, and glass cases display pop-star memorabilia. If your kids are in the age range that considers wearing a Hard Rock T-shirt from exotic locales a badge of honor, they may get a kick from a stay here. Guest rooms are neutral in décor with modern furnishings. The building's larger-than-average windows let in plenty of light. The Hard Rock rooms on the corners of each floor are larger than the standard double rooms and feature chaise longues for stretching out. The hotel's restaurant, China Bar & Grill, serves up Asian fusion cuisine in a high-energy setting, and the street-level bar, open 'til 4 a.m., features live music and DJs most nights.

See map p. 95. 230 N. Michigan Ave. (at Lake Street). ☎ 877-762-5468 or 312-345-1000. Fax: 312-345-1012. www.hardrockhotelchicago.com. CTA: Red or Blue line to Lake. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$35. Rack rates: \$169–\$239 double, from \$1,500 suite. Kids under 12 stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



Hotel Allegro

\$\$\$ Loop

Located across the street from City Hall and in the North Loop theater district, the 483-room Hotel Allegro is splashy, fun, and a great value. Formerly the Bismarck Hotel, the place opened in 1894 and was rebuilt in 1926 and again in 2000, the most recent update pioneering the redesign of the old hotels into boutique offerings. Warm, vibrant colors and bold patterns dominate the public spaces and smallish guest rooms. (Don't be surprised if your room is painted a perky pink-grapefruit color.) Suites have nice amenities, including terry robes, VCRs, and two-person Jacuzzi tubs. You also get melon-and-magenta bedspreads and green throw pillows sprinkled with gold stars. Whirlpools are installed in 31 suites. Guests gather each evening for complimentary wine served around a black grand piano and limestone fireplace. 312 Chicago restaurant, a colorful extension of the hotel, serves an Italian-American menu.

See map p. 95. 171 W. Randolph St. (at LaSalle Street). ☎ 800-643-1500 or 312-236-0123. www.allegrochicago.com. CTA: Buses stop along LaSalle Street; all El lines stop at Washington. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$30. Rack rates: \$149–\$299 double. Rates include complimentary evening wine. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



Hotel Burnham

\$\$\$ Loop

Back in 1999, in one of the city's best restorations in years, the Kimpton Group of San Francisco transformed one of the world's first skyscrapers, D. H. Burnham's Reliance Building (1891), into a superhip boutique hotel. (Thanks to the same group for creating Hotel Allegro and Hotel Monaco — both listed in this chapter.) In the heart of the Loop, across from Macy's State Street department store (formerly Marshall Field's), the hotel has 103 rooms and 19 suites — average in size, below average in price. Visitors marvel at huge guest-room windows that stretch from floor to ceiling. Ask for a high, corner room overlooking Macy's. The playful Atwood Café, which serves eclectic American cuisine on the ground floor, allows you to simultaneously dine and admire the restored terrazzo floors and Carrara wainscoting.

See map p. 95. 1 W. Washington St. (at State Street). ☎ 866-690-1986 or 312-782-1111. www.burnhamhotel.com. CTA: Buses stop on State Street, or Red Line to Washington/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$29. Rack rates: \$149–\$299 double. AE, DISC, MC, V.



Hotel Monaco

\$\$\$ North Loop

Rooms at this vibrant makeover of the dowdy Oxford House come complete with a pet. A goldfish in a bowl will be delivered on request and may be kept for the duration of the stay. Gimmicks aside, this sleek hotel, offering 192 guest rooms (including 22 suites, each with a two-person whirlpool), is distinguished by its rich décor. Guest rooms are furnished with mahogany writing desks, Art Deco armoires, and lipstick-red quilted

headboards. Amenities include coffeemakers and robes. Each evening, guests enjoy complimentary wine around a limestone fireplace, the centerpiece of Monaco's jewel-box lobby. The registration desk is whimsically modeled after a classic steamer trunk, and the adjoining restaurant, South Water Kitchen, includes a 30-foot-long exhibition kitchen on its lower level. Hotel guests as well as local office workers laud the restaurant's American comfort food, including big butcher-block sandwiches, macaroni and cheese, and chicken potpies.

See map p. 95. 225 N. Wabash Ave. (at Wacker Drive). ☎ 800-397-7661 or 312-960-8500. www.monaco-chicago.com. CTA: Buses stop at State and Wacker; Brown, Orange, or Green line to Randolph/Wabash; or Red Line to Washington/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$28. Rack rates: \$139-\$299 double. Rates include complimentary evening wine. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

House of Blues Hotel, a Loews Hotel

\$\$-\$ \$\$ North Loop

Located in the distinctive Marina Towers complex alongside the Chicago River, the House of Blues Hotel is part of what's become an entertainment mecca. The House of Blues music club, plus Smith & Wollensky steakhouse, Bin 36 wine bar, Crunch Health & Fitness Center, and a marina with boat rentals, make this an all-in-one experience. The eclectic décor of the hotel, part of the Loews Hotel group, combines Gothic, Moroccan, East Indian, and New Orleans styles. It's the place to stay if you want your hotel to be an experience, not just a place to sleep. Hall monitors show live concerts from the House of Blues club. Upon check-in, guests receive a complimentary music CD. Technology-friendly rooms provide TV Internet access, as well as interesting furniture (much of which is painted blue) and fabulous Southern folk art.

See map p. 99. 333 N. Dearborn St. (at the river). ☎ 800-235-6397 or 312-245-0333. www.loewshotels.com. CTA: Buses stop at the corner of State Street and Wacker Drive, then walk 1½ blocks north, 1 block west; Red Line goes to Grand/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$28. Rack rates: \$139-\$349 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Hyatt on Printers Row

\$\$\$ South Loop

History meets high-tech at this comfortable hotel. Surrounded by loft apartments in a fashionable area — known as Printers' Row, thanks to the presence of former printing plants — this 161-room hotel fuses the 1896 Morton Salt Building with a century-old printing plant. It's a comfortable walk from the Art Institute of Chicago, Grant Park, Sears Tower, Harold Washington Library, and the city's financial district. Guest rooms feature Frank Lloyd Wright-style geometric designs as well as black lacquer furniture and tapestry spreads. Though old-world European in flavor, this hotel offers amenities such as VCRs, computer workstations, two telephones per room, and TVs. Adjoining the hotel is the acclaimed Prairie restaurant, which serves innovative Midwestern cuisine.

See map p. 95. 500 S. Dearborn St. (at Congress Parkway). ☎ 800-233-1234 or 312-986-1234. www.hyatt.com. CTA: Buses stop at South State Street, across from the Washington Library, then walk 1 block west; Brown Line to Library/Van Buren; or Red Line to Harrison/State. Parking: Valet \$32, self-parking \$20 in nearby lots (no in-out privileges). Rack rates: \$215–\$279 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



Hyatt Regency Chicago

\$\$\$\$ River East

This sprawling hotel with more than 2,019 rooms is as impersonal as Union Station, bustling with a steady stream of travelers. For the same reason, the hotel is family-friendly — parents don't need to worry unduly about kids acting, well, like *kids*. With all the hustle and bustle, kids blend right into the general commotion of the place. With its emphasis on conventions and business meetings, the hotel offers in-room conveniences such as desk, fax, and Internet hookups. Beefs: Guest rooms are distributed over two high-rise towers and it can be a long hike from the front desk; sound-proofing in some rooms is not all it could be. Bonuses: Food is available with 24-hour room service and at a half-dozen restaurants and cafes, which include Big's, an aptly named gigantic brasserie and bar offering 87 brands of single-malt Scotch, 46 kinds of cognac, 115 Armagnacs, and 164 varieties of liqueurs and cordials.

See map p. 99. 151 E. Wacker Dr. (at North Upper Michigan Avenue). ☎ 800-233-1234 or 312-565-1234. www.hyatt.com. CTA: Buses stop at the corner of Wacker Drive and Michigan Avenue, 1 block west. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$36. Rack rates: \$180–\$330 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



InterContinental Chicago

\$\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile

Installed in two adjoining buildings at the foot of the Magnificent Mile, this hotel is eccentric and lovable. The hotel's south tower was built in 1929 as the Medinah Athletic Club, a luxury men's club, and was recently updated. Climbing to the eighth floor in the south tower, visitors are swept through a mélange of architectural styles, from classic Italian Renaissance to French Louis XVI, from medieval England to Spain and Mesopotamia. Flourishes include hand-stenciled ceilings, marble columns, brass inlays, and beautiful tapestries and artwork. Service is smooth, and rooms are elegant and intimate. Each unit at this 814-room property comes with terry robes, a coffeemaker, a refrigerator, a desk, and three dual-line phones. Rooms in the older tower are more classic in style; rooms in the north tower are modern and more standard. The hotel's restaurant, Zest, is the only street-level restaurant on Michigan Avenue, so grab a table by the window and enjoy the people-watching.

See map p. 99. 505 N. Michigan Ave. (at Grand Avenue). ☎ 800-327-0200 or 312-944-4100. www.intercontinental.com. CTA: Buses stop in front of the hotel, or Red Line to Grand/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$35. Rack rates: \$249–\$359 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Touring Tarzan's old haunt

Even if you don't stay at the InterContinental Chicago, stop by for a fascinating free architectural tour. Guests and nonguests can take a 30-minute tape-recorded, self-guided walking tour narrated by WGN radio personality Roy Leonard. Leave a driver's license or other identification as security and get a loaner Walkman. Discover the beautiful Venetian-style, junior Olympic-size pool, where Olympic gold medalist and screen actor Tarzan Johnny Weismuller trained and pioneer bodybuilder Charles Atlas coached the wealthy. Mobster Al Capone threw a huge poolside party here, but only for an episode of *The Untouchables* TV series. Nonguests may use the pool and a state-of-the-art health club for \$15 per visit. Changing rooms, saunas, showers, and toiletries are provided.

The James Chicago

\$\$\$ River North

This hotel made quite a splash when it opened a block west of Michigan Avenue in 2006. Formerly the nondescript Lenox Suites, The James brings a much-needed small luxury alternative to Chicago's hotel scene. Yes, you'll see more business travelers here than families, but well-heeled families in the know stay here as well. Cool and stylish in looks, the hotel has a small lobby. Rooms are a tribute to modern minimalism: Dark-wood platform beds, leather cube stools, chocolate-colored carpeting and slate-tiled bathrooms complete the décor. The hotel's strength is its amenities, notably the 42-inch plasma TVs in each room. There's also Wi-Fi and a stereo with an iPod dock. A small spa and gym are located on the lower level. Try the hotel's steakhouse, David Burke's Primehouse, and check out the nightlife at adjoining J Bar. One downside is the lack of views. Make sure to ask for a street view, and you'll be able to admire the famed Medinah Temple down the street; courtyard views are dismal. Families may want to inquire about the one-bedroom corner apartments that include a wet bar; they start at \$439 per night. Loft rooms are quite large (550 sq. ft.) and feature artwork by Chicago artists.

See map p. 99. 55 E. Ontario St. (at Wabash Avenue). ☎ 877-JAMES-55 or 312-337-1000. www.jameshotels.com. CTA: Buses stop on Michigan Avenue (1 block east), or Red Line to State/Grand. Valet parking \$40 with in-out privileges. Rack rates: \$289–\$629 double, from \$379 loft rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



Park Hyatt

\$\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile

How stunning is this hotel? Stunning enough that Chicago's Pritzker family, owners of the Hyatt hotel chain, moved in when it first opened several years ago. Part hotel, part condominium building, the 67-story building is a showpiece of the high-end Park Hyatt line, occupying one of the most desirable spots on North Michigan Avenue overlooking Water Tower

Square. The décor is sleek and contemporary, and you'll know immediately you're in Chicago by the elegant black-and-white photographs of the city in each guest room. Relaxing is easy in the 7,000-square-foot pool and spa facility. Guest rooms are oversize. Not as traditionally flowery as the Four Seasons or the Ritz-Carlton, the Park Hyatt has a more masculine style of elegance — not unlike the Giorgio Armani designs you can buy in the boutique on the ground level. The hotel caters to individual business travelers seeking out the ultimate in personalized service and amenities. What can you expect? Sony flat-screen TVs, DVD and CD players, a BRNO desk chair and an Eames chair designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Charles Eames, and four — count 'em — four two-line phones.

See map p. 99. 800 N. Michigan Ave. (at Chicago Avenue). ☎ 800-233-1234 or 312-335-1234. www.parkchicago.hyatt.com. CTA: Buses stop on Michigan Avenue in front of Water Tower Place, or Red Line to Chicago/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$36. Rack rates: \$375–\$425 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



The Peninsula Chicago

\$\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile

The Peninsula breezed into town a few years ago and has been giving the luxury-hotel market a run for its money ever since. Service here is practically a religion, followed by the in-room technology, which rivals any hotel in the world. The 339 spacious rooms feature marble bathrooms with a separate shower and tub, hands-free phones, and high-tech entertainment systems. A small silver "command station" by every bed allows guests to control the lights, curtains, and room temperature without getting out from under the covers. The 20-story hotel tower above the Tiffany and Co. boutique on Michigan Avenue is topped by a 3,500-square-foot suite with its own outdoor terrace. According to its promoters, the hotel's mixture of Eastern graciousness (the headquarters are in Hong Kong) and Midwestern hospitality sets it apart — a claim I can second.

108 E. Superior St. (at Michigan Avenue). ☎ 866-288-8889 or 312-337-2888. www.peninsula.com. CTA: Buses stop along Michigan Avenue, or Red Line to Chicago/State. Parking: Valet (in-out privileges) \$36. Rack rates: \$450 double. AE, DC, MC, V.



Red Roof Inn

\$ Streeterville

When Motel 6 converted the historic French-owned Hotel Richmont in the 1990s, this became *the* budget hotel in the pricey Streeterville neighborhood. Red Roof Inn then acquired the property and completed another renovation. This is your best bet for the lowest-priced lodgings near the normally pricey Magnificent Mile area. Rooms and amenities match the budget prices, but who cares, if you're spending most of your time out on the town? On the ground floor, hungry travelers can enjoy Coco Pazzo, a charming sidewalk cafe with excellent Italian fare at prices that won't eat up all that money you saved on lodgings.

See map p. 99. 162 E. Ontario St. (at St. Clair). ☎ 800-733-7663 or 312-787-3580. www.redroof.com. CTA: Buses stop on Michigan Avenue (1 block west); Red Line to Grand, then walk 2 blocks north and 4 blocks east. Parking: Valet (no in-out privileges) \$18. Rack rates: \$86–\$102 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Renaissance Chicago Hotel

\$\$\$\$ North Loop

Returning guests claim that the Renaissance Chicago — which has retained a strong following (mostly business travelers, who are the hotel's bread and butter) through several name changes — is the most comfortable hotel in the city. The 553-room, 27-story luxury hotel built by Stouffer in 1991 features bay windows that offer priceless views of the river and city. Comfortable-but-simple guest rooms are tastefully decorated in dark woods, with rich draperies and fabrics and plush carpeting. Four club floors offer even more comfortable lodgings (in extra-large rooms), a battery of business amenities, plus rates that include concierge service, a private lounge, breakfast, and evening hors d'oeuvres. The hotel has a small indoor pool and health club on the fourth floor, with a new spa room that's been added to provide massage services. Stop in the Lobby Court for evening cocktails and live jazz or piano music. Theatergoers should inquire about packages that include performances in the nearby North Loop theater district.

See map p. 95. 1 W. Wacker Dr. (at State Street). ☎ 800-468-3571 or 312-372-7200. www.renaissancehotels.com. CTA: Buses stop at State and Wacker, Brown Line to State/Lake, or Red Line to Washington/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$34. Rack rates: \$159–\$259. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



Ritz-Carlton Chicago

\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile

Yes, that was Oprah heading into the hotel dining room. You may also find Mayor Richard Daley holding a power dinner, or Christie Hefner, Playboy Enterprises CEO, running her empire. This celebrity magnet, known for its open and airy setting, is super-luxurious yet large enough, with 435 rooms, to provide anonymity. Guest rooms have handsome cherrywood furnishings and marble bathrooms; suites are ultraplush, with glass French doors separating bedroom and living room. Standard amenities include king-size beds, hair dryers, robes, and double-line phones. The Ritz forms part of the Water Tower complex, in the heart of the Magnificent Mile. You can find shoppers taking a respite — perhaps with afternoon tea or an evening aperitif — in the hotel's atrium lobby. Sunday brunch is one of the best in town and includes a separate buffet for kids. Don't miss the *gravlax* (cured salmon, a Scandinavian delicacy). Despite its upscale ambience, the size and bustle make this hotel a place where parents can feel comfortable with kids.

See map p. 99. 160 E. Pearson St. 1½ block east of North Michigan Avenue, connected to Water Tower Place). ☎ 800-621-6906 or 312-266-1000. www.fourseasons.com. CTA: Buses stop in front of Water Tower Place, or Red Line to

Chicago/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$36, self parking \$25 with no in-out privileges. Rack rates: \$395–\$535 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Suites

\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ Streeterville

This is a big hotel, but somehow it doesn't feel impersonal. The huge lobby has a friendly piano bar and windows overlooking an esplanade along the Chicago River. Rooms are sizable and comfortable, featuring a sitting area with loveseat and chair. Many of the 1,209 rooms in this 34-story hotel offer spectacular views of Lake Michigan. Guests in the 110 club-level rooms pay extra for such amenities as robes and access to a club room that serves breakfast and cocktails (included in the room rate). Guests include a large percentage of convention-goers, taking advantage of the property's 120,000 square feet of meeting and convention space. A standout among the hotel's five restaurants and lounges is Don Shula's Steakhouse, serving excellent steaks and chops.

See map p. 99. 301 E. North Water St. (at North Columbus Drive). ☎ 800-325-3535 or 312-464-1000. www.sheraton.com. CTA: Buses stop on Michigan Avenue, 3 blocks west. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$34. Rack rates: \$299 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



The Silversmith

\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ Loop

Frank Lloyd Wright would probably be delighted with this smart hotel—it has enough Wright influences to satisfy even *his* enormous ego. Opened in 1998 as a hotel, the distinctive dark-green building was created in 1897 to house silversmiths and jewelers. A National Historic Landmark today, the building contains eight floors of guest units (143 rooms), and no two rooms on any floor are alike. Rooms are decorated in Arts and Crafts and Prairie School style, with original 12-foot ceilings, 10-foot windows draped in velvety curtains, and red-oak furniture. Desks are designed to accommodate computers. Armoires contain built-in TVs, refrigerators, and CD players. Many rooms have cushioned window seats. Oversize bathrooms have granite countertops and tile-and-granite floors. Thrifty travelers with families may ask about the suites, which are a bargain compared to those in other downtown hotels.

See map p. 95. 10 S. Wabash Ave. (at Madison Street). ☎ 800-227-6963 or 312-372-7696. www.silversmithhotel.com. CTA: Orange, Brown, or Green line to Madison/Wabash, or Red Line to Washington/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$28. Rack rates: \$149–\$279 double, from \$289 suites. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Sofitel Chicago Water Tower

\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile

Another recent addition to Chicago's crowded luxury-hotel scene, the Sofitel aims to impress by drawing on the city's tradition of great architecture. French designer Pierre-Yves Rochon created a building that's



Time waits for no one

Kids are fascinated by the interactive sculpture at Columbus Drive and Illinois Street, near the Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Suites. This giant horizontal clock is 70 feet in diameter. The raised granite numerals that serve as benches are swept clean every 59 minutes by the relentless minute hand.

impossible to pass without taking a second look: a soaring, triangular tower with a glass and aluminum facade that sparkles in the sun. If you're looking for clubby exclusivity, this won't be your scene, but fans of abundant natural light will be able to get their fix here (weather permitting, of course). The guest rooms feature contemporary décor with beechwood walls and chrome hardware for a modern touch. All the rooms enjoy good views of the city (but the privacy-conscious will want to stay on the upper floors, where they won't be on display to surrounding apartment buildings). The standard doubles are fairly compact, but thanks to large picture windows, the spaces don't feel cramped. The sleek bathrooms are relatively spacious, and the amenities are top-notch.

See map p. 99. 20 E. Chestnut St. (at Wabash Street). ☎ 800-763-4835 or 312-324-4000. www.sofitel.com. CTA: Buses stop on Michigan Avenue (1 block east), or Red Line to Chicago/State. Parking: Valet \$37. Rack rate: \$249–\$455 double, \$495–\$595 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

The Sutton Place Hotel \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$ Gold Coast

Here's an oasis of quiet sophistication off raucous Rush Street. Housed in a striking 1980s-built geometric granite-and-glass-skinned building (which has won awards for architecture and interior design), the 246-room hotel offers entertainment gadgetry and high-tech conveniences. Each guest room has a stereo TV and VCR (with movie rentals available 24 hours a day), a stereo receiver with a compact disc player (and an in-room selection of CDs), a fully stocked minibar, three telephones (one with a speakerphone), and a dedicated fax or computer hookup. Among 40 luxurious suites are some with balconies, terraces, and sweeping city-and-lake views. You can work out in the fitness suite, or borrow step boxes and a Reebok step video to take back to your room. Whiskey Bar & Grill, owned by Rande Gerber (yeah, he's the guy married to Cindy Crawford), fills with beautiful people and has outdoor seating that overlooks the bustle of Rush Street, where more beautiful people drink and dine.

See map p. 99. 21 E. Bellevue Place (at Rush Street). ☎ 800-606-8188 or 312-266-2100. www.suttonplace.com. CTA: Buses stop on North Lake Shore Drive (1 block east), or Red Line to Clark/Division. Parking: Self parking (with in-out privileges) \$32, valet parking \$37 (with in-out privileges). Rack rates: \$250–\$450 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Talbott Hotel**\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile**

One of the hidden gems of the Michigan Avenue shopping corridor, the Talbott Hotel combines the charm of an English inn with a location that's hard to beat. Just off the lobby, you'll find a cozy sitting room where you can curl up in a leather armchair by the fireplace. A bar area and sidewalk cafe with first-rate people-watching were added recently. You won't find extensive hotel facilities here, but the cozy atmosphere makes for a bed-and-breakfast feel (without the sometimes-too-personal bed-and-breakfast intrusions). But the real surprise is the rooms: Many are exceptionally large, and all are available at very competitive prices. Suites and the hotel's executive king rooms entice with Jacuzzi tubs, and all suites have separate sitting areas with sofa beds and dining tables.

See map p. 99. 20 E. Delaware St. (between Rush and State streets). ☎ 800-825-2688 or 312-944-4970. www.talbotthotel.com. CTA: Buses stop on Michigan Avenue (½ block east), or Red Line to Chicago/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$35; self-parking \$25. Rack rates: \$189–\$449 double, from \$319 suite. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

The Tremont**\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile**

If you're looking for a small, romantic European-style hotel, The Tremont has great appeal. The building feels more like a bed-and-breakfast than a hotel off the busiest shopping street in the city. The cozy lobby with a fireplace sets the mood. In the guest rooms, the tasteful furnishings, plush terry robes, vases of fresh flowers, and marble bathrooms invite lounging. Rooms aren't spacious, but they are cheery, with yellow walls and large windows. (Ask for a room facing Delaware Street if you crave natural light — rooms in other parts of the hotel look into neighboring buildings.) With its bright colors and solicitous service, The Tremont is one of the city's best picks for a romantic getaway. Guests who call room service are connected to Mike Ditka's Restaurant, the boisterous New Orleans-style eatery on the premises where football and cigars reign. Check out the fabulous Chicago Bears memorabilia on the upstairs walls.

See map p. 99. 100 E. Chestnut St. (1 block west of Michigan Avenue). ☎ 800-621-8133 or 312-751-1900. www.tremontchicago.com. CTA: Buses stop on Michigan Avenue (1 block east), or Red Line to Chicago/State. Parking: Valet (no in-out privileges) \$34. Rack rates: \$119–\$279 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Westin Chicago Michigan Avenue**\$\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile**

Kudos to the Westin for sprucing up this ideally located hotel, fronting Michigan Avenue at the corner of Delaware Place, right across the street from the 900 North Michigan mall. For years, this fairly average hotel just offered potential. Now, with the opening of the Grill, a restaurant that has won rave reviews, the hotel has risen to being more than just average — and based on its location alone, you may want to consider it. Ask for a

tower lake-view room, which is larger than standard and features upgraded bathrooms and turndown service.

See map p. 99. 909 N. Michigan Ave. (at Delaware Place). ☎ 800-937-8461 or 312-943-7200. www.westinmichiganave.com. CTA: Buses stop on Michigan Avenue. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$33. Rack rates: \$179-\$250 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Whitehall Hotel

\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile

European style and ambience abound in this hideaway hotel tucked into a side street off Michigan Avenue. This landmark, 221-room hotel offers stylish, comfortable accommodations with mahogany furnishings, including armoires and Chippendale desks. Rooms come with three multiline telephones (with fax and Internet capability), Crabtree & Evelyn toiletries, terry robes, and a daily newspaper. Among the eight luxury suites, appointed in 18th-century English style with Asian touches, are two with outdoor terraces and knockout skyline views. Because this is an older property, expect narrow hallways and small bathrooms. The fully equipped fitness center supplies exercise bikes for in-room use. The hotel restaurant, Fornetto Mei (little oven), serves Italian and Asian fare, and its centerpiece is its wood-burning pizza oven, located in the restaurant's atrium overlooking Delaware Street. Moline, an American bistro, serves reasonably priced lunch fare and a dinner menu with Californian, Mediterranean, and Asian accents. Off the small, paneled lobby are a piano bar and a tearoom, which serves British-style afternoon tea.

See map p. 99. 105 E. Delaware Place (just west of Michigan Avenue). ☎ 800-948-4255 or 312-944-6300. www.whitehallhotel.com. CTA: Buses stop on Michigan Avenue (½ block east), or Red Line to Chicago/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$39. Rack rates: \$185-\$279 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Runner-Up Hotels

Best Western River North Hotel



\$-\$-\$ River North This former motor lodge may surprise you with its attractive interior, which bears little resemblance to most of its Best Western brethren. Offering moderately priced lodging within easy walking distance of one of the busiest nightlife and restaurant zones of the city, it's worth checking out. See map p. 95. 125 W. Ohio St. (at LaSalle Street). ☎ 800-528-1234 or 312-467-0800. www.rivernorthhotel.com. CTA: Red Line to Grand/State. Parking: Free parking for guests (one car per room). Rack rates: \$89-\$159 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



City Suites Hotel

\$-\$-\$ Near North This affordable 45-unit hotel offers suites with sleeper sofas, armchairs, and desks. The upside? There's an unusual level of

amenities for a modestly priced hotel, including plush robes and complimentary continental breakfast. The downside? Most rooms can be fairly noisy — some face the street, and some face the El tracks. Bring your earplugs to ensure a good night's sleep. *933 W. Belmont Ave. (at Sheffield Avenue).* ☎ **800-248-9108** or 773-404-3400. www.cityinns.com. CTA: Red Line to Belmont. Parking: Adjacent lot (with in-out privileges) \$18. Rack rates: \$99–\$169 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Comfort Inn and Suites Downtown

\$ River North This historic building features Art Deco décor. The hotel offers a free continental breakfast and a great location, and easy access to Navy Pier and the Magnificent Mile. At these prices, you can't expect a pool, but you can find a fitness room with a whirlpool and sauna. See map p. 99. *15 E. Ohio St. (just east of Michigan Avenue)* ☎ **312-894-0900**. CTA: Red Line to Grand/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$25. Rack rates: \$159–\$239 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Hilton Garden Inn

\$\$\$ River North In an enviable location that places it near the ESPN Zone, a Virgin Megastore, and Nordstrom's mall, this location will please most families traveling with young ones. See map p. 99. *10 E. Grand Ave. (at State Street)*. ☎ **800-445-8667** or 312-595-0000. www.hilton.com. CTA: Red Line to Grand/State. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$34, self-parking (with no in-out privileges) \$20. Rack rates: \$169–\$309 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



Homewood Suites

\$\$\$ River North An excellent choice for families, this hotel is near the North Bridge development, just west of Michigan Avenue. This simple-yet-comfy hotel offers 233 one-bedroom suites, each with a full kitchen, and will make you feel right at home. See map p. 99. *40 E. Grand Ave. (at Wabash Street)*. ☎ **800-225-5466** or 312-644-2222. www.homewood-suites.com. CTA: Red Line to State/Grand. Parking: Valet (with in-out privileges) \$35. Rack rates: \$109–\$359 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



Majestic Hotel

\$\$ Near North This 52-room hostelry in a residential neighborhood near Wrigleyville was recently renovated and has the ambience of an English inn, with larger suites including butler's pantries with a microwave, refrigerator, and wet bar. *528 W. Brompton St. (at Lake Shore Drive)*. ☎ **800-727-5108** or 773-404-3499. www.cityinns.com. CTA: Buses stop on Marine Drive (½ block east); Red Line to Addison, then walk several blocks east to Lake Shore Drive and 1 block south. Parking: Self-parking in nearby garage (with no in-out privileges) \$19. Rack rates: \$99–\$179 double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Millennium Knickerbocker Hotel

\$\$\$ Streeterville This member of the Millennium chain has made big strides in sprucing up its 305 rooms and does offer good value and a superb location. See map p. 99. *163 E. Walton St. (just east of Michigan Avenue)*.

☎ 800-621-8140 or 312-751-8100. www.milleniumhotels.com. **CTA:** Buses stop on Michigan Avenue ($\frac{1}{2}$ block west), or Red Line to Chicago/State. **Parking:** Valet (with in-out privileges) \$39, self-parking \$24. **Rack rates:** \$129–\$249 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.



Radisson Hotel & Suites

\$-\$-\$-\$ **Streeterville** One nice feature of this recently renovated hotel is a rooftop, outdoor swimming pool — a kid-pleaser. The sleeping rooms, which start on the 14th floor, also have great views. See map p. 99. *160 E. Huron St. (just east of Michigan Avenue).* **☎ 800-333-3333 or 312-787-2900.** www.radisson.com. **CTA:** Buses serving many routes stop on Michigan Avenue ($\frac{1}{2}$ block west). **Parking:** Valet (with in-out privileges) \$39. **Rack rates:** \$149–\$399 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

Swissôtel

\$-\$-\$-\$-\$ **River East** The focus here is on the business traveler, but you'd be surprised at the generous weekend deals on offer. Spacious guest rooms feature superior views created by this hotel's modernistic, triangular glass design. See map p. 95. *323 E. Wacker Dr. (at Columbus Drive).* **☎ 888-737-9477 or 312-565-0565.** www.swissotel.com. **CTA:** Buses stop at Wacker Drive and Michigan Avenue (3 blocks west), or Brown, Orange, or Green line to Randolph. **Parking:** Valet (with in-out privileges) \$45. **Rack rates:** \$159–\$409 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

W Chicago Lakeshore

\$-\$-\$-\$-\$ **Streeterville** If access to outdoor activities — the lakefront bike and running path, Lake Michigan swimming and beaches, and Navy Pier — is a priority, here's your spot. The only hotel on the lakefront, this boutique hotel tries hard to achieve hipness. See map p. 99. *644 N. Lake Shore Dr. (at Ontario Street).* **☎ 877-946-8357 or 312-943-9200.** www.whatels.com. **CTA:** Red Line to Grand/State. **Parking:** Valet (with in-out privileges) \$41. **Rack rates:** \$269–\$429 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.

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Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Suites
(Streeterville)
The Silversmith (Loop)
Sofitel Chicago Water Tower
(Magnificent Mile)
The Sutton Place Hotel (Gold Coast)
Swissôtel (River East)
Talbott Hotel (Magnificent Mile)
The Tremont (Magnificent Mile)
W Chicago Lakeshore (Streeterville)
Whitehall Hotel (Magnificent Mile)
- \$\$
Best Western River North Hotel (River
North)
Chicago Hilton and Towers (South
Loop)
Chicago Marriott Downtown
(Magnificent Mile)
City Suites Hotel (Near North)
- Courtyard by Marriott Chicago
Downtown (River North)
Courtyard by Marriott Chicago
Downtown/Magnificent Mile
(Magnificent Mile)
DoubleTree Guest Suites
(Streeterville)
Embassy Suites (River North,
Streeterville)
Hampton Inn & Suites Hotel (River
North)
Hotel Allegro (Loop)
House of Blues Hotel, a Loews Hotel
(North Loop)
Hyatt Regency Chicago (River East)
Majestic Hotel (Near North)
Radisson Hotel & Suites (Streeterville)
Renaissance Chicago Hotel (North
Loop)
Sheraton Chicago Hotel & Suites
(Streeterville)
- \$
Best Western River North Hotel
(River North)
Chicago Hilton and Towers (South
Loop)
City Suites Hotel (Near North)
Comfort Inn and Suites Downtown
(River North)
Hampton Inn & Suites Hotel (River
North)
Red Roof Inn (Streeterville)

Chapter 10

Dining and Snacking in Chicago

In This Chapter

- Finding out what's new and what's hot
- Discovering Chicago's culinary favorites for dining and snacking
- Eating your way around the globe: Ethnic cuisine
- Finding the 411 on some of Chicago's best restaurants
- Jonesing for caffeine: Coffee and tea

Chicago is not the meat-and-potatoes place that it was back when the Chicago stockyards and packing houses fed the nation. Today, dining in Chicago is as sophisticated as dining in New York, San Francisco, and other cosmopolitan cities. In fact, in 2006, one of our hottest restaurants, Alinea, was named best restaurant in the nation by *Gourmet* magazine. Chicago dining has arrived, and with force.

But even as you're planning which hot spots to try, don't worry about missing out on the classics: Chicago still offers the famous deep-dish pizza that was invented here in the 1940s. **Gino's East** and other Chicago pizzerias continue to draw big crowds (see Chapter 2). And Chicago is *still* the place for steak. Historically, Chicago's highest grossing restaurant has been **Gibson's Steakhouse**, a clubby, dark-wood den of cigars, fine red wine, and gargantuan steaks. Many other Chicago restaurants famously serve up juicy cuts of beef — see the "Chicago's steak joints" sidebar later in this chapter for a list of the best.

But Chicago is much more than pizza and steak. You can find everything from foodie meccas like **Charlie Trotter's** to basement-level dives like **Billy Goat Tavern**. Ethnic options abound: Mexican food doesn't get any better than **Frontera Grill**, where the museum-quality Mexican art completes an atmosphere that matches the level of the cuisine. And a bit off the beaten path, **Arun's** offers exquisite Thai food and desserts so beautiful they'll bring tears to your eyes.

Getting the Dish on the Local Scene

The most recent trend in Chicago dining is a movement toward food engineering, for lack of a better term. High-tech combinations of foods have created out-of-this-world meals and have spawned terms like “food deconstruction” at unbelievably pricey, high-end establishments such as Alinea, Moto, and Tru. Still, other well-known chefs still reign supreme, such as Jean Joho at Everest, Charlie Trotter at his eponymous restaurant, and Arun Sampanthavivat at Arun’s.

Other restaurants have put together fascinating mixes of cuisines and cultures — and the result is truly wonderful, brand-new flavor and taste. A leading example is the Indian–Latin American combinations at **Vermilion**, and **SushiSamba Rio**, which takes its inspiration from the Japanese immigrants who moved to Peru and Brazil in the early 20th century, eventually creating a cuisine that mixed their native Asian dishes with South American ingredients.

Another trend among Chicago foodies is small plates. Two restaurants are standouts in this regard. Vegetarians and veggie lovers alike will delight in the twist on fine dining served up at **Green Zebra**. The restaurant features “small plates” of veggie specialties, such as fennel risotto cake with a syrah reduction, and Hawaiian heart of palm with Kaffir lime and Thai basil chile. Another super-popular spot featuring small plates is the Mediterranean restaurant **Avec**, which is garnering kudos from foodies nationwide.

On the other end of the dining spectrum, industry analysts have noted an increase in consumers’ appetites for quick and casual eateries where you order food at a counter and sit down to have it brought to you, like the local **Potbelly’s** and **Corner Bakery**. Such places provide convenient and fairly healthy meals — very healthy, when compared to traditional fast food — and are especially popular for lunch.

Many hotels are handing over restaurant operations to independent restaurateurs — often celebrity chefs. In many cases, the new restaurants provide room service, too. A couple of notable examples include **Mike Ditka’s Restaurant** in The Tremont Hotel and the **Atwood Café** in the Hotel Burnham.

Chicago restaurants reflect the neighborhoods in which they’re located. In the **Loop**, you’ll find the expense-account business crowd. Around the **Magnificent Mile**, there’s plenty of outdoor dining where stylish people go to see and be seen. In the burgeoning **Randolph Street Market District**, a former warehouse and market area where Oprah’s Harpo Studios and many design and production companies make their home, a row of hip new restaurants has popped up. **River North**, the gallery district, is where you find the city’s largest concentration of dining spots. In **Lincoln Park** and on the **North Side**, you find locals at their neighborhood favorites, which tend to change less frequently.

Time-savers

Busy, diner-type restaurants (with booths, tables, and counter seats) usually don't take reservations. If you're willing to sit at the counter, you can often be seated immediately. The counter is not as intimate or private as a table, of course, but it's a good option if you're pressed for time. This strategy usually works, for example, at **Lou Mitchell's**, the Loop's most popular breakfast spot, which often has long lines.

One Chicago neighborhood stands out for some of the hottest dining in the country: the **Bucktown/Wicker Park** neighborhood, home to a large concentration of artists, boasts eclectic fare and restaurants with cutting-edge décor. The area's offerings range from eclectic, small cafes along Milwaukee Avenue to the high-end hot spots like Spring.

To get your bearings in terms of Chicago's neighborhoods, see Chapter 8. For a dining guide to some of Chicago's many ethnic neighborhoods, see "Tasting Chicago's ethnic eats" later in this chapter.

Making reservations

Do you want reservations at the city's hottest restaurant? Or perhaps you want to find out which blues musicians are in Chicago during your visit? This section can help you plan ahead for your night on the town.

If your ideal evening includes dinner at a top restaurant followed by an award-winning play, make reservations before you leave! Call popular restaurants two to three weeks in advance for weekend reservations. For plays, you may need to purchase tickets a few months in advance.

You may also consider using **Open Table** (www.opentable.com), the Web site which allows you to reserve tables online at restaurants all over the country. More than 200 restaurants in the Chicago area (including many of the ones in this book) are listed on the site, and you can even make reservations before you leave home.

Some restaurants are so popular with walk-in diners that they choose not to accept reservations. To avoid a long wait, plan an early or late lunch (say, 11:30 a.m. or 1:30 p.m.) or an early or late dinner (before 6 p.m. or after 8:30 p.m.). Exceptions at dinner include restaurants close to theaters, where you can usually get a table easily around 8 p.m., after the crowds have left to make the curtain.



In Chicago, you can usually get a table at most restaurants with a day or two's notice — sometimes even with a same-day phone call. In cases where I recommend reservations, I urge you to take the few minutes to make them — especially for dinner. If you arrive without reservations during the dinner rush at Chicago's most popular restaurants, you may

find yourself cooling your heels for at least an hour. And, speaking of cool, that's the reception you'll get from the harried host or hostess.

Dressing to dine

As "casual day" has taken hold in corporate America, restaurant dress codes, too, have become more casual. With a few exceptions — the **Pump Room** is a notable one — Chicago restaurant dress codes are relaxed, and many top spots allow jeans and sports shirts. If a man wears a tie and a woman a cocktail dress, they may feel slightly overdressed in all but the most formal Chicago restaurants. (Still, I feel more comfortable being slightly overdressed than slightly underdressed.) In most places, women can feel comfortable in black pants, a sweater, and boots; men, in dress pants and a sweater. In the summertime, a sundress with cardigan and sandals for women and khakis and golf shirt for men should suffice in most places. If you're concerned, call ahead and ask if the restaurant has a dress code.

Smoking — or not



Unlike New York and California, Chicago still allows smoking in restaurants, but there has been a recent movement toward a smoking ban. At press time, city ordinances required that all restaurants provide non-smoking sections. How comfortable and effective they are for nonsmokers depends on the ventilation and the distance between smoking and nonsmoking areas. Sometimes nonsmoking sections are in a separate room, away from smokers; often the sections adjoin.

Finding other restaurant sources

Here are the best print and online sources for up-to-date restaurant information and listings:



- ✓ **Centerstage Chicago** (www.centerstage.net/chicago) offers an online menu of music, food, dancing, theater, art, and bars.
- ✓ **Chicago Magazine** (☎ 312-222-8999; www.chicagomag.com), the premier city magazine, covers lifestyles, culture, theater, Chicago gossip, and other entertainment, and is a reliable source of restaurant reviews.
- ✓ The free **Chicago Reader** (☎ 312-828-0350; www.chicagoreader.com) is an alternative newspaper that has gone mainstream — mostly. Published on Thursday and distributed in the city's restaurants, cafes, and bookstores, the *Reader* contains Chicago's most comprehensive entertainment listings and reviews, covering a wide range of tastes and lifestyles.
- ✓ **Weekend**, the Friday entertainment section of the **Chicago Sun-Times** (☎ 312-321-3000; www.suntimes.com), is packed with listings. Most famous are the movie reviews by critic Roger Ebert; the restaurant review section is also good.

- ✓ The ***Chicago Tribune*** (☎ 312-222-3232; www.chicagotribune.com) publishes a weekend tabloid insert, *Friday*, that's full of listings and reviews. The section is known for excellent restaurant reviews.
- ✓ The ***Daily Herald*** (☎ 847-427-4300; www.dailyherald.com), published in suburban Arlington Heights and distributed throughout the city, has a fat weekend entertainment section, *Time Out!*, published on Friday.
- ✓ **North Shore** (www.northshoremag.com) is an online magazine covering Chicago's northern suburbs. It may be of interest if you plan to spend time there or want to ogle the homes in the city's priciest suburbs.
- ✓ **Metromix** (www.metromix.com), sponsored by the *Chicago Tribune*, is a great site for keeping abreast of new restaurants, clubs, bars, and shows.
- ✓ Gritty **New City** (www.newcitychicago.com) strives to be what the *Chicago Reader* once was. Published on Thursday, its pages are full of the offbeat and the irreverent.
- ✓ **Where Chicago** (www.wheremagazine.com) is stocked in most hotels, and lists some of the city's dining, entertainment, and shopping destinations.

Tasting Chicago's ethnic eats

A patchwork of ethnic diversity, stitched from cuisines from around the globe, distinguishes Chicago's dining scene. Looking for the cuisine of Cuba or China? Of Japan or Jamaica? Of Laos or Lithuania? You'll find them all and many more in the Windy City, where sending your taste buds on a multinational culinary adventure is easy.

Italian, Chicago-style

At the south end of the Loop, Taylor Street is as Italian as spaghetti and meatballs. Here in Chicago's own "Little Italy" (which, sadly, is shrinking due to encroaching urban renewal), the neighborhood wears its ethnicity boldly.

Check out the red-white-and-green décor of **Mario's Italian Lemonade**, 1068 W. Taylor St. (no phone). Pans of rich pizza bread, crusty loaves, and amaretto cookies fill the air with wonderful smells at **Scafuri Bakery**, 1337 W. Taylor St. (☎ 312-733-8881). And stores still sell imported olive oil, sausages, cheeses, and wines. You may even run into Italian-American celebrities like Tony Bennett dining at old neighborhood favorites, such as the **Rosebud**, 1500 W. Taylor St., near Ashland Avenue (☎ 312-942-1117). And, as in the old days in this neighborhood, black-shawl-draped elderly women gossip on stoops, and men in cloth caps linger over strong coffee.

To market, to market

One of Chicago's hottest new areas, the **Randolph Street Market District**, sprouted among the cabbages and turnips of the produce market of West Randolph Street. The neighborhood is about an \$8 cab ride from the Mag Mile. The young and the beautiful flock to this "urban chic" neighborhood, to such restaurants as **Marché**, 833 W. Randolph St. (☎ 312-226-8399); **Blue Point Oyster Bar**, 741 W. Randolph St. (☎ 312-207-1222); **Red Light**, 820 W. Randolph St. (☎ 312-733-8880); and **Vivo**, 838 W. Randolph St. (☎ 312-733-3379).

Italian restaurants, old and new, are sprinkled throughout the city. A Loop landmark for more than 70 years, **Italian Village**, 71 W. Monroe St., at Dearborn Street (☎ 312-332-7005), is three restaurants in one and a favorite for pre- and post-theater dining. Stylish **Coco Pazzo**, 300 W. Hubbard St. (☎ 312-836-0900), features the cooking of Tuscany. Just off the Magnificent Mile, **Bice Ristorante** (see listing later in this chapter) offers top food and great people-watching from a sidewalk dining area.



When Jay Leno brings his *Tonight Show* to Chicago, he often heads for **Mr. Beef on Orleans**, 666 N. Orleans St., between Erie and Huron streets (☎ 312-337-8500) for an Italian beef or sausage sandwich. Don't miss this Chicago favorite — juicy beef or spicy grilled sausage served on a chewy roll and dressed with sweet or hot peppers.

Although the Maxwell Street market has relocated, you can still buy pork-chop sandwiches along **Halsted Street**. Other don't-miss Chicago treats include double cheeseburgers at **Billy Goat Tavern**, 430 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-222-1525); all-beef Vienna hot dogs and fries smothered in cheddar cheese at **Gold Coast Dogs**, 159 N. Wabash, at Randolph Street (☎ 312-917-1677); and ribs at **Twin Anchors** (see listing later in this chapter). Suburban outposts include **Robinson's No. 1 Ribs** in Oak Park and **Hecky's Barbecue** in Evanston.

It's all Greek to me



Long tables and family-style dining reign in Greektown, which is a popular destination for large groups. Greektown, which received a face-lift in 1996, occupies a few blocks of Halsted Street north of Jackson Boulevard and offers a zesty mix of Greek restaurants, nightclubs, and grocery stores. Greektown restaurants serve such Mediterranean staples as Greek salad, *saganaki* (flaming cheese), and *baklava* (a dessert made with thin layers of pastry, nuts, and honey), as well as the ubiquitous gyro plate or sandwich. One of the area's most attractive restaurants is **Pegasus**, 130 S. Halsted St. (☎ 312-226-3377), where a rooftop garden offers a panoramic view of the Chicago skyline. Another favorite of mine is **Santorini**, 800 W. Adams St. (☎ 312-829-8820) — although most of the restaurants in the neighborhood offer the same lively atmosphere and similar fare.



Best of the wurst

Good German fellowship (known as *Gemütlichkeit*) flows — along with mounds of plump sausages — at several German restaurants. Sadly, the **Berghoff**, 17 W. Adams St. (☎ 312-427-3170), closed its long-running German restaurant, but the family still runs a bar here that holds Chicago liquor license no. 1.

The largest concentration of German food and culture is found in the Lincoln Square neighborhood, accessible via the Brown Line (at the Western Avenue stop). Business is often transacted in German at **Meyer's Delicatessen**, 4750 N. Lincoln Ave. (☎ 773-561-3377), and the **Merz Apothecary**, 4716 N. Lincoln Ave. (☎ 773-989-0900), with its fragrant European herbs and toiletries. The **Chicago Brauhaus**, 4732 N. Lincoln Ave. (☎ 773-784-4444), resembles a Munich beer hall and offers schnitzel, smoked pork loin, *Koenigsberger klopse* (meatballs in caper sauce), and other German specialties.

Dim sum and then some

Chicago's Chinatown is about 20 blocks south of the Loop and about 2 long blocks west of the McCormick Place convention complex. Some 50 restaurants, bakeries, markets, and import houses, are strung along a few blocks of Cermak Road and Wentworth Avenue. Perennially popular restaurants include **Three Happiness**, 209 W. Cermak Rd. (☎ 312-842-1964) and 2130 S. Wentworth Ave. (☎ 312-791-1228), known for its bountiful dim sum cart, and **Emperor's Choice**, 2238 S. Wentworth Ave. (☎ 312-225-8800), which serves superior seafood. Elsewhere in the city, head for River North to try the satay bar at **Ben Pao**, 52 W. Illinois St., at Dearborn Street (☎ 312-222-1888).

Thai one on

Thai restaurants are to Chicago what Chinese restaurants are to many other American cities: ubiquitous, affordable, and perfect for a quick meal that offers a taste of the exotic. If you've never tried Thai, Chicago is a great place to start. Good introductory dishes are pad thai noodles topped with minced peanuts, or the coconut-based mild yellow curry.

Arun's (see listing later in this chapter) is one of the city's reigning gourmet interpreters of Thai cuisine, but you can find many other low-key places where entrees don't go much beyond \$10. A staple of the River North dining scene is the bright and airy **Star of Siam**, 11 E. Illinois St., at North State Street (☎ 312-670-0100). **Amarit**, 1 E. Delaware Place, at State Street (☎ 312-649-0500), a few blocks off the Magnificent Mile, consistently delivers top-quality noodles, curries, and Thai iced tea, even if the décor runs toward the shabby. The North Side's **Thai Classic**, 3332 N. Clark St., at Roscoe Street (☎ 773-404-2000), near Wrigley Field, offers an excellent all-you-can-eat buffet on weekends, if you want to try a taste of everything.

Samplings from around the world

A Vietnamese enclave known as Little Saigon centers on Argyle Street and North Sheridan Road, about a 20-minute cab ride north of downtown. You find a number of restaurants here that feature **Vietnamese** and **Laotian** specialties, as well as markets offering Oriental vegetables, exotic spices, and hand-painted teapots. Even the El station on Argyle sports a red, pagoda-style roof.

Go just to the east and a bit north of Little Saigon to find Andersonville, a formerly **Scandinavian** neighborhood with eateries such as **Svea Restaurant**, 5236 N. Clark St. (☎ 773-275-7738), and **Ann Sather** (see listing later in this chapter). They serve traditional pea soup, potato sausage, Swedish meatballs, and Swedish pancakes with tart lingonberries. Check out the Swedish American Museum Center, a pair of Scandinavian delis (Wikstrom's and Erikson's), and the **Swedish Bakery**, 5348 N. Clark St. (☎ 773-561-8919) — a must-visit if you're in the area. This is the reigning star of bakeries in Chicago, in my humble opinion, and you don't have to be Swedish to love it (although their wide array of Swedish Christmas cookies are to die for). Middle Eastern food is also becoming popular in the area, with several excellent bakeries and restaurants.

Other major enclaves in Chicago that offer ethnic cuisine include a **Lithuanian** area around Marquette Park on the southwest side; a concentration of **Indian** shops and restaurants along Devon Avenue; and **Ukrainian Village** (on the West Side, near Chicago Avenue and Oakley Boulevard), where you find borscht and cabbage rolls. Sections of North Milwaukee Avenue are "Main Street" for Chicago's huge **Polish** population (the second-largest urban concentration after Warsaw's), with storefront restaurants such as **Red Apple Restaurant**, 3123 N. Milwaukee Ave., at Central Park Avenue (☎ 773-588-5781).

Trimming the Fat from Your Budget

Chicago is a great food town — but you're not here just to eat. You'll probably want some cash left over for other activities. In that case, it's time to investigate cheap eats.

Tips about tipping and taxes

How much should you tip? Throughout the United States, the standard tip is 15 percent of the total before tax is added; 20 percent is considered a generous tip. If you prefer, you can strike a reasonable compromise by figuring 15 percent of the total, tax included. Chicago's food tax is substantial. Restaurants levy a 9 percent state tax, plus a 1 percent city tax. I find it easiest to double the tax, leaving that amount for the tip.

Lettuce Entertain You . . . All Over Chicago

The Lettuce Entertain You restaurant empire was founded in Chicago in 1971 by Rich Melman, who opened R.J. Grunt's (which is still going strong) as an upscale hamburger joint just across the street from the Lincoln Park Zoo. In doing so, he staked his claim to fame with what is considered the world's first restaurant salad bar. Today, the company owns 70 restaurants around the country, and it's pretty hard to eat extensively in Chicago without happening into one owned by Lettuce Entertain You. From high-end French dining at **Everest**, to casual Asian fare at **Big Bowl**, and stuff-yourself-silly family-style Italian dining at **Maggiano's**, you'll find plenty of options. Check them out on their Web site, www.leye.com, where you can make reservations at any of their restaurants. (And hint, hint: If you need to buy a little something for your hosts or friends while in town, most Chicagoans will always appreciate a Lettuce Entertain You gift card.)



I have two tips for bargain hunters. First, head for one of Chicago's many ethnic restaurants. Two people can enjoy a Thai meal for about \$30, including beer to wash down the spicy peanut sauce. Second, eat your big meal at lunch. Many restaurants serve dinner only, but the ones that open at midday (or even for breakfast) offer great values at lunch.

Other strategies: Split an appetizer or dessert. Skip the alcohol or enjoy a before- or after-dinner drink from your private (and cheaper) stash in your room. If possible, skip beverages altogether — those \$2.50 Diet Cokes can really add up. Order the fixed-price menu (not available everywhere but always a good deal). Have a meal on the go for lunch and save your cash for a big night out.



A server who rattles off daily specials without prices may be busy or forgetful — or may be counting on your reluctance to look cheap in front of your friends or family. Always ask, and no \$23 plate of noodles (true story) will ever sneak up on you.

To help you budget, each listing in this chapter includes a price range for main courses and a dollar-sign rating. The ratings represent the price of an appetizer, entree, and nonalcoholic beverage — but not tax or tip — and correspond with the following ranges:

Table 10-1 Key to Restaurant Dollar Signs

Dollar Sign(s)	Price Range
\$	\$20 or less
\$\$	\$21–\$35

Dollar Sign(s)	Price Range
\$\$\$	\$36–\$45
\$\$\$\$	\$46–\$60
\$\$\$\$\$	\$61 and over

Use the dollar-sign ratings to get a rough idea of how much you're likely to spend on a meal, but don't rely only on them. Certainly, you can get \$\$ meals at \$\$\$ restaurants — and vice versa — depending on what you order. Remember, too, that many restaurants offer specials and fixed-price meals that the dollar signs don't reflect.

You can use the indexes at the end of this chapter to help you choose restaurants by neighborhood, cuisine, or price. The maps in this chapter show the locations of restaurants recommended here.

Chicago's Best Restaurants



Alinea

\$\$\$\$\$ Lincoln Park ECLECTIC

Mushroom-flavored puffs inspired by sculptures at the Museum of Contemporary Art, and French onion soup served inside a shell of pulverized onions (you have to break the shell to get to the soup inside) are just some of the ways Alinea's chef Grant Achatz is changing the face of food. Like Homaro Cantu at Moto (see listing later in this chapter), Achatz presents familiar foods in new contexts and unexpected forms, such as a serving of rib-eye beef surrounded by orange, yellow, and brown sauces that combine to taste just like A-1 steak sauce. Achatz, who has worked with Spain's Ferran Adrià (the master of food deconstruction), as well as French Laundry's Thomas Keller, says he wants diners to feel like they're taking a journey, "zigzagging between challenge and comfort." The restaurant itself is comfortable, with shoulder-high chairs you can sink into and soft lighting sparkling off the sharp angles of the grand staircase. But you'll only be comfortable dining here if you're willing to go along for the ride. Eat with an open mind (and a full wallet), and you'll be rewarded.

See map p. 136. 1723 N. Halsted St. (between North Avenue and Willow Street).

☎ 312-867-0110. www.alinearestaurant.com. CTA: Red Line to North/Clybourn. Reservations required. Main courses: Degustation menu \$75–\$175. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Wed–Sun 5:30–9:30 p.m.

Ambria

\$\$\$ Lincoln Park FRENCH

Ambria is one of Chicago's finest restaurants, and one of the longest-running, at 20 years and counting. Housed in the stately Belden-Stratford Hotel

(now mostly condominiums), across the street from Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago's classical French restaurant maintains a high standard. You find deals being brokered and couples celebrating anniversaries in the wood-paneled, clublike atmosphere. Service is exemplary, from the charming hostess who makes you feel comfortable in the upscale French atmosphere to the professional waitstaff. The food, from roasted rack of lamb to medallions of New Zealand venison, is superb. Ask for a soufflé for dessert when you order your main course (so they have time to prepare this light-as-air French classic).

See map p. 136. 2300 Lincoln Park West (at Belden Avenue). ☎ 773-472-5959. CTA: Bus no. 151 to Belden Avenue. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$25–\$36, fixed-price meals \$65–\$75. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri 6–10 p.m., Sat 5–10:30 p.m.



Ann Sather

\$ North Side SCANDINAVIAN/BREAKFAST

Gooey, buttery-soft homemade cinnamon rolls are reason enough to visit this mecca of Swedish delights. So are thin Swedish pancakes with lingonberry sauce, and maybe a side of mild Swedish potato sausage. This popular breakfast spot is especially busy on weekends — you may have to wait, but lines move quickly. (Get there before 11 a.m. for the fastest service.) Hearty, inexpensive lunches include chopped beefsteak, roast pork loin, and meatballs. Ann Sather's is bright and cheerful, decorated with paintings from a Swedish fairy tale. A sister restaurant is in the Swedish enclave of Andersonville, at 5207 N. Clark (☎ 773-271-6677). Several other branches serve only breakfast and lunch: in Wicker Park, at 1448 N. Milwaukee Ave. (☎ 773-394-1812), and at smaller cafes in Lakeview, at 3411 N. Broadway (☎ 773-305-0024) and 3416 N. Southport Ave. (☎ 773-404-4475).

See map p. 136. 929 W. Belmont Ave. (by North Sheffield Avenue). ☎ 773-348-2378. CTA: Red Line to Belmont. Reservations not accepted. Main courses: \$7–\$12. AE, DISC, MC, V. Open: Daily 7 a.m.–9 p.m.

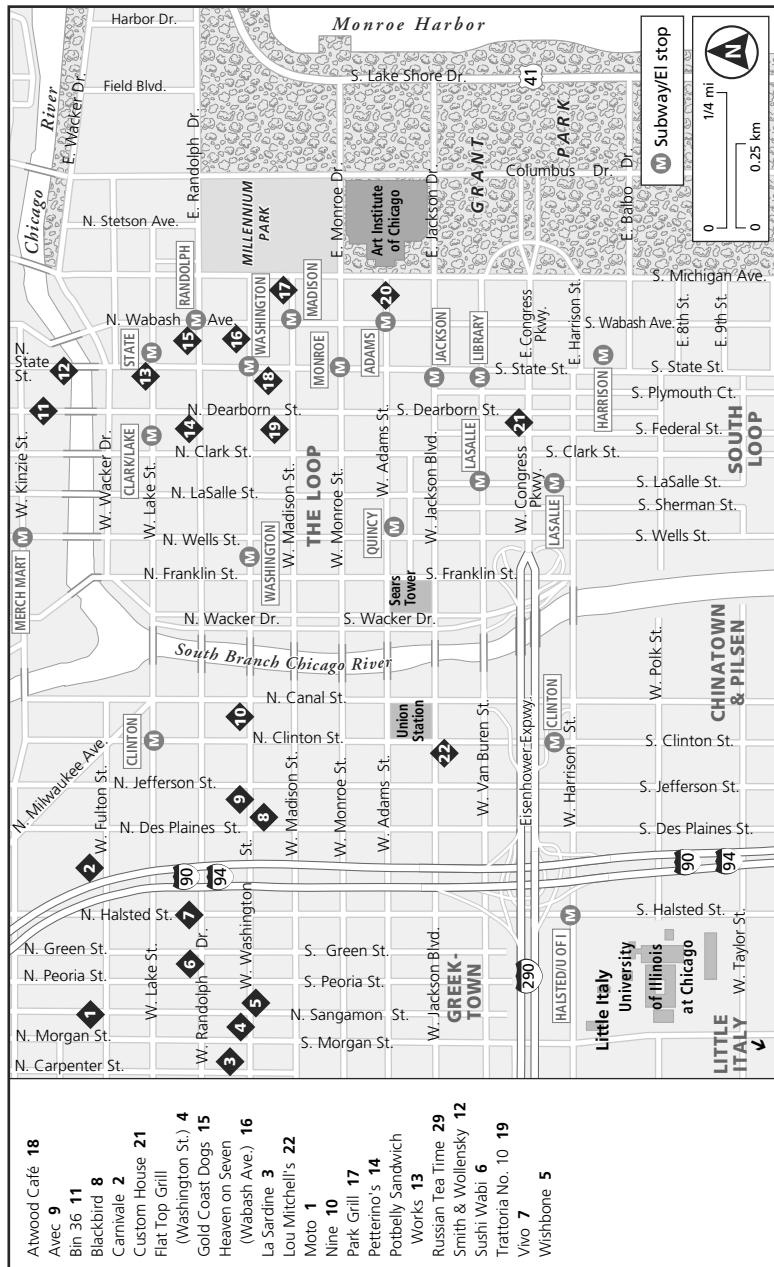


Arun's

\$\$\$\$ North Side THAI

Stunningly beautiful Thai food and an ever-changing chef's menu make this the best Thai restaurant in the city. For my money, Arun's may be the best Thai restaurant in the country. Tucked away in a far-northwest neighborhood, the restaurant's unassuming exterior cloaks a spectacular interior. It offers a fixed-price-only menu of 12 courses for \$85 — expensive, but worth it. On any given night, you may sample hot-and-sour shrimp soup, three-flavored red snapper, or garlic prawns. Even classic dishes become unforgettable here: Courses of various delicate dumplings are accented with edible, carved dough flowers. And the desserts, including the scrumptious sticky rice with papaya, are tiny works of art. If you take public transportation here, you may want to splurge on a cab home, because buses run sporadically late at night.

Loop & West Loop Dining



4156 N. Kedzie (at Irving Park Road). ☎ 773-539-1909. www.arunsthai.com. CTA: Blue Line to Irving Park Road, then transfer to eastbound bus no. 80; or Brown Line to Irving Park, then transfer to westbound bus no. 80. Reservations required with credit card. Main courses: 12-course chef's menu \$85. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Tues–Sun 5–10 p.m.

Atwood Café

\$\$ Loop ECLECTIC

Colorful and offbeat, this stylish eatery in the Hotel Burnham is eclectic and fun and serves up a fresh take on comfort food. This fanciful and romantic spot is filled with nooks and crannies and sofa-like seats. Soaring windows allow you to take in the bustle of State Street from the comfort of your own table. Don't miss the mussels in a garlicky tomato sauce with crusty, grilled homemade bread, and for dessert, try the banana-and-white-chocolate bread pudding. The bar is small, so you're allowed to take drinks and sit in chairs around the fireplace in the lobby.

See map p. 129. 1 W. Washington St. (at State Street). ☎ 312-368-1900. www.atwoodcafe.com. CTA: Bus no. 151 to Washington and Michigan, then walk west; or Red Line to Washington/State. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$18–\$26, 3-course prix fixe \$38. AE, DISC, MC, V. Open: Breakfast Mon–Fri 7–10 a.m., Sat 8–10 a.m.; Sun brunch 8 a.m.–3 p.m.; lunch Mon–Sat 11:30 a.m.–3:45 p.m.; dinner Sun–Thurs 5–10 p.m., Fri–Sat 5–11 p.m.



Avec

\$\$\$\$ Randolph Street Market District ECLECTIC

No, you aren't walking into a sauna: The wood-paneled walls and long benches for communal dining are part of the experience at this hot new restaurant, the latest from the owners of Blackbird, the restaurant next door that's been a happening spot for years. Avec is all about small plates and matching wines. And speaking of wine, it's served carafe-style, a real value, because you get about a glass and a half of wine for the price of one glass. Specialties cooked in the woodburning oven include charcuterie (such as homemade chorizo and salami dishes), and a wide range of small salads rounds out the menu.

See map p. 129. 615 W. Randolph St. (by North Jefferson Street). ☎ 312-377-2002. www.avecrestaurant.com. Cab recommended (about \$6 from the Loop). Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$15–\$25. AE, DC, MC, V. Open: Sun 3:30–10 p.m., Mon–Thurs 3:30 p.m. to midnight, Fri–Sat 3:30 p.m.–1 a.m.

Bice Ristorante

\$\$\$\$ Streeterville ITALIAN

This sleek restaurant just east of Michigan Avenue serves homemade pasta and other Northern Italian fare. It's often busy, but the bar is stylish and pleasant to rest your weary feet after a long day of shopping or touring. Many prefer to sit outside, where you can watch passersby.

See map p. 133. 158 E. Ontario St. (by North Michigan Avenue). ☎ 312-664-1474. www.bicechicago.com. CTA: Bus no. 151 to Ontario Street and Michigan Avenue, then walk 1 block west. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$15–\$25. AE, DC, MC, V. Open: Sun–Thurs 11:30 a.m.–10:30 p.m., Fri–Sat 11:30 a.m.–11:30 p.m.

Bin 36

\$\$\$ North Loop AMERICAN

It's all about wine at this bistro in a lofty, airy space in the Marina Towers complex, across from the House of Blues. This place is so wine-centric that the menu recommends which red or white would best complement each offering. Ordering glasses of wines from certain regions or of specific varietals will bring out the wine expert in you. (A *flight* is two to three small glasses of different wines served together.) And the food, enlivened with Californian and Mediterranean accents, is yummy enough to make sure you don't drink on an empty stomach. In the tavern, you can sit at the bar and snack on small plates like shiitake spring rolls, steamed mussels, and homemade pâtés. Book a table in the Cellar for a dinner menu that includes seafood, seared venison, and braised pork shank.

See map p. 129. 339 N. Dearborn St. (by West Kinzie Street). ☎ 312-755-9463. www.bin36.com. CTA: Bus no. 22 to Kinzie Street or Red Line to Grand/State. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$18–\$26. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11 a.m. to midnight, Fri 11 a.m.–1:30 a.m., Sat noon to 1:30 a.m., Sun noon to 10 p.m.



Bistro 110

\$\$ Magnificent Mile AMERICAN

A neighborhood crowd gathers at Bistro 110 for its changing weekly specials, posted on a chalkboard. (You can also check the board for the weather forecast and other local news.) This is the perfect spot to get a grilled fish, steak, or roasted veggie platter, and the place has become so well-known for its roasted garlic with crunchy French bread that the restaurant gives each table a card with the recipe to take home. Because it's a neighborhood crowd, the atmosphere is relaxed and kid-friendly. Sunday brunch with a New Orleans-inspired menu and a live jazz band is a popular ritual; get there early — or be prepared for a long wait.

See map p. 133. 110 E. Pearson St. (just west of Michigan Avenue). ☎ 312-266-3110. www.levyrestaurants.com. CTA: Red Line to Chicago/State or bus no. 151 to Water Tower. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$13–\$28. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Wed 11:30 a.m.–10 p.m., Thurs–Sat 11:30 a.m.–11 p.m., Sun 10 a.m.–10 p.m.

Bistro Zinc

\$\$ Gold Coast BISTRO

The curving zinc bar, where you find hard-boiled eggs on offer for customers and bottles of French liqueur, such as Chartreuse, is the most striking

feature of this French bistro, which also has a traditional tile floor. The atmosphere is energetic, the serving staff upbeat. Salade frisée, salade niçoise, skate, and escargot are some of the specialties.

See map p. 133. 1131 N. State St. (near Rush Street). ☎ 312-337-1131. CTA: Red Line to Clark/Division or bus no. 36 to State and Rush streets. Main courses: \$13–\$19. AE, DC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11:30 a.m.–10 p.m., Fri 11:30 a.m.–11 p.m., Sat 10 a.m.–11 p.m., Sun 10 a.m.–9 p.m.

Blackbird

\$\$\$ Randolph Street Market District NEW AMERICAN

Stylishly bare, Blackbird exudes an urban chic that could blend into the dining landscape of any major city. The white, narrow room is dense with close-packed tables, and the floor-to-ceiling windows in front frame the urban landscape outside. As in many new restaurants, the noise level can get high (and the tables are crammed too close together). Nevertheless, Blackbird is fun for people who like a scene (everyone pretends not to be looking around), but I'd recommend somewhere else if you're looking for a romantic dinner. Familiar comfort foods in new guises make up the entree list: rack of lamb with figs, leeks, and honey, and rosemary-infused mashed potatoes; quail breast stuffed with dates, almonds, orange, and smoked bacon; and grilled sturgeon with caramelized carrots and curried cauliflower. Desserts are fairly straightforward and on the small side.

See map p. 129. 619 W. Randolph St. ☎ 312-715-0708. www.blackbirdrestaurant.com. Reservations recommended. CTA: Cab ride \$8 from Loop. Main courses: \$8–\$18 lunch, \$23–\$32 dinner. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5:30–10:30 p.m., Fri 11 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5–11:30 p.m., Sat 5–11:30 p.m.

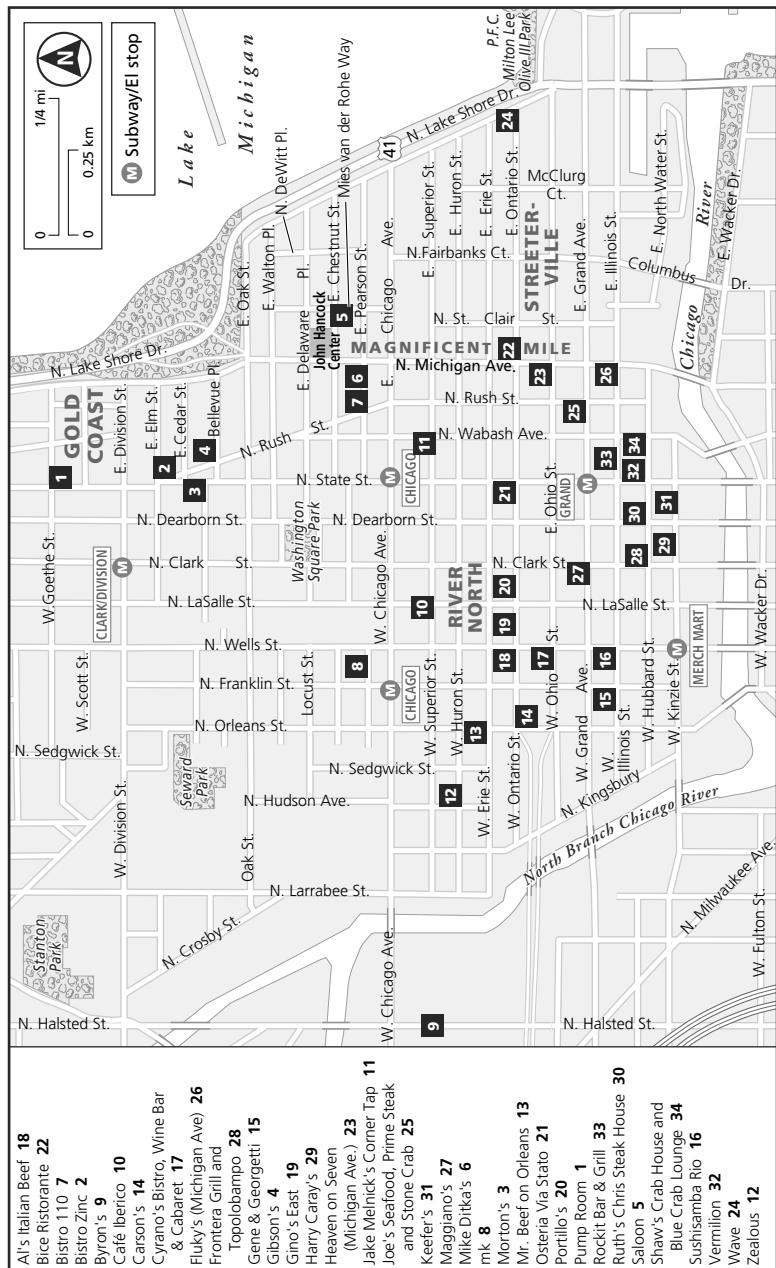
Boka

\$\$ Lincoln Park AMERICAN

In a neighborhood of Irish pubs and sandwich joints, Boka is a sophisticated, grown-up alternative. The dimly lit dining room manages to be both romantic and dramatic, thanks to the fabric “sculptures” stretched across the ceiling. The appetizer getting the thumbs-up from critics is the fresh oyster selection served with a still-bubbling sparkling wine sauce. Entrees cover a range of meat and seafood: You might try the grilled wild salmon with a thyme-sherry reduction, served with white beans and grilled greens; or go for the pork chops, which are topped with a rosemary-cider sauce and come with blue-cheese potato gratin. Boka makes a great dinner stop before a show at Steppenwolf, but make a reservation, because many other theatergoers will have the same idea.

See map p. 136. 1729 N. Halsted St. (between North Avenue and Willow Street). ☎ 312-337-6070. www.bokachicago.com. Reservations recommended on weekends. CTA: Red Line to North/Clybourn. Main courses: \$15–\$25. AE, MC, V. Open: Daily 5–11 p.m.

Magnificent Mile, Gold Coast & River North Dining



*Café Absinthe***\$\$\$ Bucktown/Wicker Park ECLECTIC**

Café Absinthe doesn't look like much from the outside (in fact, you enter from the alleyway), but the romantic interior is the perfect place to linger over a meal with a date. Be prepared for trendy types soaking in the atmosphere while jazz plays in the background. Draperies divide the tables, creating privacy for a tête-à-tête. Food is interesting and changes seasonally. Appetizers may include grilled ostrich filet with confit onion, fresh figs and mandarin oranges, or brie cooked en croute with hazelnuts, blackberry preserves, and spiced strawberries. Main courses run the gamut from wasabi-seared tuna with Oriental vegetable rolls to Pernod-glazed rack of lamb with macadamia-nut couscous. Dessert is as exotic as the rest; if it's available, try the tea-scented crème brûlée, or the decadent chocolate-and-hazelnut mousse served in a martini glass.

See map p. 141. 1954 W. North Ave. (by North Damen Avenue). ☎ 773-278-4488. Reservations recommended. CTA: Blue Line to Damen. Main courses: \$17-\$27. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Sun-Thurs 5:30-10 p.m., Fri-Sat 5:30-11 p.m.

*Café Iberico***\$ River North SPANISH/TAPAS**

Sure, this place is loud. And boisterous. And crowded. But the food is fresh, authentic, and inexpensive. It's a longtime local favorite for singles in their 20s and 30s, making it a good group destination. You may try going in the off-hours, such as very late (after 10 p.m.) or very early (at 4 p.m., after a day of shopping or touring). After you give your name to the hostess, head to the bar for a pitcher of sangria, and join in the fun. Tapas include baked goat cheese, grilled octopus, and tortilla Española. In a town where many restaurant kitchens close by 10 p.m., this place is one of Chicago's most reliable and popular spots for a late-night dinner.

See map p. 133. 739 N. LaSalle St. (between Chicago Avenue and Superior Street). ☎ 312-573-1510. www.cafeiberico.com. Reservations accepted during the week for parties of six or more. CTA: Red Line to Chicago/State or bus no. 156 to Chicago Avenue. Main courses: \$8-\$13, tapas \$2-\$7. DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon-Thurs 11 a.m.-11 p.m., Fri 11 a.m.-1:30 a.m., Sat noon to 1:30 a.m., Sun noon to 11 p.m.

*Carnivale***\$\$\$ West Loop LATIN AMERICAN**

At Carnivale, it's the vibrant atmosphere, not the food, that's the attraction. This sprawling, Latin spot is in a former nightclub — and judging from the dance music that played throughout a recent meal, the stereo system remains intact. Head for the cavernous, two-story central dining room if you want to be at the center of the action, or request a table in one of the more intimate side rooms if you prefer not to shout through your meal. The menu takes inspiration from Central and South America, and includes everything from rum-glazed pork shoulder with Puerto Rican rice and

beans to Argentine-style steaks. Befitting its clubby vibe, there's also an extensive selection of tropical drinks.

See map p. 129. 702 W. Fulton St. (between Clinton Street and the Kennedy Expressway/I-94). ☎ 312-850-5005. www.carnivalechicago.com. Reservations recommended on weekends. CTA: Green Line to Clinton. Main courses: \$14–\$28. AE, DISC, MC, V. Open: Sun–Thurs 5–10 p.m., Fri–Sat 5–11:30 p.m.; bar open Sun–Thurs until midnight, Fri–Sat until 1:30 a.m.



Carson's

\$\$ River North BARBECUE

A true Chicago institution, Carson's calls itself "The Place for Ribs," and, is it ever! The barbecue sauce is sweet and tangy, and the ribs are meaty. Included in the \$20 price for a full slab of ribs are coleslaw and one of four types of potatoes (the most decadent are au gratin), plus right-out-of-the-oven rolls. For dinner there's often a wait, but don't despair. In the bar area, you'll find a heaping mound of some of the best chopped liver around and plenty of cocktail rye to go with it. When you're seated at your table, tie on your plastic bib — and indulge. In case you don't eat ribs, Carson's also barbecues chicken, salmon, and pork chops, and the restaurant's steaks aren't bad. But ribs are the house specialty, so make sure that someone orders them. (The waitstaff will be shocked if you don't.) If by some remarkable feat you have room left after dinner, the candy-bar sundaes are a scrumptious finale. Carson's popularity has led to something of a factory mentality among management, which evidently feels the need to herd 'em in and out, but the servers are responsive to requests not to be hurried through the meal.

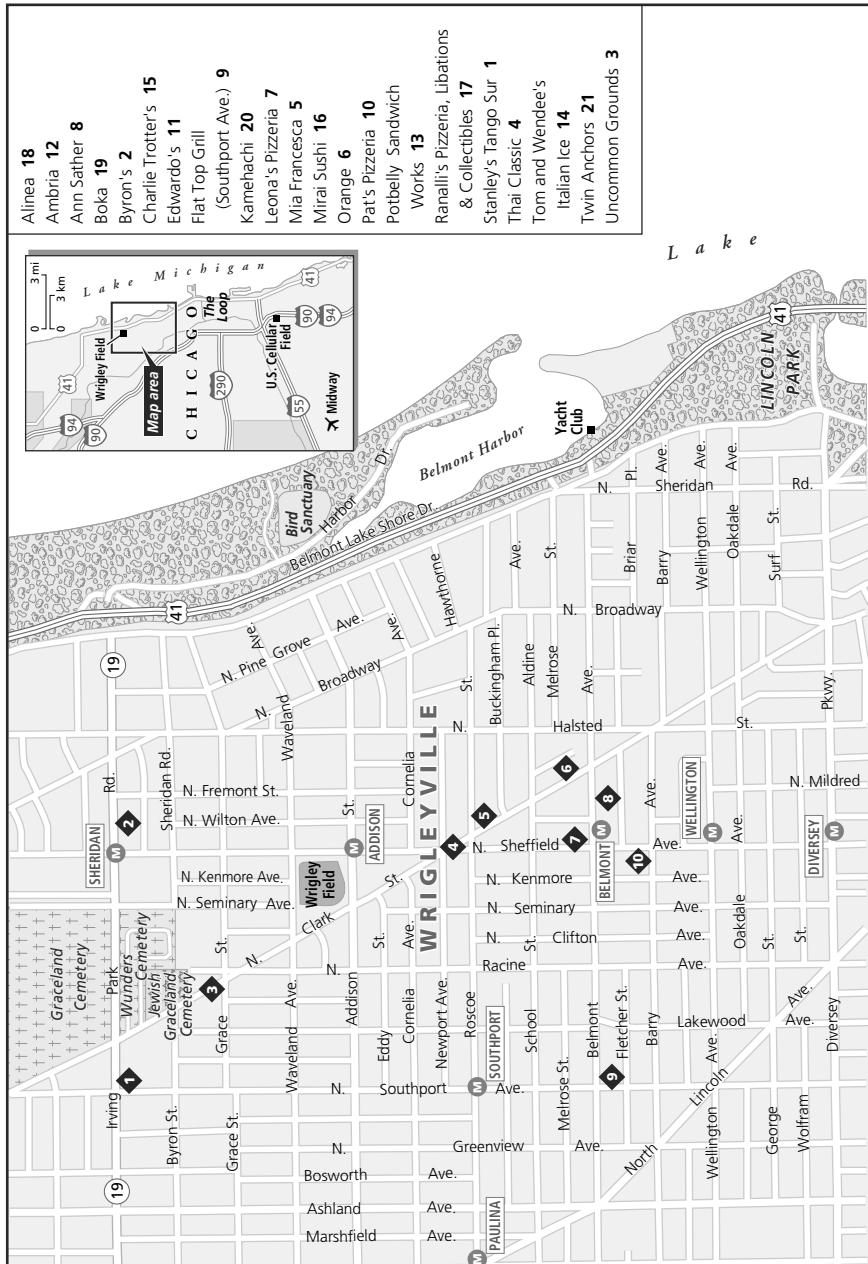
See map p. 133. 612 N. Wells St. (at Ontario Street). ☎ 312-280-9200. www.ribs.com. Reservations accepted for groups of 6 or more. CTA: Red Line to Grand. Main courses: \$8.95–\$30. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11 a.m.–11 p.m., Fri 11 a.m.–12:30 a.m., Sat noon to 12:30 a.m., Sun noon to 11 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving.

Charlie Trotter's

\$\$\$\$ Lincoln Park NOUVELLE

Welcome to Chicago's foodie mecca. Housed in a 1908-built brownstone, Charlie Trotter's is a destination, not just a restaurant. The food outshines even the restaurant's setting. Highly stylized items and lush ingredients make for complex dishes that are innovative, improvisational, and harmonious. The grand menu assortment (\$110) changes daily, and a vegetable menu is \$90. Those are your only two choices, so don't expect to order à la carte. The coveted table in the kitchen allows for the best viewing and must be booked well in advance. Be prepared to make this your entire evening's activity, because meals can take up to three hours. Naturally, you'll find an extensive wine list and a sommelier to help you match wines with each course. For a taste of Trotter's gourmet fare on a smaller scale, stop by **Trotter's To Go**, his takeout store in Lincoln Park, at 1337 W. Fullerton Ave. (☎ 773-868-6510).

Lincoln Park, Wrigleyville & Old Town Dining





See map p. 136. 816 W. Armitage Ave. (near Halsted Street). ☎ 773-248-6228. www.charlietrotters.com. Reservations required. Jackets required, ties requested. CTA: Brown Line to Armitage. Fixed-price dinners: \$90 and \$110. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Tues–Sat 6–10 p.m.

Chez Joël

\$\$ Little Italy BISTRO

Cozy and romantic, this tiny piece of France in Little Italy is well worth the trip. A pretty garden adjoining the dining room is a wonderful setting in the summer. Main courses may include fish specials, *steak frites* (skirt steak with fries), braised lamb shank, and *coq au vin* (chicken in red-wine sauce with vegetables).

1119 W. Taylor St. (by South Aberdeen Street). ☎ 312-226-6479. www.chezjoelbistro.com. Reservations recommended. CTA: Blue Line to Polk. Main courses: \$12–\$22. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11 a.m.–3 p.m. and 5–10 p.m., Fri 11 a.m.–3 p.m. and 5–11 p.m., Sat 5–11 p.m., Sun 4:30–10 p.m.

Club Lucky

\$\$ Bucktown/Wicker Park ITALIAN

Naughayde banquettes, Formica-topped bar and tables, and Captain Video ceiling fixtures may seem retro to some, but everyone from young families to stylish couples find Club Lucky both an interesting scene and a deal for good food. The menu offers Italian home-style cooking, such as *pasta e fagioli* (thick macaroni-and-bean soup); rigatoni with veal meatballs, steamed escarole, and melted slabs of mozzarella; and spicy grilled boneless pork chops served with peppers and roasted potatoes. Try one of the restaurant's signature martinis while you wait (weekends draw big crowds). The lunch menu includes about a dozen Italian sandwiches, such as scrambled eggs and pesto, meatball, and Italian sausage.

1824 W. Wabansia Ave. (1 block north of North Avenue, between Damen and Ashland avenues). ☎ 773-227-2300. www.clubluckychicago.com. Reservations accepted for parties of 6 or more. CTA: Blue Line to Damen. Main courses: \$10–\$20, sandwiches \$8–\$11. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11:30 a.m.–11 p.m., Fri 11:30 a.m. to midnight, Sat 5 p.m. to midnight, Sun 4–10 p.m.; cocktail lounge open later.

Custom House

\$\$\$ South Loop AMERICAN

The menu highlights here are aimed at carnivores, from the rich, almost buttery short rib (served with horseradish-flavored cream puffs) to the pork chop accompanied by pork-stuffed cannelloni and wild mushrooms. No gimmicks here: The draw is Chef Shawn McClain's knack for mixing unexpected flavors simply but perfectly. (Take, for example, the seemingly straightforward spinach salad, which is livened up with thick chunks of bacon, roasted shiitake mushrooms, and hazelnuts). Service is top-notch and the setting sophisticated, with velvet-upholstered booths that allow

for conversation. The restaurant also serves daily breakfast, a weekday lunch, and a Sunday brunch.

See map p. 129. 500 S. Dearborn St. (at Congress Parkway), in the Hotel Blake. ☎ 312-523-0200. www.customhouse.cc. Reservations recommended on weekends. CTA: Brown Line to Library. Main courses: \$26–\$32. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri 7:30–10 a.m., 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m., and 5–10 p.m.; Sat 7:30–10:30 a.m. and 5–10 p.m.; Sun 7:30 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5–9 p.m.



Cyrano's Bistro, Wine Bar & Cabaret

\$\$ River North BISTRO

This charming restaurant has yellow walls, gilt mirrors, and French posters — after a glass of wine, you just may think you're in Southwest France. In fact, Bergerac, France, happens to be the hometown of this lovely restaurant's chef, and also the hometown of the restaurant's namesake, Cyrano de Bergerac. For \$27, you can have a three-course fixed-price feast that may include ratatouille, coq au vin, and a bread pudding with chocolate sauce. A three-course lunch special for \$20 is a real deal. A cabaret is presented Wednesday through Saturday nights; there's a \$10 cover and two-drink minimum those nights, or pay the \$35 for an all-inclusive dinner and cabaret package.

See map p. 133. 546 N. Wells St. (between Ohio Street and Grand Avenue). ☎ 312-467-0546. www.cyranosbistrot.com. CTA: Brown Line to Merchandise Mart. Reservations highly recommended. Main courses: \$9–\$25. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. and 5:30–10:30 p.m., Sat 5:30–10:30 p.m.

Del Toro

\$\$ Bucktown/Wicker Park SPANISH/TAPAS

The mosaic-covered walls, red lace curtains and red marble bar give this space a nice dose of old-world European style, but Del Toro, with its Wicker Park address, caters to late-night hipsters (complete with a DJ who spins tunes after 10 p.m.). Dishes range from basic (marinated olives; roasted beet and goat cheese salad) to more ambitious (seared tuna with sweet-and-sour pumpkin; a terrine of saffron-braised octopus). The lightly breaded and fried chickpeas — mixed with lime juice and chiles — are typical of the Del Toro menu: seemingly straightforward but with a flavorful twist. The large, welcoming lounge area in front is a good spot to sample the restaurant's specialty cocktails.

See map p. 141. 1520 N. Damen Ave. (at LeMoyne Street). ☎ 773-252-1500. www.deltoroafe.com. Reservations accepted for parties of 6 or more. CTA: Blue Line to Damen. Tapas: \$3.50–\$13. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Sun–Wed 5–11 p.m., Thurs 5 p.m.–2 a.m., Sat 5 p.m.–3 a.m., Sun brunch 10 a.m.–3 p.m.



Flat Top Grill

\$ Old Town/North Side/Randolph Street Market District ASIAN

This create-your-own stir-fry restaurant often has lines, but don't worry — they move quickly. If you've never assembled your own stir-fry dish, you

may want to follow one of the suggested recipes on the giant blackboards. Choose from over 70 ingredients including rice, noodles, seafood, chicken, beef, sauces, and veggies — for one price. And remember, the price includes multiple visits to the food line. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Kids love to create their own dishes, and the price is right if you have a few wee ones in tow: A kid's stir-fry is \$5. Flat Top Grill has three Chicago locations, each with different hours.

www.flattopgrill.com. *Main courses (1 price): Lunch \$9, dinner \$12. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V.*

319 W. North Ave. ☎ **312-787-7676**. CTA: Bus no. 76 to North Avenue. Reservations not accepted. Open: Mon–Thurs 5–10 p.m., Fri–Sat 11:30 a.m.–11 p.m., Sun 11:30 a.m.–10 p.m.

*See map p. 129. 1000 W. Washington Blvd. ☎ **312-829-4800**. The neighborhood is a \$5 cab ride from downtown. Reservations accepted. Open: Mon–Thurs 11 a.m.–10 p.m., Fri 11 a.m.–11 p.m., Sat noon to 11 p.m., Sun noon to 9 p.m.*

*See map p. 136. 3200 N. Southport Ave. ☎ **773-665-8100**. CTA: Brown Line to Southport. Reservations accepted. Open: Sun–Thurs 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., Fri–Sat 11:30 a.m.–11 p.m.*



Frontera Grill and Topolobampo

\$-\$-\$-\$ River North MEXICAN

Owners Rick and Deann Bayless travel extensively through Mexico, gathering authentic regional recipes for what is arguably one of America's best Mexican restaurants, containing two dining options. Topolobampo is more upscale, and you can order off its menu at its more casual sister eatery, Frontera Grill. Both are in the same building. Try the signature *tacos al carbon* (the precursor of Americanized fajitas) or chile-marinated stuffed quail with smoky red beans, enchiladas, browned potatoes, and tangy cabbage. The signature appetizer at Frontera is the *sopes surtidos*, corn "boats" filled with chicken in red mole sauce, or black beans with homemade chorizo, and more. At Topolobampo, you'll find white tablecloths and more upscale ingredients and presentation. Frontera only accepts reservations for parties of five to ten, so do as the locals do after putting their names on the list: Order a few margaritas in the bar, which is decorated with terra-cotta tile and rustic wooden tables and bar stools.

*See map p. 133. 445 N. Clark St. (between Illinois and Hubbard streets). ☎ **312-661-1434**. www.fronterakitchens.com. Reservations required at Topolobampo for parties of 1 to 8, reservations accepted at Frontera Grill only for groups of 5 to 10. CTA: Red Line to Grand at State Street. Main courses: Frontera Grill \$15–\$21, Topolobampo \$20–\$29 (chef's 5-course tasting menu). AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Frontera Grill Tues–Thurs 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. and 5–10 p.m., Fri 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. and 5–11 p.m., Sat 10:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. and 5–11 p.m.; Topolobampo Tues 11:45 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5:30–9:30 p.m., Wed–Thurs 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5:30–9:30 p.m., Fri 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5:30–10:30 p.m., Sat 5:30–10:30 p.m.*

Bucktown/Wicker Park Dining & Nightlife



Chicago's steak joints

Since the days of the stockyards, Chicago has been known for its beef. The stockyards are long gone, but the steakhouses remain. The most profitable restaurant in Chicago is **Gibson's Steakhouse**, where the drinks are as big as the beef (see the listing in this chapter). **Morton's**, 1050 N. State St. (☎ 312-266-4820), a Chicago original with branches nationwide (and other Chicago-area locations), is considered by some to be the city's best. Other local favorites include the **Saloon Steakhouse** (see listing in this chapter), **Gene & Georgetti**, 500 N. Franklin St. (☎ 312-527-3718), and **Keefer's**, 20 W. Kinzie St. (☎ 312-467-9525), which works in a few French touches. Chains with branches in Chicago include **Ruth's Chris Steak House**, 431 N. Dearborn St. (☎ 312-321-2725), and **Smith & Wollensky**, 318 N. State St. (☎ 312-670-9900).

Gibson's Steakhouse

\$\$\$\$ Gold Coast STEAKHOUSE

Chicagoans come here to see and be seen, and the food isn't bad either. Photos of celebs decorate the Art Deco-style rooms. The bar has its own life, where the "who's who" of the city mingle and mix. Everything is larger than life, from the patrons to the martinis, which come in 10-ounce glasses. Entrees are also giant-size, and well-aged steaks are the star of the show. With such ample portions, Gibson's is ideal for a group interested in sharing dishes. The turtle pie (a luscious dessert) alone can probably serve eight! This is one of Chicago's most popular restaurants, so call well in advance for reservations. If you aren't up for a big meal, you can also order from the bar menu.

See map p. 133. 1028 N. Rush St. (at Bellevue Place). ☎ 312-266-8999. www.gibsonssteakhouse.com. CTA: Red Line to Clark/Division. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$22–\$35. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Daily 11:30 a.m. to midnight; bar open later.



Gino's East

\$ River North PIZZA

Chicago's famous pizzeria serves up deep-dish pizzas in the classic style at its huge, block-long location. Patrons are welcome to scrawl on the graffiti-covered walls and furniture, making this a favorite with kids. Most people consider Gino's the quintessential Chicago deep-dish pizza. It's so filling that, for many diners, one piece is sufficient for a meal — and a small cheese pizza is plenty for two. Three or more pieces is enough to send you into cholesterol overdrive. Specialties include the supreme, with layers of cheese, sausage, onions, green peppers, and mushrooms; and the vegetarian, with cheese, onions, peppers, asparagus, summer squash, zucchini, and eggplant.

See map p. 133. 633 N. Wells St. (between Ontario and Erie streets). ☎ 312-943-1124. www.ginoseast.com. CTA: Brown Line to Chicago. Reservations not accepted.

Main courses: Deep-dish pizza \$8–\$20. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11 a.m.–9 p.m., Fri–Sat 11 a.m. to midnight, Sun noon to 9 p.m.

Gioco

\$\$ South Loop ITALIAN

The South Loop was officially gentrified with the opening of this funky Italian restaurant. The cozy, convivial ambience — with exposed-brick, mahogany accents, an open kitchen, stacks of wine bottles, and hip music — is par for the course in other restaurant-rich neighborhoods, but it's a breath of fresh air in this area. While Gioco's nouveau Italian dishes include a few standard appetizers (such as fried calamari), you'll also find some creative new options: octopus carpaccio, confit of rabbit with fava-bean purée, and steamed mussels with white wine. The fine selection of pastas includes eggplant ravioli with pesto sauce, pappardelle in a duck sauce, and risotto *ai frutti di mare* (with mixed seafood). Even if you're loath to order tiramisu for the umpteenth time, try this heavenly version — light as air and easy on the rum.

1312 S. Wabash Ave. (at 13th Street). ☎ 312-939-3870. www.gioco-chicago.com. Reservations recommended. CTA: Red Line to Roosevelt. Main courses: Lunch \$11–\$18, dinner \$14–\$32. AE, DC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m., Mon–Thurs 5–10 p.m., Fri–Sat 5 p.m. to midnight, Sun 9 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5–10 p.m.



Green Zebra

\$\$\$ River North VEGETARIAN

The latest offering from the chef who won raves at Spring (see listing later this chapter), this new restaurant on the western fringes of River North is attracting attention for its “small plates” approach, featuring veggie delights. Try the fennel risotto cake with a syrah reduction, and the Hawaiian heart of palm with Kaffir lime and Thai basil chile. And count on ordering two mini-portions if you want to fill up. This vegetarian cuisine doesn't come cheap, but it's a much-needed haven for vegetarians with sophisticated tastes.

1460 W. Chicago Ave. (at Greenview Street). ☎ 312-243-7100. www.greenzebrachicago.com. Reservations recommended. CTA: Bus no. 66 or take a cab. Main courses: \$7–\$14. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Tues 5–10 p.m., Wed–Thurs 5:30–10 p.m., Fri–Sat 5:30–11 p.m., Sun 5–9 p.m.



Harry Caray's

\$\$–\$\$\$\$ River North ITALIAN/STEAKHOUSE

Holy cow! One of Chicago's most flamboyant eateries is larger than life, like its namesake, the late, legendary baseball broadcaster, Harry Caray. From the huge baseball bat outside to showcases filled with uniforms, helmets, cards, and photographs, this is Valhalla for those who follow America's favorite pastime. (Have you ever hurled a baseball from a pitcher's mound to home plate? To get an idea of the distance, take a look

at the bar at Harry Caray's restaurant. It measures 60 feet, 6 inches, the exact distance from hill to plate.) The food is pretty good, too — steaks, chops, pasta with red sauce, and such Italian basics as chicken Vesuvio, cheese ravioli, and calamari. The bar offers homemade thick-cut potato chips that can be addictive. Be careful not to ruin your appetite!

See map p. 133. 33 W. Kinzie St. (at Dearborn Street). ☎ 312-828-0966. www.harrycarays.com. Reservations accepted. CTA: Brown Line to Merchandise Mart, or Red Line to Grand at State Street. Main courses: \$11–\$33. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. and 5–10:30 p.m., Fri–Sat 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. and 5–11 p.m., Sun noon to 4 p.m. (lunch bar only) and 4–10 p.m.



Heaven on Seven

\$\$ Loop/Magnificent Mile CAJUN

Tucked away on the seventh floor of the Garland Building, you can find perhaps the best Cajun and Creole cooking north of New Orleans. Don't miss the acclaimed gumbo, po' boy sandwiches (try the oyster and soft-shell crab versions), hoppin' John (black-eyed peas and rice), and spicy jambalaya. Sweet-potato pie and bread pudding are top desserts, or try the coffee, which comes with chicory, after your meal. This original location opens one night a month for dinner. The restaurant has two additional locations: a trendy location on the Magnificent Mile at 600 N. Michigan Ave., at Rush and Ohio streets (☎ 312-280-7774); and a Wrigleyville location at 3478 N. Clark St. Unlike the original location, both new locations accept credit cards and reservations and are open for dinner.

See map p. 129. 111 N. Wabash Ave. (at Washington Street). ☎ 312-263-6443. www.heavenonseven.com. CTA: Orange, Brown, or Green line to Madison/Wabash, then walk 1 block north. Reservations not accepted. Main courses: \$8–\$11. No credit cards. Open: Mon–Fri 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m., Sat 10 a.m.–3 p.m., 3rd Fri of each month 5:30–9 p.m.

Hot Chocolate

\$ Bucktown/Wicker Park AMERICAN

Mindy Segal's desserts got raves when she worked at the restaurant mk (see the listing later in this chapter), so when she opened her own place — with a dessert theme, no less — there were lines almost immediately. Hot Chocolate is a casual neighborhood spot, the kind of place you can stop in for a brioche and coffee in the morning, a Kobe beef steak sandwich at lunch, or a plate of glazed pork tenderloin in the evening. However, desserts are the main event here. Many, including the apple-cider potpie and the banana napoleon, with layers of caramelized bananas, banana coffee cake, graham crackers, and a topping of banana ice cream, use seasonal fruit, but chocoholics can get their fill, too, with dishes such as the rich chocolate soufflé with caramel ice cream or a flight of mini hot chocolates served with homemade marshmallows. Come on a weekday (for a late lunch or early dinner) to avoid a wait.

See map p. 141. 1747 N. Damen Ave. (at Willow Street). ☎ 773-489-1747. www.hotchocolatechicago.com. Reservations not accepted. CTA: Blue Line to

Damen. Main courses: \$8–\$15. AE, MC, V. Open: Sun and Tues–Wed 9 a.m.–10 p.m., Thurs 9 a.m.–11 p.m., Fri–Sat 9 a.m. to midnight.



Jake Melnick's Corner Tap \$\$\$ Magnificent Mile AMERICAN

This warm, inviting restaurant offers a good approximation of a northern Wisconsin lodge and supper club. A screened-in porch area is pleasant in summer, and the fireplaces and big booths are comfy in winter. Food is substantial and homey. The menu features chopped salads, hamburgers, and sandwiches, as well as home-cooked specialties like barbequed ribs and fish 'n' chips. For dessert, try the chocolate-chip cookie skillet sundae. The relaxed atmosphere, large crowd (where young ones blend in easily), and comfort food make this a good place to take the kids.

See map p. 133. 41 E. Superior St. (at Wabash Avenue). ☎ 312-266-0400. www.jakemelnicks.com. Reservations accepted. CTA: Red Line to Chicago/State, or bus no. 151 to Superior Street, then 1 block east. Main courses: \$10–\$15. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Wed 11:30 a.m. to midnight, Thurs–Sat 11:30 a.m.–2 a.m., Sun 11 a.m.–11 p.m.

Jane's \$\$ Bucktown/Wicker Park ECLECTIC

Jane's is a neighborhood charmer that's managed to keep an off-the-beaten-track feel. Casual and chic, the restaurant is in an old house that was gutted, so it's open to the roof. The walls are decorated with ever-changing work by local artists. In the winter, soft yellow light makes the place cozy; in the summer, you can sit outside at sidewalk tables. Bucktown residents pack the place, so you usually wind up squeezing into the bar area to wait. But the experience is worth it. Try Jane's version of salade niçoise, with grilled ahi tuna. Pan-roasted grouper and goat cheese, and stuffed chicken breast are also favorites.

See map p. 141. 1655 W. Cortland St. (1 block west of Ashland Avenue). ☎ 773-862-5263. www.janesrestaurant.com. CTA: Blue Line to Damen Avenue, then walk 3 blocks north on Damen and 4 blocks east on Cortland. Reservations available on a limited basis. Main courses: \$9–\$20. AE, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 5–10 p.m., Fri 5–11 p.m., Sat 11 a.m.–11 p.m., Sun 11 a.m.–10 p.m.

Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak and Stone Crab \$\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile SEAFOOD/STEAKHOUSE

Here's a little piece of Miami transplanted to the North Bridge area. If you've never sampled stone crab, this outpost of famed Joe's Stone Crab of Miami Beach is just the thing. The crab claws are flown in from Florida and cracked perfectly to preserve the delectable meat. (**Note:** The claws are served cold.) Sides include creamed spinach and hash browns. The Key lime pie is the best I've had — and believe me, I've tasted many. If you get hooked, never fear: You can order stone crabs from Joe's over the Web and they'll arrive via Fed Ex the next day, packed in dry ice.

See map p. 133. 60 E. Grand Ave. (at the corner of Grand and Rush, behind the Marriott Hotel). ☎ 312-379-5637. www.icon.com/joes/Chicago_home.html. CTA: Red Line to State/Grand. Reservations recommended and available on a limited basis. Main courses: \$15–\$50 (depends on market price). AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11:30 a.m.–10 p.m., Fri–Sat 11:30 a.m.–11 p.m., Sun 4–9 p.m.

Kamehachi

\$\$ Old Town JAPANESE/SUSHI

When my sushi-loving friends and I debate the merits of Chicago sushi spots, we always come back to Kamehachi. The place is filled with a good-looking crowd, and the sushi is fresh. In the fast-changing restaurant world, Kamehachi's record is impressive. This family-owned spot has been going strong since 1967, when it opened as Chicago's first sushi bar. If you have a group, call ahead and book the tatami room, where you can make plenty of noise and linger over dinner. Otherwise, ask for a table upstairs where you can watch the Old Town crowd swirl by. A second location is just off the Magnificent Mile at 240 E. Ontario St.

See map p. 136. 1400 N. Wells St. (at Schiller Street). ☎ 312-664-3663. www.kamehachi.com. Reservations recommended. CTA: Bus no. 22 to Clark and North Avenue, walk west to Wells Street and south to Schiller. Main courses: \$8–\$15. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5 p.m. to midnight, Fri–Sat 11:30–2 p.m. and 5 p.m.–1:30 a.m., Sun 4:30–11:30 p.m.

La Sardine

\$\$ Randolph Street Market District FRENCH/BISTRO

Sister to Jean-Claude Poilevey's popular Le Bouchon (and named after a critic's description of that tiny Bucktown bistro), this more spacious and gracious destination is bathed in a honeyed glow and is filled with sensual aromas from the open kitchen and rotisserie. Well-prepared versions of bistro standards include the delicate bouillabaisse in a lobster-saffron broth; ragout of super-tender rabbit, onions, and mashed potatoes; steak frites; sensational escargots bourguignon; onion soup; and *salade Lyonnaise* (greens, bacon lardons, croutons, and poached egg). The dessert menu boasts traditional soufflés (with Grand Marnier or chocolate). There's also a daily \$22 three-course lunch featuring soup or salad and your choice of entree and dessert.

See map p. 129. 111 N. Carpenter St. ☎ 312-421-2800. <http://frenchrestaurantschicago.com>. Reservations recommended. Cab recommended (about \$8 from the Loop). Main courses: \$12–\$14 lunch, \$13–\$19 dinner. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. and 5–10 p.m., Sat 5–11 p.m.

Le Bouchon

\$\$ Bucktown/Wicker Park BISTRO

This idyllic, tin-ceilinged French bistro packs them in for classics like escargot, French onion soup, rabbit, herb-roasted chicken, country pâté, and steak frites. Many come just for the house specialty, roast duck for

two bathed in Grand Marnier–orange marmalade sauce. If you’re guessing that the fare is on the heavy, rich side, you’re right. In a tiny storefront, the tables are closely packed, meaning that the atmosphere is intimate and, after your fellow diners get a glass or two of wine in them, boisterous as well. Some people find it cozy and others feel it’s claustrophobic. You probably can already guess where you stand! The desserts are outstanding, including one of the best crème brûlées in Chicago. Prices here are more than reasonable, so even if you have reservations, you may be in for a long wait: Be prepared to have a drink at the (small) bar.

See map p. 141. 1958 N. Damen Ave. (by Armitage Avenue). ☎ 773-862-6600. www.lebouchonofchicago.com. Reservations recommended. CTA: Blue Line to Damen. Main courses: \$13–\$15. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 5:30–11 p.m., Fri–Sat 5 p.m. to midnight.



Lou Mitchell's
\$ Loop AMERICAN

Plan to eat at least one breakfast at this South Loop diner, a Chicago tradition since 1923. It's a longtime favorite, known for airy omelets and other egg dishes served in sizzling skillets. You double your pleasure (and cholesterol) with Mitchell's use of double-yolk eggs. Pancakes and waffles are good, too. Orders come with thick slabs of toasted Greek bread and homemade marmalade. The wait can be long, especially on weekends, but it can be shorter if you're willing to take a counter seat. The restaurant has a tradition of handing out boxes of Milk Duds to female patrons — and doughnut holes for everyone waiting.

See map p. 129. 565 W. Jackson Blvd. (at Jefferson Street). ☎ 312-939-3111. CTA: Blue Line to Clinton Street, then walk 2 blocks north and 1 block west. Reservations not accepted. Breakfast dishes: \$5–\$12. No credit cards. Open: Mon–Sat 5:30 a.m.–3 p.m., Sun 7 a.m.–3 p.m.



Maggiano's
\$\$ River North ITALIAN

A great pick for large groups, Maggiano's is a shrine to family-style Italian dining. Like many of its fellow Lettuce Entertain You restaurants, Maggiano's feels a bit contrived, with traditional red-checkered tablecloths and old family portraits (which family, we'll never know), designed to create the feel of Little Italy throughout the nine dining rooms. Still, heaping plates of pasta meant to be shared make Maggiano's a good choice for a large or budget-conscious family (and who's isn't?). Everything on the menu is super-sized. Steaks are all more than a pound, and most pasta dishes weigh in over 25 ounces. You're expected to share dishes, pass things around, and try a bit of everything. The menu is vast and features Italian pasta classics such as chicken and spinach manicotti, eggplant Parmesan and meat or marinara lasagna, plus chicken, veal, steaks, chops, and seafood. Try the Prime New York Steak al Forno, Gorgonzola, a strip steak served with caramelized onions and melted Gorgonzola cheese. There's no kids' menu, but the kitchen will serve smaller portions.

Downstairs, there's a banquet room that accommodates parties of 20 to 200. On holidays, Maggiano's has live music.

See map p. 133. 516 N. Clark St. (by West Grand Avenue). ☎ 312-644-7700. www.maggianos.com. CTA: Brown Line to Merchandise Mart, Red Line to Grand, or bus no. 65 or 22. Main courses: \$11–\$33. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11:30 a.m.–10 p.m., Fri–Sat 11:30 a.m.–11 p.m., Sun noon to 10 p.m.

Mas

\$\$\$ Bucktown/Wicker Park LATIN AMERICAN

Urban, cozy, and dark, Mas is almost always packed with regulars who come for the Latin cocktails and modern takes on Central and South American cuisine. Appetizers (called *primeros*) include a seviche of the day, such as blue marlin marinated in rum and vanilla. Entrées worth the wait include chile-cured pork tenderloin over smoky white beans, and traditional Brazilian shrimp and chicken stew with coconut broth and black beans. Out-of-the-ordinary desserts include lightly fried pound cake with fresh plum compote. The wine list emphasizes selections from Spain, Argentina, and Chile. At the bar, try a Brazilian caipirinha, made with sugar, lime, and a Brazilian brandy made from sugar cane.

See map p. 141. 1670 W. Division St. (by Pauline Street). ☎ 773-276-8700. www.masrestaurant.com. CTA: Blue Line to Damen. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$17–\$27. AE, DC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 5:30–10:30 p.m., Fri–Sat 5:30–11 p.m.

Meritage Café & Wine Bar

\$\$\$ Bucktown/Wicker Park AMERICAN

The romantic, bring-the-outdoors-indoors atmosphere is the draw at this neighborhood restaurant. The front room features a long wood bar and tin ceilings; this is the place to sit if you want the feel of a hip wine bar. The patio, however, is the best place to enjoy a meal: It's covered and heated in the winter, making for the unusual indoor-outdoor feel. My favorites here always include seafood, whether it's ahi tuna or seared scallops that are out of this world. Wild game is another specialty here, including grilled ostrich and venison. An apple-caramel Dutch pancake and chocolate mousse cake are among the most comforting, feel-good desserts you'll have anywhere. The West Coast-oriented wine list is heavy on Bordeaux blends, with more than 20 wines by the glass.

See map p. 141. 2118 N. Damen Ave. (at Charleston Street). ☎ 773-235-6434. www.meritagecafe.com. CTA: Blue Line to Damen. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$16–\$28. AE, DC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 5:30–10 p.m., Fri–Sat 5:30–11 p.m., Sun 11 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5–9 p.m.

Mia Francesca

\$\$ North Side/Little Italy/Andersonville ITALIAN

This place is crowded, noisy, overly warm — and people love it. Thanks to the generous helpings of pasta at reasonable prices, the place is packed

every night with neighborhood singles and couples on dates. Call for reservations or you'll be in for a long wait. The menu changes weekly and may include thin-crust pizza appetizers; four-cheese ravioli; linguine with seafood; and farfalle with ham, peas, and wild mushrooms. Given its popularity, they've added several other locations. The two in the city are **Francesca's Bryn Mawr** in the Andersonville neighborhood, 1039 W. Bryn Mawr (☎ 773-506-9261), and **Francesca's on Taylor**, 1400 W. Taylor St. (☎ 312-829-2828).

See map p. 136. 3311 N. Clark St. (just north of Belmont Avenue). ☎ 773-281-3310. www.miafrancesca.com. CTA: Red Line to Belmont. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$10-\$23. AE, MC, V. Open: Sun-Thurs 5-10:30 p.m., Fri-Sat 5-11 p.m.



Mike Ditka's Restaurant

\$\$\$\$ Magnificent Mile STEAKHOUSE

For many Chicago football die-hards, the glory days of former Coach Mike Ditka are still alive and well. From the football memorabilia to the cigar smoking in the upstairs lounge, this place is all Ditka, all the time. Local celebs and a sleek crowd gather here, bathed in amber light and tucked into dark-wood, leather banettes. TVs in the bar allow you to drink Scotch and watch Da Bears while praying for "Da (now-retired) Coach" to work his magic once again. Food here is many notches above sports-bar fare. A hamburger, one of the city's best, can feed two. Or go for the "fullback-size" filet mignon with spinach and homemade onion rings, or "Da Pork Chop," surrounded by warm cinnamon apples and a green-peppercorn sauce. And keep your eyes open, because Da Coach himself does make regular appearances.

See map p. 133. 100 E. Chestnut St. (in The Tremont Hotel, between Michigan and Rush avenues). ☎ 312-587-8989. www.mikeditkaschicago.com. CTA: Red Line to Chicago/State or bus no. 151 to Water Tower. Reservations accepted. Main courses: \$15-\$30. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon-Thurs 11 a.m.-10 p.m., Fri 11 a.m.-11 p.m., Sat 10 a.m.-11 p.m., Sun 10 a.m.-10 p.m.

Mirai Sushi

\$\$\$ Bucktown/Wicker Park JAPANESE/SUSHI

Mirai (meaning "the future") surfs atop the crest of Chicago's sushi tsunami. Blending a serious devotion to sushi and sake with a youthful and funky ambience, Mirai is one hot destination for cold, raw fish; other Japanese fare is available as well. The futuristic second-floor sake lounge is the hippest place in town to slurp down sushi, chilled sakes, and "red ones," the house cocktail of vodka with passion-fruit, lime, and cranberry juices. The bright, smoke-free main-floor dining room offers a comparatively traditional environment. Fish is flown in daily for the sushi bar, where several chefs work hard at crafting everything from beginner's sushi (California roll) to escalating classifications of tuna, five types of salmon, and a half-dozen varieties of fresh oysters. Even the sake menu will expand your horizons, with about a dozen different selections.

See map p. 136. 2020 W. Division St. (at North Damen Avenue). ☎ 773-862-8500. www.miraisushi.com. CTA: Blue Line to Division. Reservations recommended. Sushi: \$1.75–\$4 per piece. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Sun–Wed 5–10 p.m., Thurs–Sat 5–11 p.m.; upstairs lounge open until 2 a.m.

mk**\$\$\$ River North AMERICAN**

This restaurant draws a chic, mixed-age crowd and is considered one of the best American restaurants in town, although you may gripe about the prices. Start with lobster soup with cumin, carrots, and Granny Smith apples, or fresh goat cheese ravioli with tomatoes and rosemary. mk specializes in creative combinations, such as sautéed whitefish and Maine lobster with sweet corn, mushrooms, and a light cream sauce. Don't miss the sweet seasonal masterpieces, from homemade ice creams to playful adaptations of classic fruit desserts. The One Banana, Two Banana plate (banana brioche pudding, banana sherbet, and banana coffeecake topped with butterscotch and hot fudge) is worth every calorie.

See map p. 133. 868 N. Franklin St. (1 block north of Chicago Avenue). ☎ 312-482-9179. www.mkchicago.com. CTA: Brown Line to Chicago/Franklin. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$24–\$38. Main courses: Degustation menu \$58. AE, DC, MC, V. Open: Sun–Thurs 5:30–10 p.m., Fri–Sat 5:30–11 p.m.

Moto**\$\$\$\$ West Loop ECLECTIC**

If you think food is meant to be experienced by all the senses, book a table at Moto, home to Chicago's most jaw-droppingly original dishes. Chef Homaro Cantu calls his cuisine "avant-garde with Asian influences," but what he's really interested in is taking dining beyond just eating. He entwines fresh herbs in custom-designed corkscrew-handled spoons, allowing the scent of the herbs to waft toward diners as they eat. Cantu's got a sense of humor, too — during a raw food course, he uses a "virtual aroma device" to emit a subtle smoky scent, and sometimes the menu itself is edible. Dining here is strictly degustation, with 4-course, 7-course, and 10-course options and a "gastronomic tasting menu" of up to 17 courses. The restaurant itself has a minimalist Zen feel — here, all the drama is at your table.

See map p. 129. 945 W. Fulton Market Ave. (at Sangamon Street). ☎ 312-491-0058. www.motorestaurant.com. Reservations recommended. Cab recommended (about \$8 from Loop). Main courses: Prix-fixe dinners \$65–\$160. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Tues–Sat 5–11 p.m.

Nine**\$\$\$–\$\$\$\$ Loop SEAFOOD/STEAKHOUSE**

Less hip than it was a few years ago, when Chicago's trendsetters flocked here, Nine still features such crowd-pleasers as plasma TV screens in the seductive lounge and the boys' restroom, a circular "ice bar" for champagne

and caviar, and an upstairs Ghost Lounge, whose signature drink is a glow-in-the-dark Midori martini. The icy, metallic look of mirrored tiles and steel is warmed with the use of ash wood in the décor. And the food is based on straightforward favorites of steak and seafood. You find grouper, ahi tuna, a 22-ounce veal porterhouse, and filet mignon on the menu — most with an interesting twist. (The grouper, for example, is served with bacon, escarole, and beans in a cabernet reduction.)

See map p. 129. 440 W. Randolph St. (at North Canal Street). ☎ 312-575-9900. www.n9ne.com. CTA: Bus no. 125 or 129 to Randolph and Canal. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$15–\$33. AE, DC, MC, V. Open: Restaurant Mon–Thurs 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5:30–10 p.m., Fri 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5 p.m. to midnight, Sat 5 p.m. to midnight; Ghost Lounge Thurs–Fri 9 p.m.–2 a.m., Sat 9 p.m.–3 a.m.

Opera

\$\$\$ South Loop ASIAN

This building used to house a film warehouse, so it's only fitting that the ambience at this South Loop restaurant be theatrical, with dramatic velvet curtains, red-and-orange décor, and a grand staircase leading to a private dining room. Opera takes classic Chinese dishes to the next level with signature East-meets-West dishes such as spicy crab cake served with "chopsticks" (skinny crab-stuffed spring rolls), and peppered filet mignon served over a brandied beurre blanc with a side of broccoli in black-bean sauce. Do save room for dessert, whether it's one of the light homemade sorbets or the more decadent Tao of Chocolate (a liquid-center flourless chocolate cake with sticks of frozen chocolate mousse).

1301 S. Wabash Ave. (at 13th Street). ☎ 312-461-0161. www.opera-chicago.com. CTA: Red Line to Roosevelt. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$18–\$25. AE, DC, MC, V. Open: Sun–Wed 5–10 p.m., Thurs 5–11 p.m., Fri–Sat 5 p.m. to midnight.



Orange

\$\$ North Side AMERICAN/BREAKFAST

The brunch here will last you until dinner! In fact, breakfast, lunch, and multiple combinations of the two is all this place serves. On weekends, the wait starts as soon as the door opens and doesn't let up until about 1:30 p.m. And with creative variations on breakfast favorites, it's not hard to see why. The pan-seared cut oatmeal with dried fruit compote and apple-cider–brown-sugar syrup tastes more like pie than Quaker Oats. You'll find a different theme each week (such as apples) for the pancake "flight" — four silver-dollar-sized stacks of buttermilk pancakes served in a slightly different way. And, no, that isn't your mother's hash, unless she uses Guinness-braised brisket and butternut squash. Other favorites include the puff pastry and fruit smoothies blended with whatever juices you request. A second location is in the South Loop at 75 W. Harrison St. (☎ 312-447-1000).

See map p. 136. 3231 N. Clark St. (north of Belmont Avenue). ☎ 773-549-4400. CTA: Red Line to Belmont. Reservations not accepted. Main courses: \$5–\$12. DISC, MC, V. Open: Tues–Sun 8 a.m.–3 p.m.

*Osteria Via Stato***\$\$ River North ITALIAN**

At Osteria Via Stato, the choices are plentiful, so it's good that you aren't required to make many. A set price of \$36 buys you a full, European-style meal: a range of antipasto plates (smoked salmon, salami, warm focaccia, and more), two pasta dishes (served family-style), and a meat entree (the only dish you actually choose from the menu). Pastas are usually a mix of hearty and light; pappardelle with a chunky meat-and-mushroom sauce may be served alongside rigatoni with cauliflower in a Parmesan-garlic broth. Entrees include an excellent veal Marsala; smoky pork shank with white beans; or chicken Mario, a chicken breast perfectly seared with butter and olive oil. If you want to keep things simple with drinks, ask for the "Just Bring Me Wine" program, which matches a glass of wine to each course at three price levels (the most affordable, \$15, is a good deal).

See map p. 133. 620 N. State St. (at Ontario Street). ☎ 312-642-8450. www.leye.com. CTA: Red Line to Grand. Reservations recommended. Main courses: Fixed price \$36 dinner, \$18 lunch. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Sat 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m., Mon–Thurs 5–10 p.m., Fri–Sat 5–11 p.m., Sun 4–8:30 p.m.; bar open later.

*Park Grill***\$\$ Loop AMERICAN**

Location, location, location — it's what sets Park Grill apart from the other upscale comfort-food restaurants in town. Set in the middle of Millennium Park, Park Grill makes a great stop after a late-afternoon stroll or before a summer concert at the Pritzker Music Pavilion (this is a popular preshow dinner spot, so definitely make a reservation). The dining room is simple but welcoming, with floor-to-ceiling windows along one wall that look onto the Michigan Avenue skyline (you won't, alas, get a view of the park). The menu highlights American favorites, some prepared simply (pot roast, rotisserie chicken, pork chops), and others featuring a more international twist, such as seafood risotto or duck gnocchi.

See map p. 129. 11 N. Michigan Ave. (at Madison Street). ☎ 312-521-PARK. www.parkgrillchicago.com. CTA: Red Line to Washington, or Brown, Orange, Purple, or Green line to Madison. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$10–\$15 lunch, \$14–\$25 dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. Open: Sun–Thurs 11 a.m.–9:30 p.m., Fri–Sat 11 a.m.–10:30 p.m.

*Petterino's***\$\$ Loop AMERICAN/STEAKHOUSE**

Named for Arturo Petterino, maitre d' at the Pump Room (see the following listing) in the days when it swarmed with celebrities, this steakhouse re-creates the feeling of downtown dining in the 1940s and 1950s. In the Goodman Theatre building, Petterino's is a popular pre-theater option, so book a table in advance if you have to catch a show. The dimly lit dining room is decorated in dark wood with red leather booths, and the overall feel is relaxed. The straightforward menu is filled with classic American

big-night-out favorites: veal chops, New York strip steak, slow-cooked beef brisket, and some fresh fish selections. Pastas include baked ravioli and fettuccine Alberto (a version of Alfredo with peas and prosciutto).

See map p. 129. 150 N. Dearborn St. (at Randolph Street). ☎ 312-422-0150. www.1eye.com. CTA: Red Line to Washington or Brown Line to State/Lake. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$14–\$35 dinner. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11 a.m.–9 p.m., Fri 11 a.m.–11 p.m., Sat 4–11 p.m., Sun 3–7 p.m.

Pump Room

\$\$\$ Gold Coast AMERICAN

Chicago's most iconic restaurant was once the bastion of stars whose appearance in Booth One would guarantee a photo in the newspaper the next morning. Today, the Pump Room is slightly less star-filled — but the room has been restored to its former glory, in the original cobalt-blue-and-gold décor. Service is provided by a well-trained crew, and the food is classic American with a sophisticated twist. Appetizers include a simple beef tartare or a caviar plate. Entrees also provide some creative twists on old classics, including Maine lobster with apple-tarragon purée, or lamb loin with a mint pesto crust. There's a live band and dancing every Friday and Saturday night from 8 p.m. to midnight.



The Pump Room has a dress code — and it's enforced. Men must wear jackets after 4 p.m., and no jeans are allowed.

See map p. 133. 1301 N. State Pkwy. (in the Omni Ambassador East Hotel). ☎ 312-266-0360. www.pumproom.com. CTA: Bus no. 151 to Goethe Street; Red Line to Division Street, then walk 2 blocks east to State and 2 blocks north. Reservations required. Main courses: \$23–\$36. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 7 a.m.–2 p.m. and 6–10 p.m., Fri–Sat 7 a.m.–2 p.m. and 6 p.m. to midnight, Sun 10:30 a.m.–2 p.m. and 6–10 p.m.

Rockit Bar & Grill

\$ River North AMERICAN

Rockit is no gourmet destination, but if you're looking to chow down on better-than-decent food in a high-energy setting, this place fills the bill. One of the current hot spots for well-heeled 20- and 30-something singles, Rockit is definitely a scene after work and on weekends, with loud music and plenty of flirting at the busy front bar. The dining room is a trendy take on a traditional tavern, and combines exposed-brick walls and distressed-wood tables with sleek metallic accents and chocolate-brown leather booths. The menu is fairly predictable, but still a few notches above your standard bar fare. The Crispy Pork is a wonderfully tender pork medallion with a crunchy crust.

See map p. 133. 22 W. Hubbard St. (between Wabash and State streets). ☎ 312-645-6000. www.rockitbarandgrill.com. CTA: Red Line to Grand. Reservations accepted for parties of 6 or more. Main courses: \$9–\$19. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Sun–Fri 11:30 a.m.–1:30 a.m., Sat 11:30 a.m.–2:30 a.m.

Russian Tea Time**\$\$ Loop RUSSIAN/TEA**

Russian Tea Time is a popular spot with Chicago Symphony Orchestra patrons and musicians, and is far from being the simple tea cafe that its name implies. This family-owned restaurant's extensive menu is like a tour through the cuisine of Czarist Russia and the former Soviet republics (for Russian neophytes, all the dishes are well described). The atmosphere is old-world and cozy, with lots of woodwork and a friendly staff. Start with potato pancakes, blini with Russian caviar, or chilled smoked sturgeon; if you can't decide, consider mixed appetizer platters to share. For a sampling of old Russia, try the beef stroganoff; *kulebiaka* (meat pie with ground beef, cabbage, and onions); or roast pheasant served with brandied prunes and a walnut, brandy, and pomegranate sauce.

See map p. 129. 77 E. Adams St. (between Michigan and Wabash avenues). ☎ 312-360-0000. www.russianteatime.com. CTA: Brown, Purple, Green, or Orange line to Adams, or Red Line to Monroe or Jackson. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$15-\$27. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Sun-Mon 11 a.m.-9 p.m., Tues-Thurs 11 a.m.-11 p.m., Fri-Sat 11 a.m. to midnight.

Saloon Steakhouse**\$\$-\$\$\$\$ Streeterville STEAKHOUSE**

The Saloon Steakhouse is all that a steakhouse should be. It has a warm, cheery look and is usually filled with happy, animated carnivores attacking high-quality cuts of flavorful beef. You can't go wrong with steaks, suitably marbled and dry-aged, but many regulars go for the 16-ounce bone-in filet mignon prepared in the restaurant's smoker. Be sure to try a side of bacon-scallion mashed potatoes.

See map p. 133. 200 E. Chestnut St. (at Mies van der Rohe Way). ☎ 312-280-5454. www.saloонsteakhouse.com. CTA: Bus no. 151 to Chestnut, then walk 1 block west. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$13-\$35. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon-Thurs 11:30 a.m.-10 p.m., Fri 11:30 a.m.-11 p.m., Sat 4-11 p.m., Sun 4-10 p.m.

Shaw's Crab House and Blue Crab Lounge**\$\$ River North SEAFOOD**

You'd swear you stepped into a 1940s-era restaurant on the Atlantic Coast when you enter Shaw's. The busy dining room has a lively feel, and the extensive menu should suit all tastes. The appetizers alone run the gamut from popcorn shrimp and fried calamari to exotic sushi combinations. Fresh seafood is the specialty, with fried smelt, sautéed sea scallops, and grilled fish among the fare. The adjoining Blue Crab Lounge offers an excellent raw bar and jazz or blues — although some of us are entertained simply by watching the shuckers do their thing.

See map p. 133. 21 E. Hubbard St. (between State Street and Wabash Avenue). ☎ 312-527-2722. www.shawscrabhouse.com/chicago. CTA: Red Line to State/Grand. Reservations accepted for the main dining room. Main courses: \$14-\$31. AE, DC,

DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5:30–10 p.m., Fri 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5–11 p.m., Sat 5–11 p.m., Sun 5–10 p.m.

Spring

\$\$\$ Bucktown/Wicker Park AMERICAN

This former Russian bathhouse has been transformed into an oasis of Zen calm. This restaurant attracted national attention when it opened, and it still attracts foodies. Diners step down into a dining room hidden from the street, then sink into banquettes that zigzag across the center of the room. The menu emphasizes seafood and Pan-Asian preparations. Appetizers include an aromatic lemon-grass-red-curry broth with rice noodles, and sea scallop and potato ravioli with sautéed mushrooms and truffle essence. Most entrees are seafood based: New Zealand snapper with lemon couscous and fennel salad is one example. Desserts tend to go the Asian route, although the coconut brûlée with warm pineapple puts a whole new twist on rice pudding.

See map p. 141. 2039 W. North Ave. (at Milwaukee Avenue). ☎ 773-395-7100. www.springrestaurant.net. CTA: Blue Line to Damen. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$16–\$25. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Tues–Thurs 5:30–10 p.m., Fri–Sat 5:30–11 p.m., Sun 5:30–9 p.m.



Stanley's

\$ Lincoln Park AMERICAN

Here's a great neighborhood bar and restaurant that stands in the heart of Lincoln Park, the epicenter of the young and the restless, but that also welcomes families. Stanley's front room is a bar with several booths, tall tables with old chrome-and-leather bar stools, satellite- and cable-fed TVs, and a jukebox. The adjacent dining room is an abrupt leap into the family den, decorated with photos, quilts, bowling trophies, and children's drawings. This popular family spot has a special kids' menu with corn dogs and PB&J. On Saturday and Sunday there's an all-you-can-eat brunch buffet, featuring make-your-own omelets, build-your-own Belgian waffles, home-fried potatoes, fried chicken, and mashed potatoes for \$11. Daily specials are posted on the chalkboard out front.

See map p. 136. 1970 N. Lincoln Ave. (by North Sedgwick Street). ☎ 312-642-0007. CTA: Bus no. 11 or 73 to Armitage. Main courses: \$8–\$15, kids' menu \$4. Open: Mon–Tues 5 p.m.–2 a.m., Wed–Fri 11:30 a.m.–2 a.m., Sat 11 a.m.–3 a.m., Sun 11 a.m.–2 a.m.

Sushisamba Rio

\$\$\$ River North LATIN AMERICAN/SUSHI

Latin American seviche combined with sushi seems an odd juxtaposition, but it works surprisingly well at this new restaurant, which is based on a Peruvian/Brazilian culinary tradition created when Japanese immigrants moved there in the early 20th century. The dramatic dining room has

become a fashionable scene, and tables are scattered on different levels, some in a sunken red “conversation pit,” others up on a balcony along one wall. Beaded curtains hang from the ceiling and bathrooms are set in a bamboo-filled garden. But after admiring the scenery, what will you eat? Try one of the “samba rolls,” which combine the traditional sticky-rice-and-seaweed wrapping with unexpected fillings. The El Topo, a mix of salmon, jalapeño pepper, melted mozzarella, and crispy onions, is delicious; also try the Samba Rio roll, with guava-glazed short ribs and sweet pepper. More straightforward is the Surf & Turf, here interpreted as seared rare tuna and a beef filet on a bed of carrot-and-ginger purée.

See map p. 133. 504 N. Wells St. (by West Illinois Street). ☎ 312-595-2300. www.sushisamba.com. CTA: Brown/Purple lines to Merchandise; 37 bus to Wells St. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$8–\$17 lunch, \$12–\$29 dinner. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Sun–Tues 11:45 a.m.–11 p.m., Wed 11:45 a.m. to midnight, Thurs–Fri 11:45 a.m.–1 a.m., Sat 11:45 a.m.–2 a.m.

Sushi Wabi

\$\$ Randolph Street Market District JAPANESE/SUSHI

The minimal-chic décor is industrial and raw, and the lighting is dark and seductive at one of Chicago’s hippest sushi restaurants, which attracts the young and the restless. You’ll be rewarded for getting a table here with interesting sashimi and sushi, plus maki rolls like the “dragon” — rolled eel and avocado with tempura shrimp as the dragon’s head and tail. Desserts are excellent and put green tea and red-bean ice cream to new and creative uses. If you don’t make a reservation, be prepared to wait. While you’re cooling your heels, try a martini with a ginger-stuffed olive or one of a large variety of chilled sakes.



To get here, take a taxi — about a \$5 ride from the Loop.

See map p. 129. 842 W. Randolph St. (by North Green Street). ☎ 312-563-1224. www.sushiwabi.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$10–\$24. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5 p.m. to midnight, Sat 5 p.m. to midnight, Sun 5–11 p.m.



Tango Sur

\$ North Side ARGENTINE

This upbeat storefront restaurant, in one of my favorite neighborhoods, often has lines outside for the mouthwatering Argentine barbecue. Tango music provides the backdrop for the imported Argentine beef, mixed grill of short ribs, sweetbreads, chorizo, and *morcilla* (blood sausage) with *chimichurri* (parsley, garlic, and olive oil). Empanadas are a specialty. Be forewarned: If you want a drink, it’s BYOB. Afterward, head down the block to Cullen’s for a drink, or catch a movie at Chicago’s most charming old-time theater, the Music Box (Chapter 16), where an organist plays before the show.

See map p. 136. 3763 N. Southport (south of Irving Park Road). ☎ 773-477-5466. www.tangosur.qpg.com. CTA: Brown Line to Belmont, then walk north.

Reservations not accepted. Main courses: \$4.30–\$18. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 5–10:30 p.m., Sat 5:30–11 p.m., Sun noon to 11:30 p.m.

Trattoria No. 10

\$\$ Loop ITALIAN

This ideal pre-theater spot is underground on Dearborn Street and is a favorite with Chicagoans who work in the Loop. Even though it's underground, the place has a Tuscan feel, with dimly lit rooms and a warm, orangey glow. Ceramic floor tiles and arched ceilings complement the décor. The real bargain here is the wonderful (and cheap) after-work buffet (\$12 all-you-can-eat with a \$6 drink minimum). In the dining room, pasta reigns. Ravioli (try the butternut-squash version, topped with walnut sauce) is supreme, as is the farfalle with duck confit, asparagus, caramelized onions, and pine nuts.

See map p. 129. 10 N. Dearborn St. (between Madison and Washington streets).

☎ 312-984-1718. CTA: Red or Blue line to Dearborn. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$14–\$27. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5:30–9 p.m., Fri 11:30 a.m.–2 p.m. and 5:30–10 p.m., Sat 5:30–10 p.m.

Tuscany on Taylor

\$\$ Little Italy ITALIAN

This restaurant is the real thing, one of the most reliable restaurants in Little Italy, with green-checkered tablecloths and waiters who wax poetic over pasta. Family-owned Tuscany features large portions of Tuscan pastas and specializes in Tuscan sausage dishes and anything cooked on the wood-burning grill. Some of the meals are so rich you won't need dessert. By the end of your dinner, you'll feel like part of the family. Other Tuscan fare includes pizzas, veal, chicken, and a risotto of the day. A second location is across from Wrigley Field at 3700 N. Clark (☎ 773-404-7700).

1014 W. Taylor St. (between Racine Avenue and Halsted Street). ☎ 312-829-1990. www.stefanirestaurants.com. CTA: Blue Line to Polk. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$10–\$28. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 11 a.m.–3:30 p.m. and 5–11 p.m., Fri 11 a.m.–3:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. to midnight, Sat 5 p.m. to midnight, Sun 4–9:30 p.m.



Twin Anchors

\$ Old Town BARBECUE

Although it keeps classy company in a neighborhood of elegant brownstones, this eatery is strictly a rib joint. Done in dark mahogany and serviceable Formica, Twin Anchors has been around since the days when the Untouchables battled to clean up the city. Sinatra was an occasional patron, and you find Ol' Blue Eyes featured prominently on the walls and the jukebox. Meaty slabs of slow-cooked baby back ribs are fall-off-the-bone tender

(go for the zesty sauce). You can also get steaks and chicken — but ribs are what keep people coming back. For dessert, there's a daily cheesecake selection. On the weekends, prepare for a long wait.

See map p. 136. 1655 N. Sedgwick St. (1 block north of North Avenue). ☎ 312-266-1616. www.twinanchorsribs.com. CTA: Brown Line to Sedgwick. Reservations not accepted. Main courses: \$9.95–\$20. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Thurs 5–11 p.m., Fri 5 p.m. to midnight, Sat noon to midnight, Sun noon to 10:30 p.m.

Vermilion

\$\$ River North INDIAN/LATIN AMERICAN

This may seem like another unusual fusion concept, but the food is more than just a novelty. Owner Rohini Dey and chef Maneet Chauhan — both women, both originally from India — have found a common thread between Indian and Latin American cooking. Both feature similar ingredients (rice and chiles), use some of the same seasonings (cumin and coriander), and even share similar preparations (the variety of Latin salsas is comparable to different Indian chutneys). The result is a menu that mixes flavors in new ways, yet the dishes still seem familiar, whether it's empanadas with mango-coconut chutney, seviche with Indian spices, or tandoori skirt steak on sautéed garlic spinach with fried plantain.

See map p. 133. 10 W. Hubbard St. (at State Street). ☎ 312-527-4060. CTA: Red Line to Grand. Reservations recommended on weekends. Main courses: \$12–\$22. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon–Fri 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m., Sun–Thurs 5–10 p.m., Fri–Sat 5–11 p.m.; lounge open until 3 a.m. Fri–Sat.

Worth the trip

If you have a car in Chicago, these restaurants are worth a trip to the suburbs. All are within 30 to 60 minutes of downtown.

- ✓ **Phil Smidt's**, Hammond, Indiana (☎ 219-659-0025): Just across the Chicago Skyway (close to the Indiana gambling boats), you find great all-you-can-eat perch dinners followed by tart gooseberry pie. Closed on Monday.
- ✓ **White Fence Farm**, Lemont, Illinois (☎ 630-739-1720): Here you find the best fried chicken north of the Mason-Dixon line, served with all the fixings.
- ✓ **Robinson's No. 1 Ribs**, Oak Park, Illinois (☎ 708-383-8452): Backyard Chef Charlie Robinson parlayed a win in the late Mike Royko's first annual rib cook-off into this large and extremely popular venue. The restaurant serves smoky ribs and a secret sauce made with 17 herbs and spices.
- ✓ **Hecky's Barbecue**, Evanston, Illinois (☎ 847-492-1182): Head north to this rib joint, which also smokes hot pork links, chicken, and turkey drumsticks.

Vivo**\$\$\$\$ Randolph Street Market District ITALIAN**

In 1991, this restaurant was a pioneer, built in an old warehouse in the produce market just west of the Loop. Today, the Market District has become one of the city's dining hot spots, with restaurants scattered among the onions and tomatoes. The glitterati still gather at Vivo, which remains hip *and* affordable. The daily spread of antipasti is always worth sampling. You can't go wrong with the rigatoni or the roasted lamb chops, served with sautéed garlic spinach. Pastas include a black linguine with crabmeat or a daily homemade ravioli selection. For dessert, try the double-chocolate cake with espresso sauce — and with this dose of caffeine, be prepared to stay awake well into the evening! Vivo's most requested seating is a solitary table poised atop an old elevator shaft. Celebrities and the romantically inclined tend to sit here. Call well in advance to reserve this special place.

To get here, take a taxi — about an \$8 ride from the Loop.



See map p. 129. 838 W. Randolph Ave. (at Halsted Street). ☎ 312-733-3379. www.vivo-chicago.com. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$13-\$26. AE, DC, MC, V. Open: Mon-Wed 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and 5-10:30 p.m., Thurs 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and 5-11 p.m., Fri 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. to midnight, Sat 5 p.m. to midnight, Sun 5-10 p.m.

Wave**\$\$\$\$ Streeterville AMERICAN/ECLECTIC**

In the W Hotel Lakeshore, this has been called Chicago's hippest hotel dining room. The sophisticated and cool furnishings are topped off by a red canopy that crests like a wave overhead. Wave's Ice Bar is a see-and-be-seen hangout with a fresh spin on cocktails. (Case in point: Try the Linie aquavit on the rocks with orange syrup and pink peppercorns). Most of Wave's entrees, which include plenty of fish, are prepared with Mediterranean accents. Favorites include the toasted fennel seed New York strip steak and whole fish.

See map p. 133. 644 N. Lake Shore Dr. (at East Ontario Street). ☎ 312-255-4460. www.waverestaurant.com. CTA: Bus no. 151 to Ontario Street, then walk east to Lake Shore Drive. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$17-\$29. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Sun-Thurs 6:30 a.m.-10 p.m., Fri-Sat 6:30 a.m.-11 p.m.

**Wishbone****\$ Randolph St. Market/North Side CAJUN/SOUTHERN**

Primitive art decorates this bright, open restaurant that's always bustling. It's one of the few restaurants in Chicago that draws a highly diverse crowd, from Harpo Studios employees (Oprah's headquarters are just around the corner) to families, suits, and creative types. The breakfast is outstanding — try the salmon cakes. Dinner offerings may include pan-fried chicken,

jambalaya, or chicken étoufée. For dessert, the tart Key lime pie is a stand out. If you're looking for a place to eat on the North Side, check out the Wishbone location in the Lakeview neighborhood at 3300 N. Lincoln, just north of Belmont (**773-549-2663**).

*See map p. 129. 1001 W. Washington St. (at Morgan Street). **312-850-2663**. www.wishbonechicago.com. Cab recommended (about \$5 from the Loop). Reservations accepted, except for weekend brunch. Main courses: \$5.25–\$9.50 breakfast and lunch, \$6.95–\$14 dinner. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Mon 7 a.m.–3 p.m., Tues–Fri 7 a.m.–3 p.m. and 5–9 p.m., Sat 8 a.m.–3 p.m. and 5–10 p.m., Sun 8 a.m.–3 p.m.*

Zealous

\$\$\$ River North CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN

One of the most stylish contemporary restaurants in town, Chef Michael Taus's cooking combines American ingredients with the subtle complexity of Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Indian cuisines. Entrees have ranged from Asian-inspired (sesame-crusted Chilean sea bass with red coconut-curry sauce) to heartland hearty (roasted pork rack stuffed with dried peaches and served with carrot pirogi). Zealous is especially welcoming to non-meat eaters; a five-course vegetarian menu is always available, and the kitchen will prepare vegan entrees on request. The dining room is bright and airy (thanks to a central skylight), and the purple chairs, green banquettes, and silver accents make the space feel trendy but not intimidating.

*See map p. 133. 419 W. Superior St. (at N. Hudson). **312-475-9112**. www.zealousrestaurant.com. CTA: Brown Line to Chicago, walk 3 blocks west, 1 block south. Reservations recommended. Main courses: \$18–\$32, degustation menu \$85–\$105. AE, DISC, MC, V. Open: Tues–Sat 5–11 p.m.*

Dining and Snacking on the Go

Being a tourist can really take it out of you. Sometimes all you want is to rest your aching feet and re-energize with a quick snack. Unlike New York, Chicago doesn't have battalions of pushcart food vendors (thankfully — their absence keeps the sidewalks clear and cuts down on greasy smells). But this city does have great portable food and quick eats. Maybe you've burned off your lunch more quickly than expected. Or maybe you have only an hour to squeeze in a meal before a show. You're in luck: Chicago's got what you want.

Carnivore favorites

Local carnivore favorites include Italian beef and Italian sausage sandwiches. My favorite spot for these specialties is **Mr. Beef on Orleans**, 666 N. Orleans St., between Erie and Huron streets (**312-337-8500**). This hole-in-the-wall eatery has a counter up front and seating at picnic benches in the rear. When Jim Belushi and Jay Leno are in Chicago, they stop by, as do local media celebs. You have two big decisions to make:

whether you want an Italian beef (juicy, thinly sliced, piled high) or an Italian sausage (charbroiled and spicy), and whether you want toppings of hot or sweet peppers. Each sandwich is packed into a chewy roll. If you can't decide, order a combo.

Another good choice is **Al's Italian Beef**, with two places, at 169 W. Ontario St. at Wells Street (**312-943-3222**) and 1079 W. Taylor St., between Aberdeen and Carpenter in Little Italy (**312-226-4017**).

Refreshing Italian ice

If you're going the low-fat route (or even if you aren't), you'll enjoy **Mario's Italian Lemonade** in Little Italy, 1068 W. Taylor St. (no phone). From May to late October, the stand sells refreshing Italian ice — cups of shaved ice doused with syrup (traditional lemon flavor and a variety of others). **Tom and Wendee's Italian Ice**, 1136 W. Armitage Ave. at Clifton Street, Lincoln Park (**773-327-2885**) sells a version made with fresh fruit rather than syrup.



World-famous Chicago hot dogs

"Hot dogs" in Chicago mean Vienna All-Beef franks served with mustard, green relish, chopped onion, sliced tomato, hot peppers, and celery salt. Ketchup is another option, though purists don't use it. Several popular chains sell these delicious dogs. One of these is **Gold Coast Dogs**, 159 N. Wabash Ave., at Randolph Street (**312-917-1677**). Gold Coast Dogs is a place where you can grab your food and run, or join the crowd in the restaurant. Get a Vienna hot dog and top it with the works, Chicago-style. Finish off your meal with a thick shake in chocolate, vanilla, or strawberry. It's open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Fluky's, in the Westfield North Bridge mall at 520 N. Michigan Ave. (**312-245-0702**), is part of a local chain that has been serving great hot dogs since the Depression. **Portillo's**, 100 W. Ontario St. (**312-587-8930**), is another local chain that specializes in hot dogs but also serves excellent pastas and salads. **Byron's** serves Vienna All-Beef hot dogs at three locations: 1017 W. Irving Park Rd. (**773-281-7474**), 1701 W. Lawrence (**773-271-0900**), and 680 N. Halsted St. (**312-738-0968**).

Chicago treats

Deep-dish pizza may be Chicago's culinary claim to fame, but the city has also added to the national waistline in other ways. Twinkies and Wonder Bread were invented here; Chicago businessman James L. Kraft created the first processed cheese; and Oscar Mayer got his start as a butcher in the Old Town neighborhood.

Fast food with big flavors



Chicagoans in the know head for **Potbelly Sandwich Works**. The made-to-order grilled sub sandwiches on warm, crusty homemade bread can be loaded up with all sorts of meats, cheeses, and veggies. The shakes are fantastic, too. Yes, there's a potbellied stove inside and all sorts of Old West-type memorabilia. From the original at 2264 N. Lincoln Ave., between Belden and Webster (☎ 773-528-1405), the franchise has grown to ten locations, including 190 N. State St. at Lake Street in the Loop (☎ 312-683-1234) and 520 N. Michigan Ave, in the Westfield North Bridge shopping center (☎ 312-664-1008), which are convenient to the Loop and the Magnificent Mile.

Also in the Loop (in the Sears Tower, to be exact) is **Mrs. Levy's Delicatessen**, a retro deli that displays signed photographs of famous patrons. Staples such as knishes, blintzes, and soups are made daily from scratch. Sandwiches are piled high and include such standards as corned beef, beef brisket, and pastrami; soup choices include sweet-and-sour cabbage, chicken matzo ball, and mushroom barley. You can find Mrs. Levy's on the mezzanine level of the Sears Tower, 233 S. Wacker Dr. (☎ 312-993-0530).

Corner Bakery offers cafeteria-style dining and sandwiches, soups, salads, pastas, and pizzas. (Plus, check out the bakery items — hard to resist!) Downtown has more than a dozen locations. Two of the larger ones are at 676 N. St. Clair at Erie Street (☎ 312-266-2570) and 1121 N. State St. near Cedar Street (☎ 312-787-1969).



foodlife, on the mezzanine level of Water Tower Place, at 835 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-335-3663), takes the concept of "food court" to a higher level. Here you find many healthy alternatives to fast food. A dozen or so kiosks offer everything from barbecued chicken to Asian stir-fry, from pizza to low-fat Caesar salad. A hostess will seat you and give you an electronic card, and then it's up to you to stroll around and select whatever food suits your fancy (each purchase is recorded on your card, and you pay on the way out).



If you're a TV fan, you've probably heard the phrase "Cheeburger, cheeburger, cheep, cheep. No Coke — Pepsi," made famous by John Belushi's crabby Greek counterman on the original *Saturday Night Live*. Chicago's **Billy Goat Tavern**, 430 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-222-1525), served as the inspiration for Belushi's character. The Billy Goat is a hangout for newspaper writers from the nearby Tribune and Sun-Times buildings. Come on down (it's below street level) for a beer and a burger; you'll get a real Chicago experience.

I would be remiss in writing about Chicago if I omitted McDonald's (because the company headquarters is in Oak Brook). One of the chain's most profitable franchises, the **Rock-N-Roll McDonald's**, 600 N. Clark St. at Ohio Street (☎ 312-867-0455), was torn down in July 2004. A new and improved flagship store opened there in April 2005.

World-famous pizza

Chicago has three pizza styles: Chicago-style, also known as deep-dish, which is thick-crusted and often demands a knife and fork; stuffed, which is similar to a pie, with a crust on both top and bottom; and thin-crust. Many pizzerias serve both deep-dish and thin, and some make all three kinds.

Three of Chicago's best gourmet deep-dish restaurants are **Pizzeria Uno**, 29 E. Ohio St. at Wabash Avenue (☎ 312-321-1000); **Pizzeria Due**, 619 N. Wabash Ave. at Ontario Street (☎ 312-943-2400); and **Gino's East** (see earlier in this chapter).



In River North, **Lou Malnati's Pizzeria**, 439 N. Wells St. (☎ 312-828-9800), bakes both deep-dish and thin-crust pizza and even has a low-fat-cheese option.

Edwardo's is a local pizza chain that serves all three varieties, but with a wheat crust and all-natural ingredients (spinach pizza is the specialty here); locations are in the Gold Coast at 1212 N. Dearborn St. at Division Street (☎ 312-337-4490), in the South Loop at 521 S. Dearborn St. (☎ 312-939-3366), and in Lincoln Park at 2662 N. Halsted St. (☎ 773-871-3400). Not far from Lincoln Park Zoo is **Ranalli's Pizzeria, Libations & Collectibles**, 1925 N. Lincoln Ave. (☎ 312-642-4700), with its terrific open-air patio and extensive selection of beers.

In Wrigleyville, just off Belmont Avenue, are **Leona's Pizzeria**, 3215 N. Sheffield Ave. (☎ 773-327-8861), and **Pat's Pizzeria**, 3114 N. Sheffield Ave. (☎ 773-248-0168), both of which serve all three kinds of pizza. Leona's also has a location in Little Italy at 1419 W. Taylor St. (☎ 312-850-2222), and Pat's has one downtown in the Athletic Club Illinois Center at 211 N. Stetson Ave. (☎ 312-946-0220).

Tea or coffee

If you're shopping on the Magnificent Mile and feel like having an elegant afternoon tea complete with finger sandwiches, scones, and pastries, go to the Palm Court at **The Drake Hotel**, 140 E. Walton Place (☎ 312-787-2200), or the sunny Seasons Lounge of the **Four Seasons Hotel**, 120 E. Delaware Place (☎ 312-280-8800). A fine afternoon tea is also served at the Greenhouse at the **Ritz-Carlton**, 160 E. Pearson St. (☎ 312-266-1000), in the 12th-floor lobby above the Water Tower Place mall.



I scream, you scream . . .

Worth the trip is **Margie's Candies**, 1960 N. Western Ave. at Armitage Avenue (☎ 773-384-1035), a classic ice-cream parlor that makes its own hot fudge, butterscotch, and caramel. The place is frozen in time; from the looks of it, in the 1940s (it has been in existence since 1921). Margie's serves sundaes in giant dishes shaped like conch shells.



On the North Side, you can head to one of my favorite coffee shops, **Uncommon Grounds**, 1214 W. Grace St. at Clark Street (☎ 773-929-3680), which serves up fine breakfasts and sandwiches, plus wine and beer. In fact, a good portion of this book was written there, so you know you can hang out for hours without anyone bothering you!

Index of establishments by neighborhood

Andersonville

- Ann Sather (Breakfast/Scandinavian, \$)
- Francesca's on Taylor (Italian, \$\$)
- Mia Francesca (Italian, \$\$)
- Swedish Bakery (Sweets, \$)
- Svea Restaurant (Scandinavian, \$)

Bucktown/Wicker Park

- Café Absinthe (Eclectic, \$\$\$)
- Club Lucky (Italian, \$\$)
- Del Toro (Spanish/Tapas, \$\$)
- Hot Chocolate (American, \$)
- Jane's (Eclectic, \$\$)
- Le Bouchon (Bistro, \$\$)
- Margie's Candies (Sweets, \$)
- Mas (Latin American, \$\$\$)
- Meritage Café & Wine Bar (American, \$\$\$)
- Mirai Sushi (Japanese/Sushi, \$\$\$)
- Spring (American, \$\$\$)

Chinatown

- Emperor's Choice (Chinese, \$\$)
- Three Happiness (Chinese, \$\$)

Gold Coast

- Bistro Zinc (Bistro, \$\$)
- Corner Bakery (American, \$)
- Edwardo's (Pizza, \$)
- Gibson's Steakhouse (Steakhouse, \$\$\$)
- Pump Room (American, \$\$\$)

Greektown

- Pegasus (Greek, \$\$)
- Santorini (Greek, \$\$)

Lincoln Park

- Alinea (Eclectic, \$\$\$\$\$)
- Ambria (French, \$\$\$\$)
- Boka (American, \$\$)
- Charlie Trotter's (Nouvelle, \$\$\$\$\$)
- Edwardo's (Pizza, \$)
- Potbelly Sandwich Works (Cajun, \$)
- Ranalli's Pizzeria, Libations & Collectibles (Pizza, \$)
- Stanley's (American, \$)
- Thai Classic (Thai, \$\$)
- Tom and Wendee's Italian Ice (Sweets, \$)

Lincoln Square

- Chicago Brahaus (German, \$\$)
- Meyer's Delicatessen (German, \$\$)
- Merz Apothecary (German, \$\$)

Little Italy

- Al's Italian Beef (Steakhouse, \$)
- Chez Joël (Bistro, \$\$)
- Francesca's on Taylor (Italian, \$\$)
- Mia Francesca (Italian, \$\$)
- Mario's Italian Lemonade (Sweets, \$)
- Rosebud (Italian, \$\$)
- Scafuri Bakery (Sweets, \$)
- Tuscany on Taylor (Italian, \$\$)

Logan Square

- Red Apple Restaurant (Eclectic, \$)

Loop

- Atwood Café (Eclectic, \$\$)
- Bin 36 (American, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)
- Edwardo's (Pizza, \$)

Gold Coast Dogs (American, \$)
Heaven on Seven (Cajun, \$\$)
Italian Village (Italian, \$\$)
Lou Mitchell's (American/Breakfast, \$)
Mrs. Levy's Delicatessen (American, \$)
Nine (Seafood/Steakhouse, \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$)
Park Grill (American, \$\$)
Petterino's (American/Steakhouse, \$\$)
Potbelly Sandwich Works (Cajun, \$)
Russian Tea Time (Russian/Tea, \$\$)
Trattoria No. 10 (Italian, \$\$)

Magnificent Mile

Amarit (Thai, \$\$)
Billy Goat Tavern (American, \$)
Bistro 110 (American, \$\$)
Corner Bakery (Breakfast, \$)
Fluky's (American, \$)
foodlife (American, \$)
Four Seasons Hotel (Eclectic, \$\$)
Heaven on Seven (Cajun, \$\$)
Jake Melnick's Corner Tap
(American, \$-\$\$)
Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak and Stone
Crab (Seafood/Steakhouse, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)
Mike Ditka's Restaurant
(Steakhouse, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)
Ritz-Carlton (Eclectic, \$\$)

North Side

Ann Sather (Scandinavian/Breakfast, \$)
Arun's (Thai, \$\$\$\$\$)
Flat Top Grill (Asian, \$)
Mia Francesca (Italian, \$\$)
Orange (American/Breakfast, \$\$)
Tango Sur (Argentine, \$)
Uncommon Grounds (Eclectic, \$)
Wishbone (Cajun/Southern, \$)

Old Town

Flat Top Grill (Asian, \$)
Kamehachi (Japanese/Sushi, \$\$)
Twin Anchors (Barbecue, \$)

Randolph Street Market District

Avec (Eclectic, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)
Blackbird (New American, \$\$\$)
Flat Top Grill (Asian, \$)
La Sardine (French/Bistro, \$\$)
Sushi Wabi (Japanese/Sushi, \$\$)
Vivo (Italian, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)
Wishbone (Cajun/Southern, \$)

River North

Al's Italian Beef (Steakhouse, \$)
Ben Pao (Chinese, \$\$)
Byron's (American, \$)
Café Iberico (Spanish/Tapas, \$)
Carson's (Barbecue, \$\$)
Coco Pazzo (Italian, \$\$\$)
Cyrano's Bistro, Wine Bar & Cabaret
(Bistro, \$)
Frontera Grill and Topolobampo
(Mexican, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)
Gene & Georgetti (Steakhouse, \$\$)
Gino's East (Pizza, \$)
Green Zebra (Vegetarian, \$\$\$)
Harry Caray's (Italian/Steakhouse,
\$\$-\$\$\$\$)
Keefer's (Steakhouse, \$\$\$)
Lou Malnati's Pizzeria (Pizza, \$)
Maggiano's (Italian, \$\$)
mk (American, \$\$\$)
Mr. Beef on Orleans (Steakhouse, \$)
Osteria Via Stato (Italian, \$\$)
Pizzeria Due (Pizza, \$)
Pizzeria Uno (Pizza, \$)
Portillo's (American, \$)
Potbelly Sandwich Works (Cajun, \$)
Rockit Bar & Grill (American, \$)
Rock-N-Roll McDonald's (American, \$)
Ruth's Chris Steak House
(Steakhouse, \$\$\$)
Shaw's Crab House and Blue Crab
Lounge (Seafood, \$\$)
Smith & Wollensky (Steakhouse, \$\$\$)
Star of Siam (Thai, \$\$)
Sushisamba Rio (Latin American/
Sushi, \$\$\$)
Vermilion (Indian/Latin American, \$\$)
Zealous (Contemporary American, \$\$\$)

South Loop

Custom House (American, \$\$\$)
Gioco (Italian, \$\$)
Opera (Asian, \$\$\$)

Streeterville

Bice Ristorante (Italian, \$\$–\$\$\$)
Morton's (Steakhouse, \$\$\$)
Saloon Steakhouse (Steakhouse,
\$\$–\$\$\$)
Wave (American/Eclectic, \$\$–\$\$\$)

West Loop

Carnivale (Latin American, \$\$\$)
Moto (Eclectic, \$\$\$\$\$)

Wrigleyville

Byron's (American, \$)
Leona's Pizzeria (Pizza, \$)
Pat's Pizzeria (Pizza, \$)

Index of establishments by cuisine

American

Billy Goat Tavern (Magnificent Mile, \$)
Bin 36 (Loop, \$\$–\$\$\$)
Bistro 110 (Magnificent Mile, \$\$)
Blackbird (Randolph Street Market
District, \$\$\$)
Boka (Lincoln Park, \$\$)
Byron's (River North and
Wrigleyville, \$)
Custom House (South Loop, \$\$\$)
Fluky's (Magnificent Mile, \$)
foodlife (Magnificent Mile, \$)
Gold Coast Dogs (Loop, \$)
Hot Chocolate (Bucktown/
Wicker Park, \$)
Jake Melnick's Corner Tap
(Magnificent Mile, \$–\$\$)
Lou Mitchell's (Loop, \$)
Meritage Café & Wine Bar
(Bucktown/Wicker Park, \$\$\$)
mk (River North, \$\$\$)
Mrs. Levy's Delicatessen (Loop, \$)
Park Grill (Loop, \$\$)
Orange (North Side, \$\$)
Petterino's (Loop, \$\$)
Portillo's (River North, \$)
Pump Room (Gold Coast, \$\$\$)
Rockit Bar & Grill (River North, \$)
Rock-N-Roll McDonald's
(River North, \$)
Spring (Bucktown/Wicker Park, \$\$\$)
Stanley's (Lincoln Park, \$)
Wave (Streeterville, \$\$–\$\$\$)
Zealous (River North, \$\$\$)

Argentine

Tango Sur (North Side, \$)

Asian

Flat Top Grill (Old Town/
North Side/Randolph Street
Market District, \$)
Opera (South Loop, \$\$\$)

Barbecue

Carson's (River North, \$\$)
Twin Anchors (Old Town, \$)

Bistro

Bistro Zinc (Gold Coast, \$\$)
Chez Joël (Little Italy, \$\$)
Cyrano's Bistro, Wine Bar &
Cabaret (River North, \$\$)
La Sardine (Randolph Street
Market District, \$\$)
Le Bouchon (Bucktown/
Wicker Park, \$\$)

Breakfast

Ann Sather (Andersonville and
North Side, \$)
Corner Bakery (Magnificent Mile
and Gold Coast, \$)
Lou Mitchell's (Loop, \$)
Orange (North Side, \$\$)
Wishbone (North Side/Randolph
Street Market District, \$)

Cajun/Creole/Southern

Heaven on Seven (Loop/Magnificent Mile, \$\$)
Potbelly Sandwich Works (Lincoln Park/Loop/River North \$)
Wishbone (North Side/Randolph Street Market District, \$)

Chinese

Ben Pao (River North, \$\$)
Emperor's Choice (Chinatown, \$\$)
Three Happiness (Chinatown, \$\$)

Eclectic

Alinea (Lincoln Park, \$\$\$\$\$)
Atwood Café (Loop, \$\$)
Avec (Randolph Street Market District, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)
Café Absinthe (Bucktown/Wicker Park, \$\$\$)
Four Seasons Hotel (Magnificent Mile, \$\$)
Jane's (Bucktown/Wicker Park, \$\$)
Moto (West Loop, \$\$\$\$\$)
Red Apple Restaurant (Logan Square, \$)
Ritz-Carlton (Magnificent Mile, \$\$)
Uncommon Grounds (North Side, \$)
Wave (Streeterville, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)

French

Ambria (Lincoln Park, \$\$\$\$\$)
La Sardine (Randolph Street Market District, \$\$)

German

Chicago Brauhaus (Lincoln Square, \$\$)
Meyer's Delicatessen (Lincoln Square, \$\$)
Merz Apothecary (Lincoln Square, \$\$)

Greek

Pegasus (Grektown, \$\$)
Santorini (Grektown, \$\$)

Indian

Vermilion (River North, \$\$)

Italian

Bice Ristorante (Streeterville, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)
Club Lucky (Bucktown/Wicker Park, \$\$)
Coco Pazzo (River North, \$\$\$\$)
Francesca's on Taylor (Little Italy/Andersonville, \$\$)
Gioco (South Loop, \$\$)
Harry Caray's (River North, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)
Italian Village (Loop, \$\$)
Maggiano's (River North, \$\$)
Mia Francesca (North Side/Little Italy/Andersonville, \$\$)
Osteria Via Stato (River North, \$\$)
Rosebud (Little Italy, \$\$)
Trattoria No. 10 (Loop, \$\$)
Tuscany on Taylor (Little Italy, \$\$)
Vivo (Randolph Street Market District, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)

Japanese/Sushi

Kamehachi (Old Town, \$\$)
Mirai Sushi (Bucktown/Wicker Park, \$\$\$)
Sushi Wabi (Randolph Street Market District, \$\$)
Sushisamba Rio (River North, \$\$\$)

Latin American

Carnivale (West Loop, \$\$\$\$)
Mas (Bucktown/Wicker Park, \$\$\$\$)
Sushisamba Rio (River North, \$\$\$)
Vermilion (River North, \$\$)

Mexican

Frontera Grill and Topolobampo (River North, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)

Nouvelle

Charlie Trotter's (Lincoln Park, \$\$\$\$\$)

Pizza

Edwardo's (Gold Coast/Loop/Lincoln Park, \$)
Gino's East (River North, \$)
Leona's Pizzeria (Wrigleyville, \$)
Lou Malnati's Pizzeria (River North, \$)
Pat's Pizzeria (Wrigleyville, \$)
Pizzeria Due (River North, \$)

Pizzeria Uno (River North, \$)
Ranalli's Pizzeria, Libations & Collectibles (Lincoln Park, \$)

Russian/Tea

Russian Tea Time (Loop, \$\$)

Scandinavian

Ann Sather (Andersonville and North Side, \$)
Svea Restaurant (Andersonville, \$)

Seafood

Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak and Stone Crab (Magnificent Mile, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)
Nine (Loop, \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$)
Shaw's Crab House and Blue Crab Lounge (River North, \$\$)

Spanish/Tapas

Café Iberico (River North, \$)
Del Toro (Bucktown/Wicker Park, \$\$)

Steakhouses

Al's Italian Beef (River North/
Little Italy, \$)
Gene & Georgetti (River North, \$\$)
Gibson's Steakhouse
(Gold Coast, \$\$\$\$)
Harry Caray's (River North, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)
Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak and Stone Crab (Magnificent Mile, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)

Index of establishments by price

\$\$\$\$

Alinea (Eclectic, Lincoln Park)
Arun's (Thai, North Side)
Charlie Trotter's (Nouvelle,
Lincoln Park)
Moto (Eclectic, West Loop)

\$\$\$

Ambria (French, Lincoln Park)
Frontera Grill and Topolobampo (Mexican, River North)

Keefer's (River North, \$\$\$)
Mike Ditka's Restaurant (Magnificent Mile, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)
Morton's (Streeterville, \$\$\$)
Mr. Beef on Orleans (River North, \$)
Nine (Loop, \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$)
Petterino's (Loop, \$\$)
Ruth's Chris Steak House (River North, \$\$\$)
Saloon Steakhouse (Streeterville, \$\$-\$\$\$\$)
Smith & Wollensky (River North, \$\$\$)

Sweets

Margie's Candies (Bucktown/
Wicker Park, \$)
Mario's Italian Lemonade (Little Italy, \$)
Scafuri Bakery (Little Italy, \$)
Swedish Bakery (Andersonville, \$)
Tom and Wendee's Italian Ice (Lincoln Park, \$)

Thai

Amarit (Magnificent Mile, \$\$)
Arun's (North Side, \$\$\$\$\$)
Star of Siam (River North, \$\$\$)
Thai Classic (Lincoln Park, \$\$)

Vegetarian

Green Zebra (River North, \$\$\$)

Gibson's Steakhouse (Steakhouse,
Gold Coast)
Nine (Seafood/Steakhouse, Loop)

\$\$

Avec (Eclectic, Randolph Street Market District)
Bice Ristorante (Italian, Streeterville)
Bin 36 (American, Loop)
Blackbird (New American, Randolph Street Market District)

- Café Absinthe (Eclectic, Bucktown/Wicker Park)
Carnivale (Latin American, West Loop)
Coco Pazzo (Italian, River North)
Custom House (American, South Loop)
Frontera Grill and Topolobampo (Mexican, River North)
Green Zebra (Vegetarian, River North)
Harry Caray's (Italian/Steakhouse, River North)
Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak and Stone Crab (Seafood/Steakhouse, Magnificent Mile)
Keefer's (Steakhouse, River North)
Mas (Latin American, Bucktown/Wicker Park)
Meritage Café & Wine Bar (American, Bucktown/Wicker Park)
Mike Ditka's Restaurant (Steakhouse, Magnificent Mile)
Mirai Sushi (Japanese/Sushi, Bucktown/Wicker Park)
mk (American, River North)
Morton's (Steakhouse, Streeterville)
Nine (Seafood/Steakhouse, Loop)
Opera (Asian, South Loop)
Pump Room (American, Gold Coast)
Ruth's Chris Steak House (Steakhouse, River North)
Saloon Steakhouse (Steakhouse, Streeterville)
Smith & Wollensky (Steakhouse, River North)
Spring (American, Bucktown/Wicker Park)
Sushisamba Rio (Latin American/Sushi, River North)
Vivo (Italian, Randolph Street Market District)
Wave (American/Eclectic, Streeterville)
Zealous (Contemporary American, River North)
- \$\$
- Amarit (Thai, Magnificent Mile)
Atwood Café (Eclectic, Loop)
Avec (Eclectic, Randolph Street Market District)
Ben Pao (Chinese, River North)
Bice Ristorante (Italian, Streeterville)
Bin 36 (American, Loop)
Bistro 110 (American, Magnificent Mile)
Bistro Zinc (Bistro, Gold Coast)
Boka (American, Lincoln Park)
Carson's (Barbecue, River North)
Chez Joël (Bistro, Little Italy)
Chicago Brauhaus (German, Lincoln Square)
Club Lucky (Italian, Bucktown/Wicker Park)
Cyrano's Bistro, Wine Bar & Cabaret (Bistro, River North)
Del Toro (Spanish/Tapas, Bucktown/Wicker Park)
Emperor's Choice (Chinese, Chinatown)
Four Seasons Hotel (Eclectic, Magnificent Mile)
Francesca's on Taylor (Italian, Little Italy/Andersonville)
Frontera Grill and Topolobampo (Mexican, River North)
Gene & Georgetti (Steakhouse, River North)
Gioco (Italian, South Loop)
Harry Caray's (Italian/Steakhouse, River North)
Heaven on Seven (Cajun, Loop/Magnificent Mile)
Italian Village (Italian, Loop)
Jake Melnick's Corner Tap (American, Magnificent Mile)
Jane's (Eclectic, Bucktown/Wicker Park)
Joe's Seafood, Prime Steak and Stone Crab (Seafood/Steakhouse, Magnificent Mile)
Kamehachi (Japanese/Sushi, Old Town)
La Sardine (French/Bistro, Randolph Street Market District)
Le Bouchon (Bistro, Bucktown/Wicker Park)
Maggiano's (Italian, River North)
Merz Apothecary (German, Lincoln Square)
Meyer's Delicatessen (German, Lincoln Square)
Mia Francesca (Italian, North Side/Little Italy/Andersonville)

Mike Ditka's Restaurant (Steakhouse, Magnificent Mile)
Orange (American/Breakfast, North Side)
Osteria Via Stato (Italian, River North)
Park Grill (American, Loop)
Pegasus (Greek, Greektown)
Petterino's (American/Steakhouse, Loop)
Ritz-Carlton (Eclectic, Magnificent Mile)
Rosebud (Italian, Little Italy)
Russian Tea Time (Russian/Tea, Loop)
Saloon Steakhouse (Steakhouse, Streeterville)
Santorini (Greek, Greektown)
Shaw's Crab House and Blue Crab Lounge (Seafood, River North)
Star of Siam (Thai, River North)
Sushi Wabi (Japanese/Sushi, Randolph Street Market District)
Thai Classic (Thai, Lincoln Park)
Three Happiness (Chinese, Chinatown)
Trattoria No. 10 (Italian, Loop)
Tuscany on Taylor (Italian, Little Italy)
Vermilion (Indian/Latin American, River North)
Vivo (Italian, Randolph Street Market District)
Wave (American/Eclectic, Streeterville)

\$

Al's Italian Beef (Steakhouse, River North/Little Italy)
Ann Sather (Scandinavian/Breakfast, Andersonville/North Side)
Billy Goat Tavern (American, Magnificent Mile)
Byron's (American, River North/Wrigleyville)
Café Iberico (Spanish/Tapas, River North)
Corner Bakery (Breakfast, Magnificent Mile/Gold Coast)
Edwardo's (Pizza, Gold Coast/Loop/Lincoln Park)
Flat Top Grill (Asian, Old Town/North Side/Randolph Street Market District)

Fluky's (American, Magnificent Mile)
foodlife (Eclectic, Magnificent Mile)
Gino's East (Pizza, River North)
Gold Coast Dogs (American, Loop)
Hot Chocolate (Bucktown/Wicker Park, \$)
Jake Melnick's Corner Tap (American, Magnificent Mile)
Leona's Pizzeria (Pizza, Wrigleyville)
Lou Manalti's Pizzeria (Pizza, River North)
Lou Mitchell's (American, Loop)
Margie's Candies (Sweets, Bucktown/Wicker Park)
Mario's Italian Lemonade (Sweets, Little Italy)
Mr. Beef on Orleans (Steakhouse, River North)
Mrs. Levy's Delicatessen (American, Loop)
Pat's Pizzeria (Pizza, Wrigleyville)
Pizzeria Due (Pizza, River North)
Pizzeria Uno (Pizza, River North)
Portillo's (American, River North)
Potbelly Sandwich Works (Cajun, Lincoln Park/Loop/River North)
Ranalli's Pizzeria, Libations & Collectibles (Pizza, River North)
Red Apple Restaurant (Eclectic, Logan Square)
Rockit Bar & Grill (American, River North)
Rock-N-Roll McDonald's (American, River North)
Scafuri Bakery (Sweets, Little Italy)
Stanley's (American, Lincoln Park)
Svea Restaurant (Scandinavian, Andersonville)
Swedish Bakery (Sweets, Andersonville)
Tango Sur (Argentine, North Side)
Tom and Wendee's Italian Ice (Sweets, Lincoln Park)
Twin Anchors (Barbecue, Old Town)
Uncommon Grounds (Eclectic, \$)
Wishbone (Cajun/Southern, North Side/Randolph Street Market District)

Part IV

Exploring Chicago

The 5th Wave By Rich Tennant



"We do offer an authentic William 'The Refrigerator' Perry football jersey for sale, we just don't have a wall large enough to display it on."

In this part . . .

Whether you want to make up your own itinerary or follow my ready-made ones, this part helps you peruse Chicago's sights. I cover Chicago's main attractions, as well as others worth a stop if you have the time and energy. I've created itineraries based on the length of your stay — what should you do if you have one day, or two, or three? — and special interests. And what would travel be without a little souvenir hunting? In this part, you find a complete guide to shopping, from Michigan Avenue's glittering boutiques to unique vintage shops. Finally, I provide five day trips in case you have the time and interest in venturing beyond Chicago.

Chapter 11

Chicago's Top Attractions

In This Chapter

- Discovering Chicago's world-famous museums: Art and dinosaurs!
- Exploring the parks and lakefront
- Cheering for Chicago's favorite teams
- Orienting yourself with a sightseeing tour
- Sailing smoothly on boat tours

Chicago is a sophisticated city with many diverse attractions, from museums with world-famous collections; to outstanding buildings by internationally known architects; to miles of running and biking paths along the lakefront; and, of course, major sports venues such as Wrigley Field, the friendly confines of the Chicago Cubs. Best of all for visitors, the majority of the top attractions are in or near downtown, all accessible by public transportation.

In this chapter, I describe the city's most popular attractions. See the map in this chapter for locations, unless noted otherwise.

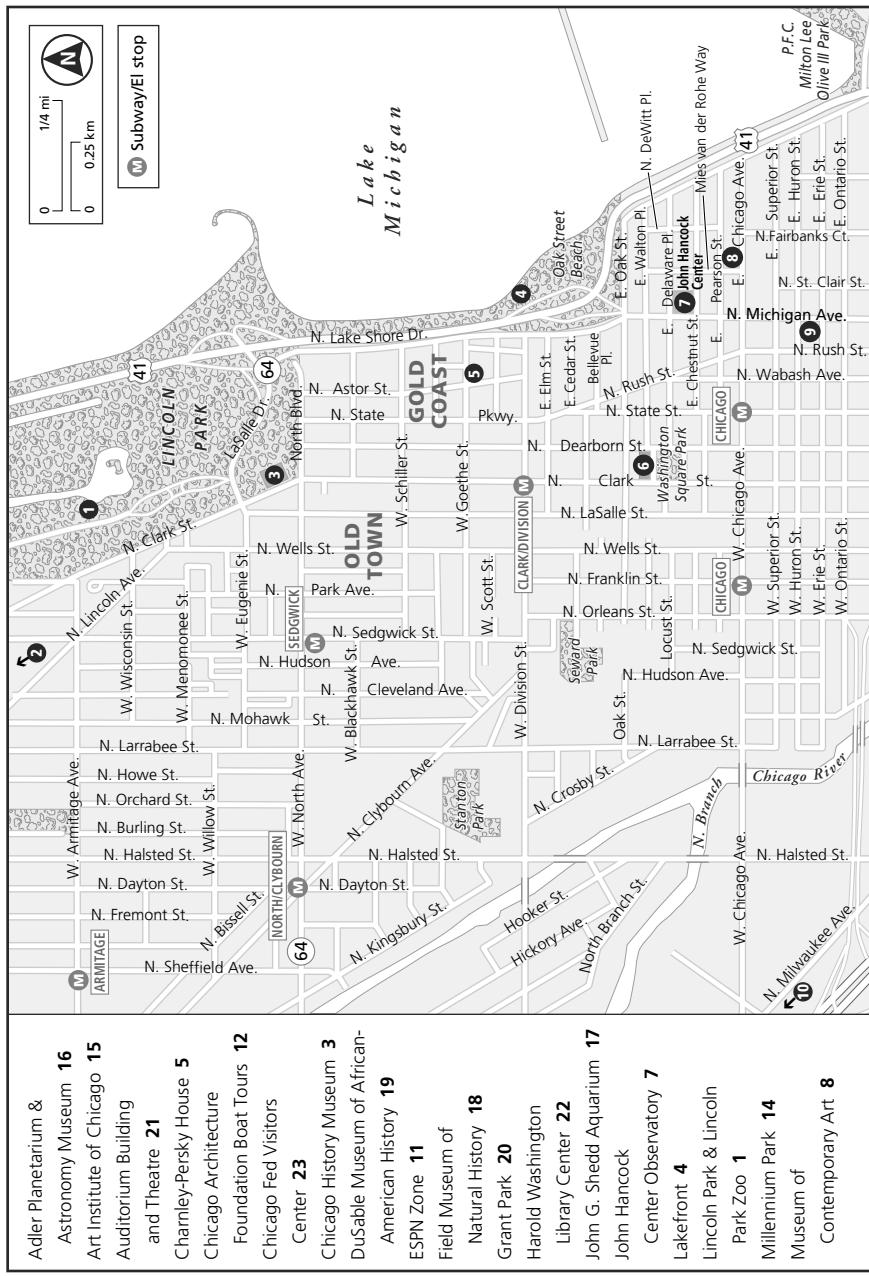
Chicago's Top Sights

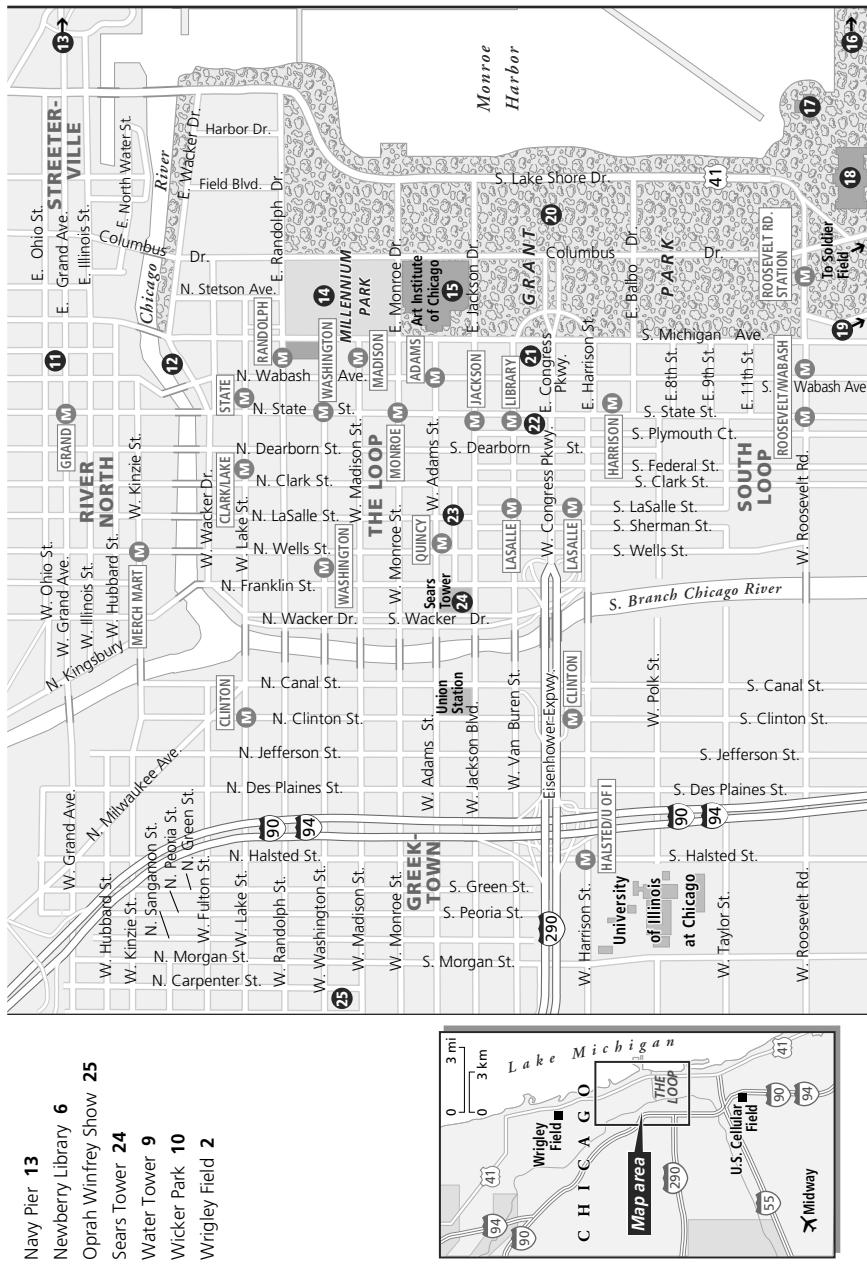


Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum Museum Campus (near the Loop)

The first planetarium in the Western Hemisphere rocketed into the new millennium with a face-lift and an addition that wraps itself around the 1920-built planetarium like a high-tech glass visor. And high-tech it is: Your first stop should be the Sky Pavilion, which includes four exhibition galleries, including the StarRider virtual-reality theater, which propels visitors on a voyage of discovery into the infinity of space. Settle down under the massive dome, and you'll take a half-hour interactive virtual-reality trip through the Milky Way and into deep space, featuring a computer-generated 3-D graphics projection system and controls in the armrest of each seat. Afterward, come back to Earth at the museum's cafe, which offers stunning views of Chicago's skyline and a selection of salads, soups, and

Central Chicago Attractions





sandwiches. On the first Friday of every month, visitors can view dramatic close-ups of the moon, the planets, and distant galaxies through a closed-circuit monitor connected to the planetarium's Doane Observatory telescope. Allow at least two hours at the Adler, or combine a visit with a day at the Museum Campus (see the "Mixing fish, fossils, and outer space: The Museum Campus" sidebar, in this chapter).

See map p. 174. 1300 S. Lake Shore Dr. ☎ 312-922-7827. www.adlerplanetarium.org. CTA: Red Line to Roosevelt or bus no. 12 or 146 to planetarium entrance. Admission (including 1 show): \$16 adults, \$15 seniors and \$14 children 4–17, free for children under 4. Free admission Mon–Tues Sept–Feb only (except for the last 2 weeks in Dec). Open: Mon–Fri 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Sat–Sun 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m.; first Fri of every month until 10 p.m.; open until 6 p.m. daily Memorial Day–Labor Day. StarRider Theater and Sky Shows at numerous times throughout the day; call for current times.



Taking advantage of free museum days

Alas, the days when every museum in town had at least one free-admission day a week are gone. Now, the major museums only give breaks on admission during the slowest times of the year (usually late fall and the dead of winter). Still, if you plan your time carefully, you can save yourself some fees, especially at the city's smaller museums. Keep in mind that you will still have to pay for special exhibitions and films on free days.

Monday: Adler Planetarium and Field Museum of Natural History (both Sept–Feb, except the last two weeks of Dec); Museum of Science and Industry (mid-Sept–Nov and Jan–Feb); Shedd Aquarium (Oct–Feb, except the last two weeks of Dec; Oceanarium admission extra)

Tuesday: Adler Planetarium and Field Museum of Natural History (both Sept–Feb, except the last two weeks of Dec); International Museum of Surgical Science; Museum of Contemporary Art; Museum of Science and Industry (mid-Sept–Nov and Jan–Feb); Shedd Aquarium (Sept–Feb, except last two weeks of Dec; Oceanarium admission extra)

Thursday: Art Institute of Chicago (5–8 p.m. only, until 9 p.m. Memorial Day–Labor Day); Chicago Children's Museum (5–8 p.m. only)

Friday: Spertus Museum

Sunday: DuSable Museum of African-American History

Always Free: Chicago Cultural Center, Garfield Park Conservatory, David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, Lincoln Park Conservatory, Lincoln Park Zoo, Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, Museum of Contemporary Photography, Newberry Library



Art Institute of Chicago

Near the Loop

Chicago's pride and joy is a warm, welcoming museum, a world-class institution that never seems stuffy. (You can get an idea of the museum's sense of whimsy during the holidays when the lion sculptures that guard its entrance sport Santa hats.) The Art Institute has several different departments, each with its own exhibition space and collection. Highlights include well-known works such as *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of the Grande Jatte* by Georges Seurat; *Paris Street: Rainy Day* by Gustave Caillebotte; and two icons of American isolation, Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks* and Grant Wood's *American Gothic*.



The size and scope of the Art Institute's collections can be overwhelming. First-timers would do well to take a Collection Highlight Tour (2 p.m. Sat, Sun, and Tues). The tour is free and lasts about an hour, concentrating on a few major works. A highlight tour for kids runs on some Saturdays, and the **Kraft Education Center** on the lower level offers fun seek-and-find programs for children and interactive exhibits. If you're touring on your own, don't miss the museum's outstanding **Impressionist art** collection, with one of the world's largest collections of Monet paintings, and the **Thorne Miniature Rooms** — 68 dollhouselike chambers that chronicle decorative arts through the centuries. Watch for touring shows, for which reservations are usually required. Reserve at least two hours for the museum and try to visit during off times, such as weekdays, early mornings, or late afternoons.

See map p. 174. 111 S. Michigan Ave. ☎ 312-443-3600. www.artic.edu. CTA: Green, Brown, Purple, or Orange line to Adams; Red Line to Monroe or Jackson, then walk 1 block east; or bus no. 3, 4, 60, 145, 147, or 151 to Monroe and South Michigan Avenue. Admission (suggested): \$12 adults; \$7 seniors, students, and children. Free admission Thurs 5–8 p.m. Open: Mon and Wed–Fri 10:30 a.m.–5 p.m., Thurs 10:30 a.m.–8 p.m., Sat–Sun 10 a.m.–5 p.m. (Open until 9 p.m. Thurs–Fri Memorial Day–Labor Day). Closed Thanksgiving and Dec 25.

Chicago ArchiCenter and Chicago Architecture

Foundation Boat Tours

Near the Loop

Chicago calls itself the "first city of architecture," and a quick swing through the ArchiCenter, followed by a Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF) boat tour, is the best way to survey the architectural highlights. The ArchiCenter is run by the Foundation and is across the street from the Art Institute. Exhibits include a scale model of downtown Chicago, profiles of the people and buildings that shaped the city's look, and a searchable database with pictures and information on many of Chicago's best-known skyscrapers. "Architecture ambassadors" are on hand to provide information on tours run by the Foundation. The most popular tour is a one-and-a-half-hour "Architecture River Cruise" along the north and south

branches of the Chicago River. You see 50 or so buildings, including the Gothic 1925 Tribune Tower, designed by a New York architect who won a contest; Marina City, home of Bob Newhart on *The Bob Newhart Show* (if you remember that far back); Sears Tower; and NBC Tower, constructed in wedding-cake style in homage to the city's old zoning codes mandating that sunlight must reach down to the street. Lecturers generally do a good job of making the cruise enjoyable for visitors with all levels of architectural knowledge.



The boat tours are quite popular, so buy tickets in advance through **Ticketmaster** (☎ 312-902-1500; www.ticketmaster.com), or avoid the service charge and buy your tickets at the ArchiCenter at 224 S. Michigan Ave., or from the boat launch on the southeast corner of Michigan Avenue and Wacker Drive. (Look for the blue awning.)

CAF also offers architecture tours year-round by foot and bus. For first-time visitors, I highly recommend two tours for an excellent introduction to the dramatic architecture of the Loop. **Historic Skyscrapers** (daily at 10 a.m.) covers buildings built between 1880 and 1940, including the Rookery and the Chicago Board of Trade; **Modern Skyscrapers** (daily at 1 p.m.) includes modern masterpieces by Mies van der Rohe and post-modern works by contemporary architects. The two-hour tours cost \$14 each for adults and \$11 each for seniors and students. Call or check the very thorough Web site for details.

*See map p. 174. **Chicago ArchiCenter:** 224 S. Michigan Ave. ☎ 312-922-3432. www.architecture.org. Free admission. Exhibits: Daily 9:30 a.m.–4 p.m. Shop and tour desk: Mon–Sat 9 a.m.–6:30 p.m. CTA: Brown, Green, Purple, or Orange line to Adams, or Red Line to Jackson. **Chicago Architecture Foundation boat tours:** Tour boats depart from the Michigan Avenue Bridge. ☎ 312-922-8687 (for information only). www.architecture.org. Tickets must be purchased in advance or through Ticketmaster (☎ 312-902-1500; www.ticketmaster.com). CTA: Brown, Green, Orange, or Purple line to State/Lake, then walk 1 block north to Wacker and 1 block east to Michigan Avenue Bridge; bus no. 151 to Wacker and Michigan. Tickets: Fri–Sat and holidays, \$27, Mon–Thurs \$25. Boat tours: May 1–Nov 20. Call or check Web site, because times change.*



Chicago Cultural Center Near the Loop

The Cultural Center offers a storehouse of not-too-heavy culture and plenty of fun — for free. Built in 1897 as the city's library, the building exhibits the Beaux Arts style that became popular after the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition on the city's South Side. But it's what's inside that will knock your socks off. Free tours guide visitors up a sweeping staircase of white Italian marble to admire what is, for my money, the most stunning interior in Chicago. You will see rare marble; fine hardwood; stained glass; polished brass; and mosaics of Favrile glass, colored stone, and mother-of-pearl inlaid in white marble. At the top of the grand staircase is a Tiffany dome, believed to be the world's largest. The grand setting hosts an array

of art exhibitions, concerts, films, lectures, and other events, many of them free. A long-standing tradition is the Dame Myra Hess Memorial classical concert every Wednesday in the Preston Bradley Hall. Allow about an hour to visit the Cultural Center.

78 E. Washington St. ☎ 312-744-6630 or 312-346-3278 for weekly events. www.cityofchicago.org/exploringchicago. CTA: Brown, Green, Orange, or Purple line to Randolph, then walk ½ block east; Red Line to Washington/State; or bus no. 3, 4, 20, 56, 145, 146, 147, 151, or 157 to Randolph and Michigan. Admission: Free. Open: Mon–Thurs 10 a.m.–7 p.m., Fri 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed major holidays.

Chicago Fed Visitors Center Loop

The Visitors Center at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago is a quick stop-off if you're touring the Loop. More than just the standard history-of-banking displays, the center has kid-friendly features such as a giant cube that holds a million dollars, and an exhibit that lets you try detecting counterfeit bills. And there's even a section that enables visitors to pretend to wield the power of the Fed for a moment, showing how changes in interest rates affect the economy. Free guided tours are offered weekdays at 1 p.m. Allow 30 minutes for the tour.

See map p. 174. 230 S. LaSalle St. (at Quincy Street). ☎ 312-322-2400. www.chicagofed.org. CTA: Brown Line to Quincy/Wells or bus no. 134, 135, or 156. Admission: Free. Open: Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–4:15 p.m. Closed federal holidays.

Mixing fish, fossils, and outer space: The Museum Campus

The Museum Campus is a 1990s creation that brings together three great Chicago institutions — the Field Museum of Natural History, the John G. Shedd Aquarium, and the Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum. Previously divided by the northbound lanes of Lake Shore Drive, the area was much like the center grounds of the Indy 500 racetrack — without professional drivers. Today, the road has been moved west of Soldier Field, and you can stroll from the Field Museum to the Shedd Aquarium and the Planetarium without fear of being struck by a speeding auto. A new pedestrian underpass makes the campus a 15-minute walk east from the Roosevelt El stops or a longer (but enjoyable) stroll through Grant Park and along the lakefront from the Loop. If you're not up for a walk, bus no. 146 runs from North Michigan Avenue and State Street in the Loop. Parking isn't bad because the museums have access to the lots around Soldier Field, but be aware that no public parking is available during Chicago Bears football games in the fall; Bears fans get first dibs on all surrounding parking spaces. Check out www.museumcampus.org for driving directions and information on parking and public transportation.



Field Museum of Natural History

Museum Campus (near the Loop)

For the fun of it, the Field Museum is hard to beat. Kids love it for its wide-open spaces, giant dinos, and hands-on exhibits. Come see Sue, the largest *T. rex* fossil ever unearthed, but stay to explore gleaming gems, giant stuffed elephants, mummies, and Native American artifacts. Visitors can climb into a life-size Egyptian tomb, step into the sun-drenched desert, and visit an ancient Egyptian marketplace. Take time to explore the African continent, visiting a royal Cameroon palace, witnessing some of the great savanna wildlife, and traveling across the Sahara and back to Nigeria. You can “travel” to America by ship and feel what it may have been like for Africans taken against their will and sold into slavery. The museum also has its own McDonald’s on the lower level. While you’re downstairs, plug a dollar bill into one of the old-fashioned wax-molding machines and watch as a red *T. rex* or green brontosaurus comes to life in front of your eyes. Allow at least half a day.

See map p. 174. Roosevelt Road and Lake Shore Drive. ☎ 312-922-9410. www.fieldmuseum.org. CTA: Bus no. 6, 10, 12, 130, or 146 to museum entrance. Admission: \$12 adults; \$7 seniors, students, and children 3–11; free for teachers, armed-forces personnel in uniform, and children 2 and under; free Mon–Tues mid-Sept–Feb (except last 2 weeks in Dec). Open: Daily 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Jan 1 and Dec 25.

Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio

Suburban Oak Park

World-famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright made his first home and studio in Oak Park, a suburb just west of Chicago. Wright lived and worked here for 20 of his most productive years. During this time, he experimented with and perfected what became known as the Prairie School style of architecture. His home and studio were built in 1889 as a cottage that came to house the 22-year-old architect, his new bride, and a growing family. You can glimpse Wright’s genius on a guided tour (the only way to see the place), as guides show how the house became the architect’s showcase and laboratory. You may not agree with his controversial private life, but you have to admire a man who became the single-most important influence on American architecture. While you’re in Oak Park, you can check out **Unity Temple**, Wright’s masterpiece for the Unitarian Church, and take a walking tour to view the exteriors of homes throughout the neighborhood that were built by Wright. (See Chapter 14 for a complete Oak Park itinerary.) Plan on a full day to visit the home and studio and tour the surrounding neighborhood.

951 Chicago Ave., Oak Park (10 miles west of downtown Chicago). ☎ 708-848-1976. www.wrightplus.org. CTA: Green Line to Harlem, then walk 4 blocks north on Harlem Avenue and 3 blocks east on Chicago Avenue. Admission: \$12 adults, \$10 seniors and children 7–18, free for children under 7. Combined admission for home and studio tour and guided or self-guided historic district tour: \$20 adults, \$16 seniors and children 7–18, free for children under 7. Admission to home and studio is by guided tour only. Tours depart Gingko Tree Bookshop Mon–Fri 11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3 p.m.; Sat–Sun every 20 minutes 11 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Closed Jan 1, last week in Jan, Thanksgiving, and Dec. 25. Facilities for people with disabilities are limited; please call in advance.



More museums, less \$\$\$

If you're planning on visiting lots of Chicago museums, you should invest in a **CityPass**, a prepaid ticket that gets you into the biggest attractions (Art Institute, Field Museum of Natural History, Shedd Aquarium, Adler Planetarium, Museum of Science and Industry, and The Hancock Observatory). The cost is \$50 for adults and \$39 for children, which is about 50 percent cheaper than paying all the attractions' individual admission fees. You can buy a CityPass at any of these six attractions, or purchase one online at www.citypass.net before you arrive in Chicago.



Grant Park Near the Loop

During the summer, festivals reign in Grant Park, the Loop's front lawn overlooking Lake Michigan. **Grant Park Music Festival**, **Blues Fest**, **Jazz Fest**, **Gospel Fest**, and the ever-popular **Taste of Chicago** food free-for-all take place here. (For details on these festivals, see Chapter 3.) But Grant Park also offers quieter pleasures — all of them free.



For picnic supplies, head to **Corner Bakery** (Chapter 10) on the corner of Jackson Boulevard and Michigan Avenue, across from the Art Institute.

This 319-acre swath of greenery between South Michigan Avenue and the lakeshore is not contiguous parkland, but a patchwork of greenery dissected by city streets. The northwest corner of Grant Park (bordered by Michigan Avenue and Randolph Street) is the site of **Millennium Park**, a winning combination of beautiful landscaping, elegant architecture, and public entertainment spaces. (For more on Millennium Park, see the listing later in this chapter.)

Chief among Grant Park's charms is **Buckingham Fountain** — twice as big as the Latona Basin at Versailles, after which it was modeled. Built in 1927 of Georgia pink marble, the baroque fountain delights strollers with a computer-orchestrated symphony of dancing water. After dark from April through October, the fountain spurts columns of water up to 150 feet every hour on the hour, and beginning at 4 p.m., a whirl of colored lights and dramatic music amps up the drama. The fountain shuts down at 11 p.m., and concession areas and bathrooms are available on the plaza.

See map p. 174. From East Lower Randolph Street to East Roosevelt Road, and Michigan Avenue to Lake Michigan. www.chicagoparkdistrict.com. CTA: All El stops in the Loop along State and Wabash; bus no. 3, 4, 6, 146, or 151 along Michigan Avenue, Randolph Street, or Roosevelt Road.



John G. Shedd Aquarium Museum Campus (near the Loop)

The world's largest indoor aquarium is a spectacular sight, especially the **Oceanarium**, housed in a setting that re-creates a Pacific Northwest

coastal environment. The wall of windows revealing Lake Michigan just beyond the Oceanarium's windows creates the illusion of an expanse of sea. Don't miss walking the winding nature trail and watch dolphins, sea otters, and harbor seals. The most popular animals are three female Beluga whales, cute creatures whose humped heads and natural "smiles" make them seem human. Buying the All-Access Pass that includes the Oceanarium is more expensive, but I highly recommend it — it's the only way to see the dolphin show, in which a crew of friendly trainers puts the dolphins through their paces of leaping dives and tail walking.

Upon entering, it's impossible to miss the 90,000-gallon **circular tank** holding a **Caribbean coral reef** in the aquarium's central rotunda. Divers doing the feedings describe animals and their environment via underwater microphones. Watch for a hawksbill sea turtle named Hawkeye who has been here for 20-plus years, and keep an eye out for the very scary moray eel. Observe the **penguin colony** in an exhibit that approximates the Falkland Islands off Argentina. ***Amazon Rising: Seasons of the River*** features an array of piranhas, birds, sloths, insects, snakes, catfish, stingrays, iguanas, and caimans. The newest exhibit is ***Wild Reef — Sharks at Shedd***, a series of 26 interconnected habitats that house a Philippine coral reef patrolled by sharks and other predators (they even swim over your head at certain spots). Allow at least three hours to visit.

See map p. 174. 1200 S. Lake Shore Dr. ☎ 312-939-2438. www.sheddaquarium.org. CTA: Bus no. 6, 10, 12, 130, or 146 to aquarium entrance. Admission: All-Access Pass (to all exhibits) \$23 adults, \$16 seniors and children 3–11, free for children under 3; aquarium and Oceanarium \$18 adults, \$14 seniors and children 3–11; aquarium only \$8 adults, \$6 seniors and children. Free admission to aquarium Mon–Tues, Oct–Feb (except last 2 weeks in Dec) Open: Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–5 p.m. (until 6 p.m. Memorial Day–Labor Day), Sat–Sun and some holidays 9 a.m.–6 p.m. Closed Jan 1 and Dec 25.



The Hancock Observatory Magnificent Mile

A location right on the Magnificent Mile means the John Hancock Center offers an up-close-and-personal view of the city from its observatory on the 94th floor. Okay, so visits to "Big John" are not as popular as the Sears Tower Skydeck, but I think the view is more interesting and the location can't be beat. The view looking north over the Gold Coast and Lincoln Park is fantastic, with the curving lakefront, beaches, and high-rises disappearing in a line toward the suburbs. Looking west, you get an interesting view of the Mag Mile, which twinkles with lights on any evening, especially during the holidays. (The observatory doesn't close until 11 p.m.) On a clear day, you can see about 65 miles and part of three states surrounding this corner of Illinois — Michigan, Indiana, and Wisconsin. Talking telescopes have sound effects and narration in four languages, history walls illustrate the growth of the city, and the Skywalk open-air viewing deck allows visitors to feel the rush of the wind at 1,000 feet through a "screened porch." A high-speed elevator whisks passengers to the observatory in 40 seconds — kids love the ride. Allow one hour.



The **Signature Room** at the 95th floor, a sleek restaurant with adjoining lounge, allows you to take in views with a drink in hand. (Ladies, make sure to visit the restroom — it has the best view in the restaurant.) If the line for the observatory is too long, head here. You'll pay the cost of a drink rather than admission — about the same price.

See map p. 174. John Hancock Center, 875 N. Michigan Ave., 94th floor. ☎ 888-875-8439 or 312-751-3681. www.hancock-observatory.com. CTA: Red Line to Chicago/State, then walk 3 blocks east and 3 blocks north; bus no. 145, 146, 147 or 151 to Michigan Avenue and Delaware Place. Admission: \$11 adults, \$8 seniors, \$6.50 children 5–12, free for children under 5 and military personnel in uniform or with active-duty cards. Open: Daily 9 a.m.–11 p.m.



Lakefront

Walk, run, bike, skate, or just sit and watch the world go by at Chicago's lakefront, the city's number-one free attraction, lined with paths and beaches. The best-known is **Oak Street Beach**, the location of which at the northern tip of the Magnificent Mile creates some interesting sights as sun worshippers wearing flip-flops and carrying coolers make their way up Michigan Avenue. For some seclusion, try **Ohio Street Beach**, an intimate sliver of sand in Olive Park, just north of Navy Pier. With buoys marking a 1-mile course, Ohio Street Beach is also the place for serious open-water swimming (see "Especially for active types," later in this chapter). Beaches are officially open and staffed by lifeguards from Memorial Day to Labor Day until 9:30 p.m. Contact the Chicago Park District (☎ 312-742-7529) for more information on the beaches.

To rent bikes or skates, go to **Bike Chicago** (p. 194) at North Avenue Beach, Millennium Park, or Navy Pier.



The most popular beach in Chicago is **North Avenue Beach**, about 6 blocks north of Oak Street, a volleyball hot spot that features a landmark steamship-shaped beach that's home to an outdoor gym. This is where Lincoln Park singles come to play, check each other out, and fly by on bikes and in-line skates.



Because Lake Shore Drive runs between the lake and the city, access to the lakefront is somewhat limited. Near the Magnificent Mile, you find pedestrian tunnels to the lakefront at the corner of Oak Street and Michigan Avenue, at Chicago Avenue and Lake Shore Drive, and at Grand Avenue and Lake Shore Drive near Navy Pier. On the near North Side, you find access under and over Lake Shore Drive at North Avenue, from Lincoln Park Zoo, and at Fullerton Avenue.

See map p. 174. CTA: To Oak Street Beach, Red Line to Division, then walk east to the lake; to Oak Street and North Avenue beaches, bus no. 151 along Lake Shore Drive; to Ohio Street Beach, bus no. 29, 56, 65, or 66 to Navy Pier.



Lincoln Park and Lincoln Park Zoo

Lincoln Park

Lincoln Park is the city's largest park. Straight and narrow, it begins at North Avenue and follows the shoreline of Lake Michigan for several miles.

Within its 1,200 acres are bathing **beaches** (see the previous listing for the lakefront); the **Chicago Historical Society** (see “Especially for serious museum buffs”); the **Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum** (see “Especially for kids,” later in this chapter); the **Lincoln Park Conservancy** with its gardens; a **driving range**, **golf course**, and **tennis courts** near Diversey Avenue; and miles of walking and running paths.



The park’s free **Lincoln Park Zoo**, 2001 N. Clark St. (☎ 312-742-2000; www.lpzoo.com), is convenient, compact (35 acres), and charming. The nation’s oldest, founded in 1868, the zoo is home to more than 200 species. A favorite exhibit is the **Regenstein African Journey**, a series of linked indoor and outdoor habitats that’s home to elephants, giraffes, rhinos, and other large mammals; glass-enclosed tanks allow visitors to go face-to-face with swimming pygmy hippos and (not for the faint of heart) a rocky ledge filled with Madagascar hissing cockroaches. Your second stop should be the **Regenstein Center for African Apes**, which was rebuilt in 2004. Lincoln Park Zoo has had remarkable success breeding gorillas and chimpanzees, and watching these ape families interact can be mesmerizing (and touching). **One caveat:** I’ve found the building incredibly noisy during weekend visits, so be prepared. Another popular spot is the Sea Lion Pool, in the center of the zoo and home to harbor seals, gray seals, and California sea lions. An underwater viewing area spans 70 feet. Look for seasonal events, such as caroling to the animals in December and concerts in summer, when you can stroll among the great cats with a glass of chardonnay in hand. The zoo grounds are open most days from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. On weekends and holidays between Memorial Day and Labor Day, the hours are from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. In the winter, hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (The zoo buildings and farm are open slightly later and close slightly earlier than the grounds each day.) Parking is \$12 a day in an on-site lot. Allow two to three hours.

When hunger strikes, head to **Cafe Brauer**, 2021 Stockton Dr. near Armitage Avenue in the park (☎ 312-742-2400). Here you find fast food and an ice-cream parlor, plus **paddleboat rentals** at the edge of the South Pond. For more upscale dining, try the **North Pond Café**, 2610 Cannon Dr., south of Diversey Parkway in the park (☎ 773-477-5845), serving American cuisine in a Prairie School-style setting.

See map p. 174. Lincoln Park runs from North Avenue to Ardmore Avenue along the lakefront. CTA: Bus no. 151 runs the length of the park.



Millennium Park

At the north end of Grant Park along Michigan Avenue is the city’s newest urban showpiece, and many of its attractions have already come to symbolize the city. The architectural highlight is the Frank Gehry–designed **Pritzker Music Pavilion**, home of the free summer music concerts by the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra. Another popular attraction is the huge elliptical sculpture by British artist Anish Kapoor, officially named *Cloudgate*, which is his first public work in the United States. But you’ll soon be affectionately calling it the “Bean” like most Chicagoans. I dare you to stand with your toes in the water at the Crown Fountain, surveying

the spectacular cityscape of South Michigan Avenue, and not feel an irrepressible urge to uproot your family and move into a condo in downtown Chicago. The park is a great success and an example of what a modern park can be.

Compare Millennium Park's interactive fountain with the grande dame of Chicago fountains, Buckingham Fountain (just south in Grant Park), which is lovely but untouchable. Even the sculpture is interactive — the "Bean" by Anish Kapoor is essentially a gigantic 3-D mirror. Kids and adults are attracted to its reflective surface and house-of-mirrors qualities. The Crown Fountain is another favorite, with its two 50-foot glass-brick towers, facing each other across a black-granite plaza, with water cascading down their sides. Faces of Chicagoans are projected through the glass blocks and change at regular intervals — and watch out, because water spews from their mouths when you least expect it. The Jay Pritzker Pavilion, with its bandshell, is a sight to behold, and the BP Pedestrian Bridge, also designed by Gehry, curves and winds its way over Columbus Drive, providing changing views of the cityscape as you walk. Gardens of native plants are beginning to flourish, and by the next edition of this book, you'll surely feel as though you're walking through a Midwestern prairie as you stroll the Lurie Garden, with 250 varieties of native perennial plants. All in all, this is a must-see, must-experience park.

You can lunch at the **Park Grill** (☎ 312-521-7275; www.parkgrillchicago.com; open daily 11 a.m.–10:30 p.m.), overlooking the McCormick Tribune Plaza ice-skating rink. Next door to the grill, Park Café offers take-out salads and sandwiches. Parking is easy, in underground lots at the bargain rate of \$12, the best deal in the city.

See map p. 174. Michigan Avenue, from Randolph Drive on the north to Monroe Drive on the south, and west to Columbus Drive. ☎ 312-742-1168. www.millenniumpark.org. CTA: Blue Line to Washington; Red Line to Lake; or Brown, Green, Orange, or Purple line to Randolph. Admission: Free. Open: Daily 6 a.m.–11 p.m.



Free lunchtime entertainment under the Picasso

While you're in the Loop, stop by the Picasso sculpture in Daley Plaza at the Richard J. Daley Center any weekday at noon for a free show. Offerings include music, dance, and other performing arts, and are popular with Loop workers, who often come with their brown-bag lunches. As the days grow colder, performances move indoors to the lobby.

Daley Center is between North Dearborn, North Clark, West Randolph, and West Washington streets. For "Under the Picasso" information, call ☎ 312-346-3278, the Department of Cultural Affairs cultural programming hot line. To get to Daley Plaza, take the Brown, Green, Orange, or Purple line to Clark, and then walk 1 block south on Clark and ½ block east on Randolph. Or take bus no. 22, 24, or 42 to the corner of Randolph and Clark streets.



Museum of Science and Industry Hyde Park

Don't miss Chicago's fabulous granddaddy of all interactive museums. There is no more eerie or thrilling exhibit in Chicago than the **U-505**, the captured World War II U-boat. You can relive its capture during a dramatic (and claustrophobic) sound-and-lights tour. Or, ride a retired **727 United Air Lines jetliner**. Perhaps you'd like to travel deep into a replica of a Southern Illinois **coal mine**? Or concentrate on the story of space exploration at the **Henry Crown Space Center**? Children are entranced by **Colleen Moore's Fairy Castle**, a lavishly decorated miniature palace. Younger children (up to age 10) enjoy the **Idea Factory**, where they can explore scientific principles. A massive model train exhibit called **The Great Train Story** and **All Aboard the Silver Streak**, a refurbished Burlington Pioneer Zephyr train with onboard interactive exhibits, should please most kids. And don't miss **The Farm**, where kids can sit in a John Deere combine, and the **chick hatchery** within the exhibit **Genetics: Decoding Life**. This huge museum (there are 2,000 exhibits!) is so full of wonders that you may not know where to start. One thing is for sure: You can easily spend a day here, especially if you're going to catch a movie at the **OMNIMAX Theater**, for which you may need advance tickets. When hunger strikes, you can head to the museum's impressive "food court," which has tons of (surprisingly!) healthy and delicious options.

57th Street and Lake Shore Drive. ☎ 800-468-6674. www.msichicago.org. CTA: Bus no. 6, 10, 35, 151, or 156 to museum entrance. Open: Mon-Sat 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Sun 11 a.m.-4 p.m. (until 5:30 p.m. daily Memorial Day-Labor Day). Admission: Museum only \$11 adults, \$9 seniors, \$7 children 3-11, free for children under 3, free admission Mon-Tues mid-Sept-Nov and Jan-Feb; combination museum and OMNIMAX Theater \$17 adults, \$15 seniors, \$12 children 3-11, free for children under 3 on an adult's lap.



Navy Pier East of Streeterville

Jutting three-quarters of a mile into Lake Michigan, Navy Pier was built in 1916 as a shipping and recreational facility. Today, with its 50 acres of parks, gardens, shops, restaurants, and attractions, it's Chicago's number-one tourist attraction — and rightfully so: This is the best place for dining outside or strolling along the water and taking in views of the city.

Kids love the **IMAX Theater** (☎ 312-595-5629); the small **ice-skating rink**; and the mammoth **Ferris wheel**, with cars that look like red french-fry boxes (the sponsor is McDonald's). The wonderful **Chicago Children's Museum** (☎ 312-527-1000; www.chicichernsmuseum.org) has areas for preschoolers as well as for older children, and several permanent exhibits that allow kids a maximum of hands-on fun.

The pier also hosts art shows, outdoor sculpture exhibits, and more. Plus, the **Chicago Shakespeare Theater** (Chapter 15) makes its home here, and several boat tours — from speedboats to tall ships — depart from the

pier's south side (see "Seeing Chicago by Guided Tour," later in this chapter). Summer is one long party, with fireworks Wednesday and Saturday evenings.

The pier has nine restaurants and a food court. **Bubba Gump Shrimp Co.** (☎ 312-252-4867) re-creates the down-home atmosphere of the movie *Forrest Gump*. A more elegant alternative is **RIVA** (☎ 312-644-7482), specializing in fresh seafood, steaks, and pasta, and which has a fabulous view of Chicago's skyline.



The pier has its downside, including massive weekend crowds and limited parking. Try to come during the week or on Sunday. (Sat can be a zoo.) To avoid the parking issue, take the free trolley service between Navy Pier and State Street along Grand Avenue and Illinois Street. Trolley hours are Sunday to Thursday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Friday 10 a.m. to midnight, and Saturday 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. Trolleys run about every 20 minutes; look for the NAVY PIER TROLLEY STOP signs along the route.

See map p. 174. 600 E. Grand Ave. (on the lakefront). ☎ 800-595-7437 or 312-595-7437. www.navypier.com. CTA: Bus no. 29, 65, 66, 120, or 121. Admission: Free. Open: Summer Sun–Thurs 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Fri–Sat 10 a.m. to midnight; fall through spring Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Sun 10 a.m.–7 p.m. Parking: Rates start at \$11 for the first hour and go up to \$19 for up to 8 hours; lots fill up quickly.



Oprah Winfrey Show **Randolph Street Market District**

Are you in touch with your spirit? If not, you'd better hightail it over to the Harpo Studios for *Oprah*. With a little persistence, you, too, can be a part of the show. Considered the world's largest cult by detractors, and must-see television by followers, the show is taped Tuesday through Thursday at 8 a.m. and noon. You can get tickets by calling ☎ 312-591-9222 (persistence required!). Call at least four weeks in advance. Even if you don't love Oprah, watching her producers work like a well-oiled machine and seeing Oprah turn on the charm when the cameras roll gives you insight into how television works. The studio is small and intimate, and Oprah answers questions and talks with the audience during commercial breaks. After the show, head over to **Wishbone** (Chapter 10), a Harpo Studios favorite hangout, for Southern-style cooking.

See map p. 174. 1058 W. Washington Blvd. ☎ 312-591-9222 (Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–5 p.m.). www.oprah.com. \$9 cab ride from the Loop. Reservations can be made generally only one month in advance by telephone only. Ticket price: Free. Tapings generally take place Sept–early Dec and Jan–early June Tues–Thurs 8 a.m. and noon.



Sears Tower Skydeck **Loop**

The view from the skydeck of the Sears Tower is a good way to orient yourself to the city and beyond, because it provides a panorama of Chicago and the Midwest. On a clear day, you can see up to 50 miles and four states (including Illinois). Visitors rocket to the top in a high-speed elevator that

goes from ground to the 103rd floor in 70 seconds. Built in 1973 and long the world's tallest building, the Sears Tower had to surrender its title to a building in Malaysia with longer decorative spires. (The Sears Tower has since put up a 22-foot antenna in an attempt to win back the title). Allow one to two hours, depending on the length of the line (arrive in the late afternoon to avoid the worst of the crowds).



I think you get a better view of Chicago at The Hancock Observatory (see listing earlier in this chapter), which overlooks more interesting neighborhoods and architecture and is more centrally located — the Sears Tower sits in the west Loop, which becomes a dead zone on weekends.

See map p. 174. 233 S. Wacker Dr. (enter on Jackson Boulevard). ☎ 312-875-9696. www.the-skydeck.com. CTA: Bus no. 1, 7, 126, 146, 151, or 156 to Jackson Boulevard; Brown, Purple, or Orange line to Quincy; or Red or Blue line to Jackson. Admission: \$12 adults, \$9.95 seniors, \$8.50 children 3–12. Open: Daily May–Sept 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Oct–Apr 10 a.m.–8 p.m. The last ticket is sold 30 minutes before closing.



Wrigley Field Wrigleyville

Nothing makes you feel more optimistic than Opening Day at Wrigley Field. Sure, you may be wearing long underwear and earmuffs, but that doesn't deter Cubs fans, for whom hope springs eternal. Wrigley Field is an almost-perfect ballpark, from its ivy-covered outfield walls to the hand-operated scoreboard. If you attend a day game and buy a hot dog, a beer, and a box of Crackerjacks, the whole afternoon runs about \$50 a person. Because Wrigley is small, just about every seat is decent, but the coveted outfield seats get more sun — significant if a tan is more important to you than the game. Call in advance for tickets; although the Cubs lose plenty of games every year, tickets can be difficult to get.

See map p. 174. 1060 W. Addison St. ☎ 800-843-2827 for tickets. www.cubs.com. CTA: Red Line to Addison or bus no. 22 to Addison. Wrigley Field box office: Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–6 p.m., Sat 9 a.m.–4 p.m., and during games.

Finding More Cool Things to See and Do

Beyond the city's major attractions, Chicago has plenty to offer visitors with special interests — whether you're an architecture buff or you have kids in tow. The following suggestions should give you some ideas.

Especially for kids



Chicago offers loads of activities for pint-size and teenage tourists. For the major attractions with kid appeal — **Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum, Art Institute of Chicago, Field Museum of Natural History, John G. Shedd Aquarium, The Hancock Observatory, Lincoln Park and Lincoln Park Zoo, Museum of Science and Industry, Navy Pier, and Sears Tower** — see "Chicago's Top Sights," earlier in this chapter.

For kid-friendly sightseeing tours see "Seeing Chicago by Guided Tour," later in this chapter. For ideas on restaurants, see Chapter 10, and for itinerary suggestions, see Chapter 13.

Brookfield Zoo

Suburban Brookfield

The Chicago area's largest zoo is spread over 216 acres with 2,700 animals in residence. Observe giraffes, snow leopards, Siberian tigers, green sea turtles, baboons, and more. Start out at **Habitat Africa!**, a multiple-ecosystem exhibit, almost 30 acres in size (about the size of the entire Lincoln Park Zoo). All the animals live in naturalistic environments that allow them to live side-by-side with other inhabitants of their regions. And definitely check out **Tropic World**, where you hang out at treetop level with monkeys, and **Australia House**, where fruit bats flit around your head. **The Living Coast** explores the west coast of Chile and Peru, and includes everything from a tank of plate-size moon jellies to a rocky shore where Humboldt penguins swim and nest as Inca terns and gray gulls fly freely overhead. **The Swamp** re-creates the bioregions of a southern cypress swamp and an Illinois river scene and discusses what people can do to protect wetlands. The dolphins at the **Seven Seas Panorama** put on an amazing show that has been a Brookfield Zoo fixture for years. If you go on a weekend, buy tickets to the dolphin show at least a couple of hours before the one you plan to attend, because they tend to sell out quickly.

The **Hamill Family Play Zoo** is a wonderful stop for kids. They not only get to pet animals but can also build habitats, learn how to plant a garden, and even play animal dress-up. The only catch: the separate admission fee (\$3.50 adults, \$2.50 children). Allow three hours.

First Avenue and 31st Street in Brookfield. ☎ 708-485-0263. www.brookfieldzoo.org. CTA: Bus no. 304 or 311. By car: Take the Stevenson (I-55) and Eisenhower (I-290) expressways 14 miles west of the Loop; parking is \$8. Admission: \$10 adults, \$6 seniors and children 3–11; free admission Tues and Thurs Oct–Mar. Open: Daily Memorial Day–Labor Day 9:30 a.m.–7:30 p.m., fall through spring daily 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

ESPN Zone

Near the Magnificent Mile

This sports-themed entertainment and dining complex is a hit with teenagers. Inside you find the Studio Grill, designed with replicas of studio sets from the network's shows; the Screening Room, a sports pub with a 16-foot screen and TV monitors; radio sets carrying broadcasts of games; and the Sports Arena, a gaming area. You even find a mini basketball court where parents can play with their kids.

See map p. 174. 43 E. Ohio St. ☎ 312-644-3776. CTA: Red Line to Grand or bus no. 22 or 36. Admission: Free, but games cost extra. Open: Mon–Thurs 11:30 a.m. to midnight, Fri 11:30 a.m.–1 a.m., Sat 11 a.m.–1 a.m., Sun 11:30 a.m.–11:30 p.m.



Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum Lincoln Park

This museum (also known as the Nature Museum of the Chicago Academy of Sciences) focuses on human activities and the environment. Exhibits include the **Children's Gallery**, where kids can check out a beaver lodge from the inside or climb around in a model, ground-level squirrel town. The highlight is the **Butterfly Haven**, where 25 Midwestern species, along with butterflies and moths from around the world, carry on their life cycles in a greenhouse environment. **Water Lab**, a model river system, highlights the uses and abuses of a waterway traveling from a rural to an urban environment. In summer, you can stop by the **Butterfly Café** to enjoy a coffee with joggers and other locals.

2430 N. Cannon Dr. (off Fullerton Parkway). ☎ 773-755-5100. www.chias.org. CTA: Bus no. 146 or 151. Admission: \$7 adults, \$5 seniors and students, \$4 children 3–12, free for children under 3; free admission Thurs. Open: Mon–Fri 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Sat–Sun 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.

Six Flags Great America Suburban Gurnee

If your kids have thrill-seeking personalities, head for this major theme/amusement park in the northern suburbs, about a 45-minute drive from Chicago. The park has more than 100 rides and attractions and is a favorite with roller-coaster fans. There are ten roller coasters, including **Déjà Vu**, where riders fly forward and backward over a twisting, looping, inverted steel track, and Superman, where you speed along hanging headfirst. Other don't-miss rides include the **Iron Wolf**, where you do corkscrew turns and 360-degree loops while standing up, and the **American Eagle**, a classic wooden coaster. Teenagers have a ball here, but so do little ones: The Looney Tunes National Park is full of kiddie rides with cartoon themes. Six Flags also has live shows, IMAX movies, and restaurants. If you take the trouble to get here, allow a full day. If you're without a car, you can get there by Metrarail, which offers day trips to Six Flags from May to October, leaving from Ogilvie Transportation Center or Union Station. For more information call ☎ 847-249-INFO (4636); www.metrarail.com/DayTrips/sixflags.html.

I-94 at Route 132 East. ☎ 847-249-4636. www.sixflags.com. Take I-94 or I-294 to Route 132 (Grand Avenue). Admission (including unlimited rides, shows, and attractions): \$43 adults, \$35 seniors and children under 54 inches tall, free for children 3 and under. Parking: \$10. Open: Daily May 10 a.m.–7 p.m., June–Aug 10 a.m.–10 p.m., weekends only in Sept 10 a.m.–7 p.m.

Especially for architecture lovers

Chicago has so many great buildings — by such notable architects as Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Sullivan, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe — that architecture buffs will be in heaven.



Also see the listings for the **Chicago Architecture Foundation Boat Tours**, **Chicago Cultural Center**, and **Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio** earlier in this chapter. You may also want to visit the **Sears Tower** or **The Hancock Observatory** (earlier in this chapter) or the **Harold Washington Library Center** (later in this chapter). See “*Seeing Chicago by Guided Tour*,” later in this chapter, for information on architecture tours.

Auditorium Building and Theatre Loop

A truly grand theater with landmark status, the Auditorium is worth a visit to experience late-19th-century Chicago opulence. Designed and built in 1889 by Louis Sullivan and Dankmar Adler, the Auditorium was a wonder of the world: the heaviest (110,000 tons) and most massive modern edifice on earth, the most fireproof building constructed, and the tallest in Chicago. It was also the first large-scale building to be electrically lighted, and its theater was the first in the country to install air-conditioning. Today, the 4,000-seat auditorium is a venue for touring Broadway shows, and the office building is the home of Roosevelt University. Tours are available on Mondays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. but must be arranged in advance; call ahead to book your place.

See map p. 174. 50 E. Congress Pkwy. (at Michigan Avenue). ☎ 312-922-2110. www.auditoriumtheatre.org. CTA: Brown, Green, Orange, or Purple line to Library/Van Buren; Red Line to Jackson; or bus no. 145, 147, or 151. Call ☎ 312-431-2389 to arrange a 1-hour tour. Tour tickets: \$6 adults, \$3 seniors and students.

Charnley-Persky House Gold Coast

Architecture junkies may want to visit this modest Gold Coast mansion, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1891 while he was working in the office of Louis Sullivan. Elements of the design can be traced to both architects — Sullivan’s famous organic ornamentation decorates the fireplaces while the layout around the home’s hearth is pure Wright. A stop here makes a nice highlight to a walking tour of the surrounding neighborhood. Visits to the house, now the home of the Society of Architectural Historians, are by guided tour only; enter the house by the south gate. Tours last approximately 45 minutes.

See map p. 174. 1365 N. Astor St. ☎ 312-915-0105. www.charnleyhouse.org. CTA: Bus no. 11, 22, 36, or 151 to Inner Lakeshore Drive and Goethe Street, then walk 2 blocks west. Tours: \$5 adults, \$3.50 seniors and students, free for children; free for all on Wed. Tour times: Wed noon, Sat 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. Reservations not accepted, but call ahead for information.

Glessner House South of the Loop

Prairie Avenue, south of the Loop, was the city’s first “Gold Coast,” and its most famous address is Glessner House, a must-see for anyone interested

in architectural history. The only surviving Chicago building designed by Boston architect Henry Hobson Richardson, the house represented a dramatic shift from Victorian architecture upon its completion in 1886. The granite exterior gives the home a forbidding air, but step inside and you discover a welcoming, cozy retreat filled with Arts and Crafts furnishings. Visits to the house are by guided tour only, and are first-come, first-served, unless you have a group of ten or more. They can be combined with tours of the nearby **Clarke House Museum**, a Greek Revival home that's the oldest surviving house in the city.

1800 S. Prairie Ave. ☎ 312-326-1480. www.glessnerhouse.org. CTA: Bus no. 1, 3, or 4 from Michigan Avenue at Jackson Boulevard; get off at 18th Street. Tickets: \$10 adults, \$9 seniors and students, \$5 children 5–12. Combination tours of the Glessner House and Clarke House Museum, \$15 for adults, \$12 for students and seniors, and \$8 for children. Tours: Wed–Sun 1, 2, and 3 p.m. Tours of the Clarke House take place at noon, 1 p.m., and 2 p.m. Closed major holidays.

Water Tower **Magnificent Mile**

One of Chicago's best-known landmarks dominates the Magnificent Mile like a gleaming fairy-tale castle. However, its original purpose is decidedly un-fairy-tale-like. The tower was designed to conceal an ugly, 138-foot-high standpipe used in connection with pumping water from Lake Michigan. Many thought the structure itself even more unsightly — Oscar Wilde described it as “a castellated monstrosity with pepper boxes stuck all over it.” But Chicagoans have come to be proud of their talisman, one of the few buildings to survive the Great Fire of 1871. (Its companion pumping station, across the street, was another.) Today, the tower houses City Gallery, an art gallery, and the tower has been spruced up and is surrounded by lawns and park benches. Lights illuminate the tower at night, and street musicians often play in the surrounding park.

See map p. 174. 800 N. Michigan Ave. ☎ 312-440-3165. CTA: Red Line to Chicago/State or bus no. 125, 145, 146, 147, or 151 to Michigan and Chicago avenues. Open: Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–6:30 p.m., Sun noon to 5 p.m.

Wicker Park

If you hit just one outlying neighborhood, Wicker Park, with its Victorian homes and 19th-century buildings first built by Polish immigrants, is the place to go. Not long ago, this was a tough neighborhood whose “mean streets” served as a model for author Nelson Algren in novels such as *The Man With the Golden Arm*. Wicker Park is now being gentrified — its many large homes are being remodeled, and restaurants and boutiques are opening. **Chicago Neighborhood Tours** (☎ 312-742-1190; www.chgocitytours.com) offers an excursion that explores Wicker Park. Sights include art galleries, the distinctive **Flatiron Building**, 1569–79 N. Milwaukee Ave. at North Avenue, an office building designed in 1929 by Holabird & Root that now houses galleries and artist studios. The tour also passes **Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Cathedral**, 1121 N. Leavitt St., designed in 1899 by Louis Sullivan and constructed with a donation from Czar Nicholas II.

Taking love to new heights

Navy Pier's 148-foot-high Ferris wheel, which opened in 1995, quickly became a Chicago landmark. The ride was modeled after the first Ferris wheel, built for Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Only weeks after the new Ferris wheel opened, a man and woman were married on it. You don't have to get married to enjoy the ride: A seven-and-a-half-minute ride costs \$5 (bride or groom not included), and the views are spectacular.

Strong evidence remains of Wicker Park's Polish past and present. Coexisting with coffee bars and galleries are the shops, eateries, and churches that serve the Polish community. Many Poles still live in Wicker Park — sometimes called Chicago's "Ethnic Gold Coast." The **Polish Museum of America**, 984 N. Milwaukee Ave. (☎ 773-384-3352), features an exhibit about Ignacy Jan Paderewsky, a Polish Renaissance Man who was a pianist, composer, and prime minister of Poland.

See map p. 174. Bordered by John F. Kennedy Expressway and Western, Chicago, and Fullerton avenues. CTA: Blue Line to Damen or Division or bus no. 56, 70, or 72 along Milwaukee Avenue.

Especially for romantics

Don't be fooled by the sports-town image: Chicago can be just as romantic as the next city. When the stars rise on a warm summer evening, few cities can match its seductive lake breezes and city lights.

You can always go to a high-end restaurant for a romantic setting, but why not try something more creative? Here are some of my favorites:

- ✓ On a starry night, head to **Navy Pier** (p. 186), where you can take a spin on the Ferris wheel or just stroll along the water and gaze at the city's lights.
- ✓ Pack up your picnic supplies and candelabra for a classy night under the stars at the **Ravinia Festival** (Chapter 15) in Highland Park.
- ✓ You can enjoy the moon, music, and munchies closer to downtown during free concerts in Millennium Park's Pritzker Bandshell by the **Grant Park Symphony and Chorus** (Chapter 15).
- ✓ What could be more romantic than spending the day on a sailboat? You can rent a boat from the **Chicago Sailing Club** in Belmont Harbor (see the next section for details).
- ✓ The McKinlock Court Garden Restaurant (☎ 312-443-3600), tucked away in the center of the **Art Institute of Chicago** (see listing in this chapter), is the spot for free jazz — as well as good quiche, wine, cheesecake, and cappuccino. The outdoor cafe surrounds the



soothing Triton fountain. On Tuesday evenings during warm-weather months, jazz aficionados sit outside among the flowers and trees and listen to live music. Museum admission is free on Tuesdays; the restaurant has an \$8-per-person minimum.



Especially for active types

From biking to climbing to skating, Chicago presents loads of opportunities for indoor and outdoor adventures. If you're traveling with a teenager, one of these activities may be just the thing to combat teen boredom — no doubt the result of too many hours spent touring museums with the family.

✓ **Biking:** Chicago boasts 18 miles of paved lakefront paths. **Bike Chicago** rents bicycles daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. from May through October at Navy Pier (**312-595-9600**) and North Avenue Beach (**773-327-2706**), and year-round at Millennium Park (**888-245-3929**). It stocks everything from mountain and touring bikes to kids' bikes, strollers, and quadcycles (four-wheeled vehicles with a steering wheel and canopy). Rates start at \$8.75 an hour, or \$34 a day, with helmets, pads, and locks included. If you'd like to cycle your way past some Chicago landmarks, guided tours are also available.

Both the **Chicago Park District** (**312-742-7529**) and the **Chicagoland Bicycle Federation** (**312-427-3325**; www.chibikefed.org) offer free maps that detail biking routes. The latter, which is the preeminent organization for cyclists in Chicago, sells a much larger map for \$6.95 that details extensive routes within a seven-county area.

✓ **Climbing:** Waiting to challenge climbers at the **Lakeshore Athletic Club**, 211 N. Stetson, 1 block east of North Michigan Avenue at Lake Street (**312-616-9000**), is "Mount Chicago," billed as the "world's highest indoor climbing wall." Rising 110 feet, the man-made wall offers a climbing adventure even to those who lack previous experience. Climbers must take an orientation and safety class and wear a protective body harness. The cost is \$35 for first-time climbers; return visitors pay \$20.

✓ **Fishing:** Want to do battle with a Coho salmon, or tie into a tackle-testing, arm-aching, 20-plus-pound Chinook? Salmon fishing has been big on Lake Michigan since Pacific species were introduced in the 1970s. The **Chicago Sportfishing Association** (**312-922-1100**) can help you find a charter in Burnham Harbor and Diversey Harbor, most of which cost about \$395 for five hours.

✓ **Golfing:** To warm up your swing in the spring, head to **The Green at Grant Park** (**312-642-7888**; www.thegreenonline.com), an 18-hole putting course on Monroe Street between Columbus Avenue and Lake Shore Drive, just east of Millennium Park. It's not



exactly tournament-level play, but it's more challenging than miniature golf, and the setting can't be beat. The course is open daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., and putters and golf balls are provided. Rates are \$9 per round for adults, \$6 for children under 13. Another option is the **Diversey Driving Range**, 141 W. Diversey Pkwy. (☎ 312-742-7929), in Lincoln Park just north of Diversey Harbor. This two-level range attracts all levels, and the price is certainly right — \$11 for a bucket of 100 balls. The Chicago Park District runs six golf courses in the city; one of the most popular is the nine-hole **Sydney Marovitz Course**, 3600 N. Lake Shore Dr., at Waveland Avenue; many Chicagoans refer to it simply as Waveland. Thanks to its picturesque lakefront location, it's always full on the weekends, so make a reservation well in advance. This course and other city-run courses are open mid-April through November. For information on greens fees, locations, and hours, contact the Chicago Park District golf office (☎ 312-245-0909; www.cpdgolf.com).

- ✓ **Ice-skating:** Whether you're a graceful glider or merely a stumbler, you can ice-skate (weather permitting) in the heart of Chicago's Loop at **McCormick-Tribune Ice Rink**, 55 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-742-5222). Located in Millennium Park on the north end of Grant Park, the 16,000-square-foot rink is open from November through March. Admission is free, and skate rentals cost \$5. There's also a relatively small rink at Navy Pier, 600 E. Grand Ave. (☎ 312-595-7437).
- ✓ **Sailing:** The **Chicago Sailing Club** in Belmont Harbor (☎ 773-871-7245; www.chicagosailingclub.com) rents J-22 and J-30 boats from 9 a.m. to sunset, weather permitting, May through October. A J-22 holds four adults, and a J-30 accommodates six. Rates range from \$35 to \$90 an hour or from \$305 to \$520 a day, depending on boat size. The services of a skipper are extra; if you choose not to hire a skipper, you must prove your sailing skills (a small evaluation fee is charged). If you'd rather sit back and relax, you can charter a boat. Reservations are essential.
- ✓ **Swimming:** The lakefront is open for swimming until 9:30 p.m. from Memorial Day to Labor Day in areas watched over by lifeguards (no swimming off the rocks, please). A good place to swim is Ohio Street Beach, located near Navy Pier. The Chicago Triathlon Club marks a course here each summer with a buoy at both the $\frac{1}{4}$ - and $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile marks. This popular swimming route follows the shoreline in a straight line and is fairly shallow. For more information, contact the Chicago Park District (☎ 312-742-7529; www.chicagoparkdistrict.com).
- ✓ **Walking or running:** The paved lakefront path is perfect for walking or running. See the "Walking in Chicago" sidebar in this chapter for my recommended route.



Walking in Chicago

Chicago is a great city for stretching your legs. If you stay downtown, take a stroll along **Michigan Avenue** from Oak Street to the Chicago River. Although the walk can be enjoyable at any hour, I recommend the morning, before the crowds descend.

If the day is pleasant and you have a bit more energy, head to the **Lakefront path**, a popular destination for locals. You can access the lakefront at the intersection of Oak Street and Michigan Avenue. (If it's daytime and busy in the area, use the pedestrian tunnel. Do not use the tunnel at night or very early in the morning.) After you're on the lakefront path at Oak Street Beach, head south. You'll go around a bend and see two stunning glass apartment buildings designed by Mies van der Rohe to your right. Keep heading south. You may see swimmers (in wet suits during much of the year) swimming alongside you in the water. When you reach the black Lakefront Tower (the only high-rise to the east of Lake Shore Drive), head east to **Navy Pier**. Walk or run along the south side of the pier all the way to the end and back. You can return to Michigan Avenue along the same route or use the pedestrian underpass beneath Lake Shore Drive at Chicago Avenue. (Again, don't use the underpass at night or very early in the morning.) After you emerge from the tunnel, walk due west to Michigan Avenue. Navy Pier is $\frac{1}{2}$ mile in length. The run (or walk) from Oak Street adds just over 2 miles.

Especially for sports fans

Chicago's pro sports teams have their share of ups and downs, but fans are insanely loyal — witness the **Chicago Cubs**, who haven't played in a World Series since 1945 but sell out many games. Until that wonderful 2005 World Series win, the **White Sox** had been excluded from baseball's fall classic since 1959. Not since the glory days of 1961 have the **Blackhawks** hoisted hockey's Stanley Cup. The **Bears** won their one and only Super Bowl after the 1985–1986 season — but things are looking up; though they didn't win it, Da Bears won the 2006 NFC Championship and went to the Super Bowl (where they lost to the Indianapolis Colts). The **Bulls** were the exception. During the Jordan years, they took six NBA championships. With Michael gone, the Bulls lagged at the bottom of the league, and now as a young team, they are becoming more exciting to watch. And new to the pro-sports scene in Chicago are the WNBA's **Chicago Sky**, an expansion team that brings the best of women's pro hoops to town in their summer season.

Tickets are generally available for most teams, although Bears tickets can be tough to get, and tickets for weekend and night Cubs games.

What follows is a guide to Chicago's professional sports teams:

- ✓ **Chicago Bears: Soldier Field**, Lake Shore Drive and 16th Street (www.chicagobears.com), is home of the Chicago Bears. The classic colonnade was retained in a recent renovation, but football fans

will recognize little else. A giant addition looks like a spaceship was crammed awkwardly on top of the venerable old stadium. But the “Monsters of the Midway” will continue to battle wind, snow, and fog, in addition to their opponents — the revamped stadium still doesn’t have a dome. For Bears tickets, which cost from \$45 to \$300, call **847-295-6600**. Bus no. 146 travels to the stadium.

- ✓ **Chicago Blackhawks:** The Chicago Blackhawks (www.chicagoblackhawks.com) have a devoted, passionate following of fans who work themselves into a frenzy with the first note of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” The ‘Hawks play at the **United Center**, 1901 W. Madison St., west of the Loop, which they share with the Chicago Bulls. For hockey tickets (\$15–\$100), call Ticketmaster at **312-559-1212**.
- ✓ **Chicago Bulls:** The Bulls play at the **United Center**, 1901 W. Madison St., a facility that they share with the Blackhawks. The life-size bronze statue of Michael Jordan at the stadium entrance pretty much sums up the recent success of pro sports in Chicago. For Bulls tickets (\$10–\$85), go to the Web site www.nba.com/bulls or call the United Center (**312-455-4500**; www.chicagosports.com). Bus no. 20 travels from the Loop to the United Center.
- ✓ **Chicago Cubs:** See listing for **Wrigley Field** earlier this chapter.
- ✓ **Chicago Sky:** Chicago’s WNBA team (www.wnba.com/sky) made its debut in 2006, at 6,500-seat Pavilion on the University of Chicago at Illinois campus (known to locals as the **UIC Pavilion**), at 525 S. Racine. The season starts in May, and there are 17 home games, usually starting at 7 p.m. Don’t miss the energetic cheering by the Sky Dance Crew, an all-youth dance squad that gets the crowd moving. The Sky is one of seven teams in the WNBA’s Eastern Conference, and tickets begin at a reasonable \$13, and range up to \$225 for club seating. The 2007 season is the start of the league’s 11th year. For tickets, call **877-329-9622**.
- ✓ **Chicago White Sox:** This South Side baseball club has a reputation for attracting “blue-collar” fans (compared to the Cubs’ “white-collar” supporters). The toughest ticket in town is the Sox-Cubs match-up. The White Sox (**312-674-1000**; www.whitesox.mlb.com) play in **U.S. Cellular Field** (formerly called Comiskey Park), 333 W. 35th St. For Sox tickets (\$12–\$45), call Ticketmaster at **866-769-4263** or visit the park’s box office. To get to the ballpark by the El, take the Red Line to Sox/35th Street.

Especially for serious museum buffs

After you hit the major Chicago institutions — the **Art Institute of Chicago**, the **Museum of Science and Industry**, and the offerings of the **Museum Campus** (see “Chicago’s Top Sights,” earlier in this chapter for details on these) — museum fans still have more options.



Chicago History Museum

Lincoln Park

At the southwestern tip of Lincoln Park is one of the city's oldest cultural institutions (founded in 1856), but it has reinvented itself for the 21st century. Completely gutted and rebuilt in 2006, the new museum immerses visitors in interactive experiences and surrounds them with priceless artifacts. Galleries include a re-creation of an 1890s El station (complete with the city's first elevated train); an exhibit on "Chicago in Crisis" (covering everything from the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 to the 1968 Democratic National Convention riots); and a section on Illinois's most famous native son, Abraham Lincoln (including his presidential carriage). Though you'll find the computer stations and multimedia presentations that are the hallmark of modern museums, it's not all high-tech; one of my favorite exhibits is made up of decidedly low-tech dioramas of historical scenes, where you can trace the city's progression from a few cabins to the grand World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Another must-see is the Costume and Textile Gallery, which showcases pieces from the museum's collection of historical clothing, including Michael Jordan's basketball uniform, dresses made by 19th-century immigrants, and gowns by French designer Christian Dior. In a move to attract more families, there's also an interactive gallery just for kids.

The History Museum presents a wide range of lectures, seminars, and tours, including walking tours of the surrounding neighborhood; check the museum's Web site for details, because the schedules change frequently.

See map p. 174. 1601 N. Clark St. (at North Avenue). ☎ 312-642-4600. www.chicagohistory.org. CTA: Bus no. 11, 22, 36, 72, 151, or 156. Admission: \$5 adults, \$3 seniors and students, \$1 children 6–12, free for children under 6; free admission Mon. Open: Mon–Sat 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Sun noon to 5 p.m.; research center Tues–Sat 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

DuSable Museum of African-American History

South Side

The pride and the pain of African-Americans is chronicled in the museum named for Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, born of a French father and a black mother. The affluent, well-educated du Sable became Chicago's first permanent settler when he established a trading post in 1779. Exhibits portray the degradation and cruelty of slavery and the hope of the civil rights movement. Offering a mix of art and history, the museum displays works by African-American artists and celebrates African-Americans in the armed forces. It also documents lynchings, Ku Klux Klan activities, and demeaning products.

See map p. 174. Washington Park, 740 E. 56th Place. ☎ 773-947-0600. www.dusablemuseum.org. CTA: Metra electric train to 57th Street and Lake Park Avenue, then a short cab ride. Admission: \$3 adults, \$2 seniors and students, \$1 children 6–12, free for children under 6; free admission Sun. Open: Mon–Sat 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun noon to 5 p.m. Closed Jan 1, Thanksgiving, and Dec 25.



Museum of Contemporary Art Magnificent Mile

Billed as the nation's largest contemporary-art museum, the MCA is set between the lake and the Water Tower on a piece of prime real estate, although the building feels a bit inaccessible, with a daunting set of stairs leading to the entrance. The interior, however, is light and vibrant. The museum highlights works dating back to 1945, including work by Alexander Calder, Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd, and Bruce Nauman — plus Andy Warhol and Jeff Koons. You may want to take the free daily tour or rent an audio tour for insights into the often-challenging exhibits. In addition to a range of activities and educational programming, including films, performances, and a lecture series in a 300-seat theater, the museum features **Puck's at the MCA**, a cafe operated by Wolfgang Puck of Spago restaurant fame, with seating that overlooks a 1-acre terraced sculpture garden. The store, **Culturecounter**, with one-of-a-kind gift items, is worth a stop. The museum's First Fridays program, featuring after-hours performances, live music, and food and drink, takes place on (yes!) the first Friday of every month. Allow one to two hours.

See map p. 174. 220 E. Chicago Ave., just east of Michigan Avenue. ☎ 312-280-2660. www.mcachicago.org. CTA: Red Line to Chicago/State or bus no. 3, 10, 11, 66, 125, 145, 146, or 152. Admission: \$10 adults, \$6 seniors and students, free for children 12 and under; free admission Tues. Open: Tues 10 a.m.–8 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–5 p.m.



Oriental Institute Museum Hyde Park

Don't be misled by the name, which predates the term *Middle East*. At this location at the midpoint of the University of Chicago campus, you'll find mummies, Persian kings' gold jewelry, a fragment of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Tutankhamen's tomb. This user-friendly, free museum contains one of the world's largest collections of Near Eastern art, including a massive statue of the boy-king, Tutankhamen. The museum is divided into the Egyptian Gallery, Mesopotamian Gallery, and Persian Gallery. So if you're interested in Ancient Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and other Middle Eastern countries, come here to discover amazing artifacts — and don't miss the 40-ton Assyrian winged bull.

1155 E. 58th St. at University Avenue. ☎ 773-702-9514. www-oi.uchicago.edu. CTA: Bus no. 6 or Metra electric train to 57th Street and Lake Park Avenue. Admission: Free; suggested donation \$5 adults, \$2 children. Open: Tues–Sat 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed 10 a.m.–8:30 p.m., Sun noon to 4 p.m.

Especially for book lovers

Bibliophiles find plenty to keep them entertained in Chicago. Book collectors and readers alike may want to schedule their visit around the **Printers Row Book Fair**, which takes place in June (see Chapter 3).

Chicago's colorful politics

Read the newspapers or listen to the news, and you get a glimpse into Chicago's ward politics and political machine (*vote early and often* was a phrase coined in the Windy City), as well as the not-so-complimentary nicknames that Chicago gives its politicians. Corrupt Alderman "Bathhouse" John Coughlin earned his nickname because he formerly labored in a public bathhouse. Snippy Mayor Jane Byrne was known as "Attila the Hen" and "Crazy Jane." Deal-making Alderman Edward Vrdolyak was known as "Fast Eddie." Not-so-slick-tongued Mayor Eugene Sawyer was dubbed "Mayor Mumbles." Mayor Anton Cermak was labeled "Pushcart Tony" because of his former job as a teamster.



Chicago Public Library/Harold Washington Library Center Loop

Chicago's first African-American mayor was a charismatic leader, and this handsome library is a fitting tribute. A permanent exhibition chronicles the life of the mayor, who died in 1987. The political memorabilia includes a button collection; one reads "Honkies for Harold," symbolizing his universal appeal. Artworks by African-American artists fill the ten-story interior. The ninth floor contains the sun-dappled, 52-foot glass-domed winter garden, a good spot for study and contemplation, and the stylish **Beyond Words Café**. A children's library offers puppet shows and other activities. On the ground floor, **Second Hand Prose** sells (for pennies) books retired from circulation.



The library offers free one-hour guided tours of its art and architecture. Tours depart daily at 2 p.m.

See map p. 174. 400 S. State St. ☎ 312-747-4300. www.chipublib.org. CTA: Purple, Brown, or Orange line, or bus no. 2, 6, 10, 11, 29, 36, 44, 62, 99, 146, or 164 to State and Van Buren. Admission: Free. Open: Mon–Thurs 9 a.m.–7 p.m., Fri–Sat 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun 1–5 p.m.

Newberry Library Near the Magnificent Mile

This five-story granite building houses a non-circulating research library with rare books and manuscripts (including Shakespeare's First Folio and Jefferson's copy of *The Federalist Papers*). The library is a major destination for genealogists — the genealogy holdings are available to the public for free if you're over age 16 and have a photo ID. Exhibitions display many of the library's books and maps. Programs include concerts, lectures, children's story hours, and a holiday bazaar in early December.



Free one-hour tours are available on Thursday at 3 p.m. and on Saturday at 10:30 a.m.

See map p. 174. 60 W. Walton St. at Dearborn Parkway. ☎ **312-943-9090** or 312-255-3700 for programs. www.newberry.org. CTA: Red Line to Chicago/State or bus no. 22, 36, 125, 145, 146, or 151 to Chestnut and Dearborn streets. Admission: Free. Open: Reading room Tues–Thurs 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Fri 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Especially for movie lovers

Tired of sightseeing? Is the weather too hot or rainy to be outside? Seek shelter in the comforts of a movie theater. For locations and movie listings for Chicago's many multiplexes, pick up a copy of the *Chicago Tribune* or *Chicago Sun-Times*.

If you're in the mood for something different (no doubt you can go to a multiplex in your hometown), visit one of these movie houses that cater to cinema buffs with truly original programming:

- ✓ **Facets Multi-Media**, 1517 W. Fullerton Ave. (☎ **773-281-9075**; www.facets.org; CTA: Red or Brown line to Fullerton), is for the die-hard cinematic thrill-seeker. This nonprofit center screens independent films and videos from around the world. Facets also hosts the Children's Film Festival (Oct–Nov) and the Chicago Latino Film Festival (Apr–May).
- ✓ **The Gene Siskel Film Center**, 164 N. State St. (☎ **312-846-2600**; www.siskelfilmcenter.org; CTA: Red Line to Washington or Brown Line to Randolph), named after the well-known *Chicago Tribune* film critic who died in 1999, is part of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. The center hosts an eclectic selection of film series in two theaters, including lectures and discussions with filmmakers. The Film Center often shows foreign films that are not released commercially in the United States.
- ✓ The **Music Box Theatre** on the far North Side is a classic movie house with a big screen and a house organist (see Chapter 16 for details).



If you're a fan of the oldies, you have two interesting options, both free:

- ✓ **Chicago Cultural Center**, 78 E. Washington St., near the Loop (☎ **312-744-6630**), screens classics such as *Casablanca* on Tuesday evenings.
- ✓ The **Oriental Institute Museum** (☎ **773-702-9507**; see listing earlier in this chapter) in Hyde Park screens such flicks as *Cleopatra*, the 1934 Cecil B. DeMille epic starring Claudette Colbert, on Sundays.



For inexpensive seats to Hollywood's more-recent offerings, check out one of these second-run movie theaters:

- ✓ **Davis Theaters**, 4614 N. Lincoln Ave. (☎ 773-784-0893; CTA: Brown Line to Western)
- ✓ **Village North**, 6746 N. Sheridan Rd. (☎ 773-764-9100; CTA: Bus no. 147 or 151 to the door)
- ✓ **Village South**, 1548 N. Clark St. (☎ 312-642-2403; CTA: Bus no. 135 or 136 to LaSalle and North, then walk 1 block east)

Seeing Chicago by Guided Tour

Although you already have a friend to show you around Chicago (this book!), I won't be offended if you want an in-person guided tour. A good guide can escort you around the city and its neighborhoods, pointing out the sights and giving you special insights.

Just the basics: Orientation tours

Take a tour as soon as you arrive. You can take a basic sightseeing tour on a motor coach, van, double-decker bus, open trolley, or boat. Even if you did your homework and have read this book cover to cover, there's nothing like seeing the city firsthand. Suddenly, the geography you tried to fix in your mind makes sense. Attractions and sights you read about come to life. Instead of words on the page in a book in your hand, you're seeing the place with your own eyes.



One popular spot for picking up a land or water tour is at the Michigan Avenue Bridge (over the Chicago River at East Wacker Drive). Other land tours take off from the intersection of Pearson Street and Michigan Avenue (near the Water Tower).



Insider tours — for free!

Want to see the city from a native's point of view? **Chicago Greeter**, a new program run by the Chicago Office of Tourism, matches tourists with local Chicagoans who serve as volunteer guides. Visitors can request a specific neighborhood or theme (everything from Polish heritage sites to Chicago movie locations), and a greeter gives a free, two- to four-hour tour. Greeters won't escort groups of more than six people, but kids of all ages are welcome (bringing newborns on the tours, however, is discouraged). When you call, be sure to specify that you'll be using a stroller, so your guide can plan accordingly for accessing public transportation. Popular family tours include Lincoln Park Zoo and the Shedd Aquarium. Specific requests for tours should be made at least a week in advance, but "InstaGreeters" are also available on a first-come, first-served basis at the Chicago Cultural Center, 77 E. Randolph St., Friday through Sunday. For details, call ☎ 312-744-8000 or visit www.chicagogreeter.com.



Do-it-yourself sightseeing

A cheap way to tour the city is by hopping aboard one of Chicago's El trains or buses. You can take your own tour for the cost of subway or bus fare — \$1.75, plus 25¢ for a transfer (good for a return trip if you use it within two hours). Here are some of the city's best sightseeing routes (for information on public transportation, see Chapter 8):

- ✓ **Brown Line** (trip duration 20 minutes; daily): Ride from the Loop to Belmont Station. You get a bird's-eye view of downtown, gentrified loft districts, and a number of historic neighborhoods. Start at the big El station at Clark and Lake streets and get on the northbound train.
- ✓ **No. 151 Sheridan bus** (trip duration 30 minutes; daily): Pick up the 151 downtown on Michigan Avenue (the bus stops every 2 blocks on the avenue) and ride it north to Belmont. You cover Lake Shore Drive and Lincoln Park. If you take the bus south, you travel State Street and wind up at Union Station.
- ✓ **No. 146 Marine-Michigan bus** (trip duration 20 minutes; daily): This express bus allows you to take in North Michigan Avenue, State Street, and the Museum Campus. Pick up the bus on Sheridan and Diversey going south. (You can also pick up the 146 along Michigan Avenue, although it has fewer stops than the 151.) You see the Harold Washington Library, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Chicago Cultural Center, and the landmark Water Tower.
- ✓ **No. 10 Museum of Science and Industry bus** (trip duration 35 minutes; weekends year-round, daily in summer and winter holiday season): From North Michigan Avenue at the Water Tower (the stop is in front of Borders on Michigan Avenue across from Water Tower Place), ride south to the Museum Campus. You see Grant Park, the Art Institute of Chicago, the University of Chicago, and Chinatown.



One word of caution about guided tours: Don't regard everything you hear as fact. Narrators are known to take liberties with the truth and are apt to spread a rumor or two. They also read from a script that is usually memorized — the 10,000th repetition may be dull. Treat these tours as what they are: basic sightseeing and orientation — here's the Water Tower, there's the Sears Tower, here's Lake Michigan.

Any of the following can give you a good overview of the city:

- ✓ **Chicago Trolley Company (☎ 773-648-5000)**: Breezy trolleys provide one-and-a-half-hour narrated tours of the major sites and also offer all-day on-and-off privileges. In inclement weather, vehicles are enclosed and heated. Trolleys run every 20 minutes or so, depending on the seasonal demand. The fare is \$20 for adults, \$17 for seniors, and \$10 for children 3 to 11. Tours run daily 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. (until 6:30 p.m. Apr-Oct).

- ✓ **Gray Line Tours** (☎ 312-251-3107; www.grayline.com): You'll find the granddaddy of tour companies in every major city, including Chicago. Gray Line offers a range of bus excursions, including four-hour Inside Chicago tour packages, which cost \$28 for adults and \$14 for children 5 to 12.

Water, water everywhere: Boat tours

A variety of excursion boats travel the Lake Michigan shoreline and three branches of the Chicago River. The boats offer sightseeing by day, and dining and dancing at night. Primary boarding spots are along the Chicago River between North Michigan and Wabash avenues; Ogden Slip, at the east end of East Illinois Street next to River East Plaza; and Navy Pier.



You may be surprised at this advice from an off-the-beaten-path aficionado, but here goes: Get on that boat! Chicagoans know the best way to get the lay of the land is by water. You save oodles of time. Instead of wandering around (like a tourist, I must add), you can maneuver with something resembling confidence and get a taste of Chicago's beautiful lakefront from a unique perspective.

For most sightseeing boats, the season runs from early May through late October. Tours typically last 90 minutes, but shorter and longer trips are available. Most operate on a set schedule, and reservations are advisable during prime times, such as weekends and holidays in the middle of summer. At other times, walking on is possible.

The following tour companies offer great ways to see the city from the water (also see **Chicago Architecture Foundation Boat Tours** earlier in this chapter):

- ✓ **Chicago from the Lake** (☎ 312-527-1977; www.chicagoline.com) runs two types of cruises: a 90-minute tour of architecture along the Chicago River, and historical excursions that travel on the lake and river to explore the development of the city. The price includes coffee (Starbucks, no less), lemonade, cookies, and muffins. For tickets, call or stop by the company's ticket office on the lower level on the east end of River East Plaza. Advance reservations are recommended. Tours depart from Ogden Slip adjacent to River East Plaza (formerly North Pier) at the end of East Illinois Street. Tickets cost \$28 adults, \$26 seniors, \$16 children 7 to 18, free for children under 7. Tours run May through October daily.
- ✓ **Mystic Blue Cruises** (☎ 877-299-7783; www.mysticbluecruises.com) offers a casual dinner cruise with a DJ, TV monitors playing music videos, and spirited dancing. You may run into a bachelor or bachelorette party. Food is served buffet-style. The fare is \$30 to \$75, depending on the time of day, and cruises run year-round. The same company offers more formal (and expensive) cruises year-round aboard the *Odyssey* (www.odysseycruises.com) and motorboat

rides on the 70-passenger *Seadog* (www.seadogcruises.com) from May through Labor Day, if you really want to feel the water in your face.

- ✓ **Shoreline Sightseeing** (**312-222-9328**; www.shorelinesightseeing.com) launches 30-minute lake cruises every half-hour from its three dock locations: the Shedd Aquarium, Navy Pier, and Buckingham Fountain in Grant Park. Shoreline has also gotten in on the popular architecture tours. Narrated by architectural guides, they cost more than regular tours. A **water taxi** also runs every half-hour from Navy Pier to both the Sears Tower and the Shedd Aquarium. One-way tickets for the water taxi are \$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors, and \$3 for children under 12; all-day passes cost \$12 for adults and \$6 for children. Tours depart from Navy Pier, Shedd Aquarium, and Buckingham Fountain in Grant Park. Tickets cost \$12 adults, \$11 seniors, \$6 children under 12; architectural tours cost \$22 to \$24 adults, \$19 to \$21 seniors, \$11 children under 12. Tours run May through September daily.
- ✓ **Spirit of Chicago** (**866-211-3804**; www.spiritcruises.com) and *Odyssey II* (**888-957-2322**; www.odysseycruises.com), a pair of sleek motor yachts, offer luxury cruises. They include lunch, brunch, or dinner, and a romantic moonlight cruise with bubbly and dancing. The 600-passenger *Spirit of Chicago* and the 800-passenger *Odyssey II* depart from Navy Pier from April to December. Tickets run from \$32 to \$95.
- ✓ The **Tall Ship Windy** (**312-595-5555**; www.tallshipwindy.com) is for those who enjoy listening to the slap of sails as they plow through the waves of Lake Michigan. The 148-foot, four-masted schooner offers 90-minute daytime and evening cruises. Passengers help raise and trim sails and take turns at the ship's wheel. Adults ride for \$25, seniors and children under 12 ride for \$15. Call for sailing times; according to their Web site, "We sail daily except we tend to take some Mondays off in May, September and October."
- ✓ **Wendella Sightseeing Boats** (**312-337-1446**; www.wendellaboats.com) has operated cruises on the Chicago River and Lake Michigan since 1935. Guides identify the skyscrapers, which are brilliantly lit at night. Guided lake and river tours run one, one and a half, and two hours. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors, and \$10 for children ages 3 to 11. The boats run daily from April through October.



Beyond the basics: Architectural and cultural tours

Chicago is a living textbook of architectural styles, and the high-quality tours offered by the **Chicago Architecture Foundation** (**312-922-8687**; www.architecture.org) provide an excellent introduction. More than 50 tours are offered — by bus, train, boat, and bicycle, as well as on foot. For more on their most popular tour, the Architecture River Cruise along the north and south branches of the Chicago River,

By horse and carriage

Noble Horse (☎ 312-266-7878), with the largest fleet of antique horse carriages in the city, is stationed around the old Water Tower Square, at the northwest corner of Chicago and Michigan avenues. Each of the drivers, outfitted in black tie and top hat, has his own variation on the basic Magnificent Mile itinerary. (You can also do tours of the lakefront, river, Lincoln Park, and Buckingham Fountain.) The charge is \$35 for each half-hour for up to four people. The coaches run year-round, with convertible coaches in the warm months and enclosed carriages with wool blankets on bone-chilling nights. You'll find several other carriage operators, all of whom pick up riders in the vicinity.

see the listing under "Chicago's Top Sights," earlier this chapter. Other favorite tours are the Rise of the Skyscraper and On and About North Michigan Avenue walking tours, and the Chicago Architecture Highlights by Bus trip. The bus tour, which covers a number of high-impact historical districts, departs at 9:30 a.m. every Saturday, some Wednesdays, and some Sundays from 224 S. Michigan Ave.; the tour lasts over three hours and costs \$35 for adults, \$32 for students and seniors.



The **Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs** offers audio walking tours in the Loop. Pick up the headset that includes a tape at the Shop at the Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington (☎ 312-742-0079). The 90-minute tape, narrated by local broadcast journalist Bill Kurtis, provides visitors with an overview of downtown's skyscrapers, public spaces, and sculptures. The tour package costs \$5 (with a \$50 returnable deposit, cash or credit card) and includes rental of a tape player and a map and booklet of the downtown area.

The **Chicago History Museum** offers daylong and half-day bus tours year-round that cover unique themes or aspects of the metropolitan area's history. Led by historians and scholars, they take place in the city and surrounding areas. Tours are different every year and are usually related to exhibits at the Historical Society's museum; call the Historical Society (☎ 312-642-4600; www.chicagohistory.org) for updates. Prices are \$60 per person for full-day tours (10 a.m.–4 p.m.), including lunch; and \$35 for half-day tours (1–5 p.m.). Tours depart from the museum, at Clark Street and North Avenue.

Meet the locals: Neighborhood tours

Chicago Neighborhood Tours (☎ 312-742-1190; www.chgocitytours.com) offers half-day, narrated, bus excursions to about a dozen diverse communities throughout the city, and you'll be accompanied by local greeters. Tours are divided into three categories: Neighborhood Tours, Special Interest Tours (focusing on the Great Chicago Fire, for example),

and Cultural Historian's Choice Tours, led by the cultural historian for the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, who takes visitors to some offbeat gems.

These tours are a wonderful way to see landmarks, cultural centers, and museums. Tours also explore shopping centers and allow you to taste local cuisine. For example, the Chinatown/Pilsen tour includes a guided walking tour of Chinatown led by Chinese American Service League representatives, with a stop for refreshments at a Chinese bakery. Then there's a visit, reception, and shopping at the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, and a guided bus tour of the Pilsen neighborhood that takes in murals by local artists. Another tour includes the Bronzeville neighborhood on the South Side, a view of Chicago's Jewish neighborhoods.

Tours depart from the **Chicago Cultural Center**, 77 E. Randolph St., at 10 a.m. on Saturdays and last approximately four to five hours. Call first, because the tours don't run on major holidays and generally don't run during the month of January. Advance purchase is recommended. Neighborhood tours include refreshments and are \$25 for adults, \$20 for seniors and students; Special Interest tours include lunch and are \$50 for adults, \$45 for seniors and students; Cultural Historian's Choice tours include refreshments and are \$35.

Gangsters and ghosts: Specialty tours

Untouchable Tours (☎ 773-881-1195 — ask for Bugsy; www.gangstertour.com) are led by Da Boys and their molls. Suitably costumed guides — the men in snap-brimmed fedoras, the women in flapper outfits — brandish machine guns and pistols. Two-hour tours visit Prohibition-era gangster hangouts and hit spots like the Biograph Theatre, where John Dillinger met his end; and the site of the St. Valentine's Day massacre. The fare is \$25 for adults and \$19 for children under 16. Tours depart from the southeast corner of Clark and Ohio streets and run Monday through Wednesday at 10 a.m.; Thursday at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.; Friday at 10 a.m., 1 p.m., and 7:30 p.m.; Saturday at 10 a.m., 1 p.m., and 5 p.m.; and Sunday at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Focusing on the supernatural and paranormal, the **Tour of Haunted and Legendary Places** (☎ 708-499-0300; www.ghosttours.com) visits graveyards, haunted houses, and other ghostly places, led by Richard Crowe, who bills himself as a "professional ghost hunter." Crowe does know his stuff, so you'll get some informative history lessons along the way. A four-hour narrated bus tour costs \$37 per person and departs from Goose Island Restaurant at 1800 N. Clybourn Ave.; a two-hour supernatural boat excursion from July to Labor Day is \$24 per person and leaves at 10:30 p.m. from the Mercury boat dock at Michigan Avenue and Wacker Drive. Reservations are required. Crowe's tours are especially popular around Halloween, so book well in advance.

Chapter 12

A Shopper's Guide to Chicago

In This Chapter

- Checking out the local shopping scene
- Hitting the big-name stores
- Exploring the best shopping neighborhoods

Chicago is a shopping mecca. Why do you think the Magnificent Mile is called “magnificent”? Not because of the sightseeing, believe me! On Michigan Avenue, the stores are the thing.

You can buy everything from Hermès scarves to LEGO building blocks on or around Michigan Avenue. As you stroll the Magnificent Mile, you’ll see that finding the department stores and four (yes, four!) high-rise shopping malls is no problem. But if you want to discover Chicago’s boutiques and specialty stores, I point you in the right direction. (Even within the downtown malls, you may miss some of the smaller places that make Chicago a great shopping destination.) I also explore other neighborhoods that offer boutique shopping.

Surveying the Scene

Stores traditionally stay open latest on Thursday night, until 8 p.m. or so. Department stores stay open until about 7 p.m. all other nights except Sundays, when they open around 11 a.m. and close around 6 p.m. Smaller stores close by 5 or 6 p.m.



The biggest **sales** of the year are in January, when retailers slash prices to make room for spring offerings. This is the best time to shop (if you didn’t blow all your bucks over the holidays!), especially because Chicago’s **sales tax** on nonfood items is a noticeable 9 percent. Ouch.

Checking Out the Big Names

Chicago is populated by outposts of most major department stores. Here's the info on the many department stores that await you:

- ✓ **Bloomingdale's**, 900 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-440-4460; www.bloomingdales.com): New York's beloved Bloomie's is transplanted here as a six-level store that includes a section devoted to Bloomingdale's logo merchandise. Home furnishings have a fabulous historic location in the former Medinah Temple, a landmark building at 600 N. Wabash Ave. (☎ 312-324-7500).
- ✓ **Carson Pirie Scott**, 1 S. State St. (☎ 312-641-7000): Stunning architecture by Louis Sullivan (one of Frank Lloyd Wright's mentors) makes this century-old department store easy on the eyes. The exterior incorporates intricate ornamental iron filigree. The store is also easier on your pocketbook than nearby Macy's (formerly Marshall Field's) and carries slightly lower-end merchandise as well. In late 2006, it was announced that this location would close; the store plans to open in a new location that as of press time, is yet to be announced.
- ✓ **Macy's**, 111 N. State St. (☎ 312-781-1000; www.macys.com): The former Marshall Field's department store is one of the world's largest, occupying an entire city block (72 acres of shopping!) and featuring the largest Tiffany glass mosaic dome in the United States. Chicago traditions include meeting under the clock and viewing the animated holiday window displays at the 1852-built store. When Macy's took over in 2006, it maintained another tradition: Serving afternoon tea in the gracious Walnut Room (which, during the holidays, is home to a giant Christmas tree and another tradition, breakfast with Santa). A smaller branch is located in Water Tower Place (☎ 312-335-7700).
- ✓ **Neiman Marcus**, 737 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-642-5900; www.neimanmarcus.com): Texas's favorite department store has top merchandise and prices to match. If you're in town in late January, the "Last Call" sale is one of the city's best. The fourth-floor epicure shop specializes in pâté, caviar, and other delicacies.
- ✓ **Nordstrom**, Westfield North Bridge Mall, 520 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-379-4300; www.nordstrom.com): The newest department store addition to the Magnificent Mile, Nordstrom anchors a mall that has attracted traffic to the south end of Michigan Avenue. Why go to Nordstrom? Shoes. On the weekends, you'll have to take a number, and an employee with a microphone walks around the huge department calling out the next number to be served. Despite the microphone, the service is renowned.

- ✓ **Saks Fifth Avenue**, Chicago Place, 700 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-944-6500; www.saks.com): Designer fashions are what this seven-story store is all about. Visit the jewelry department on the first floor, or shop for makeup and the city's best selection of Jo Malone scents, lotions, and other beauty products.

Going to Market

When the temperature rises, retail vendors hit the streets. This section guides you to the best of the summer markets and art fairs.

Farmers' markets

From mid-May to late October, Chicago's downtown plazas and neighborhoods come alive with fruits, vegetables, flowers, and food from farms outside the city and even out-of-state. Markets in residential neighborhoods, such as the **gourmet market** at Lincoln Park High School, 2001 N. Orchard St., usually take place on Saturdays. The farmers' markets downtown take place during the week. Schedules may vary, so contact the **Mayor's Office of Special Events** (☎ 312-744-3315) for more information. Downtown markets include

- ✓ **Daley Plaza**, 55 W. Randolph St., on Thursdays
- ✓ **Federal Plaza**, Adams Street and Jackson Boulevard, on Tuesdays
- ✓ **Park at Jackson and Wacker**, across from the Sears Tower, on Thursdays
- ✓ **Prudential Plaza**, 130 E. Randolph St., every other Tuesday

Art fairs

Chicago hosts a festival in one of its parks or neighborhoods practically every weekend in summer. Many of the best are focused around art. Artists from all over apply to be accepted into these four juried art fairs:



- ✓ **Around the Coyote**, at the intersection of Damen, North, and Milwaukee avenues (☎ 773-342-6777; www.aroundthecoyote.org): This art festival, held the second weekend in September, showcases the talent of local artists. The entrance fee entitles you to enter not only local art galleries but also many artists' homes and studios for a look behind the scenes.
- ✓ **Bucktown Arts Fest**, near Fullerton and Western avenues (☎ 312-409-8305; www.bucktownartsfest.com): This most recent addition to the art-fair circuit is staged in a comfortable park setting. Don't forget your sunscreen or hat, however, because it's typically pretty steamy the last weekend in August.
- ✓ **57th Street Art Fair**, 57th Street in downtown Hyde Park (☎ 773-493-3247; www.57thstreetartfair.org): This long-standing fair

is a natural outgrowth of the intellectual and artsy enclave on Chicago's South Side. Much less crowded than the Old Town Art Fair the weekend before, this fair on the third weekend in June makes for a more comfortable art-viewing experience.

- ✓ **Old Town Art Fair**, Lincoln Avenue and Wisconsin Street (☎ 312-337-1938): The most high-end of Chicago's art-fair offerings boasts art prices to match. It kicks off the art-fair season the second weekend in June. Go early or late in the day to avoid unbearable midday crowds. Be careful not to accidentally pay entrance into the other nearby festivals that take advantage of the art fair's draw, unless you're more interested in drinking beer and hearing bands than seeing art. (See Chapter 3 for more details.)

Street fairs



Although not in the same league as the art fairs in the preceding section, almost every neighborhood festival includes booths with vendors selling jewelry, bohemian clothing, sunglasses, African drums, and even massages. In this city that loves to eat, you also find a healthy helping of food vendors offering a variety of ethnic cuisines. See Chapter 3 for a list of the most popular festivals. You can also contact the **Mayor's Office of Special Events** (☎ 312-744-3315) for a festival calendar.

Discovering the Best Shopping Neighborhoods

In this section, I describe Chicago's best stores, organized by neighborhood.

Magnificent Mile and environs

This high-priced stretch of real estate on Michigan Avenue reaches from Oak Street to the Chicago River. You find high-visibility names, from Cartier to Kenneth Cole, Filene's Basement to Ralph Lauren, Gucci to Nike. For locations of stores, see the "Magnificent Mile Shopping" map in this chapter. Standout shops include

- ✓ **Active Endeavors**, 45 E. Grand Ave. (☎ 312-822-0600; www.activeendeavors.com): Gear for outdoor pursuits, from hiking to biking to skiing. Fun casual clothes, too. In the Westfield North Bridge mall, on the street level facing Grand Avenue.
- ✓ **American Girl Place**, 111 E. Chicago Ave. (☎ 877-247-5223; www.americangirl.com): The "in" place for the preteen set. You can never collect enough American Girl dolls . . . and then you need to buy them an extensive wardrobe, complete with accessories! This three-story, 37,500-square-foot store lures in millions of shoppers each year. In order to avoid disappointing the American girl in your life, I strongly advise that you call ahead about a month in advance to secure lunch in the chic cafe or to catch a stage show, which is performed five days a week in a 150-seat theater. In 2006, it was



announced that the store would be moving to a new home in Water Tower Place. Stay tuned for more.

- ✓ **Ann Taylor**, 600 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-587-8301; www.ann-taylor.com): The Chicago flagship store for this seller of women's casual and career clothing, accessories, and shoes, including petite and regular sizes.
- ✓ **Anthropologie**, 1120 N. State St. (☎ 312-255-1848; www.anthropologie.com): Ethereal and funky clothing combines with decorative items in this beautiful store. Great for gifts.
- ✓ **The Apple Store**, 679 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-981-4104; www.store.apple.com): The four-story mecca for all technological gadgets beginning with *i*: iPod, iMac, and more.
- ✓ **Aveda**, 875 N. Michigan Ave., in the plaza of the John Hancock Center Observatory (☎ 312-664-0417; www.aveda.com): The Minnesota company creates all-natural scents, lotions, hair-care products, and makeup. Come here and breathe in the aromatherapy.
- ✓ **Banana Republic**, 744 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-642-0020; www.bananarepublic.com): Gap's stylish sibling has a megastore on Michigan Avenue and a smaller one in Water Tower Place.
- ✓ **Barnes & Noble**, 1130 N. State St. (☎ 312-280-8155; www.bn.com): Tucked into Rush Street, this two-level store offers a cafe on the street level, perfect for watching the parade of shoppers. There's another store in Lincoln Park, 1 block west of Clark Street (☎ 773-871-9004), and at 1441 W. Webster Ave. at Clybourn Avenue (☎ 773-871-3610).
- ✓ **Borders**, 830 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-573-0564; www.borders.com): This popular and well-trafficked bookstore has a cafe that overlooks Michigan Avenue as well as the standard assortment of books, CDs, and videos. On the main floor is a section of books on Chicago. Downstairs, you find a colorful selection of writing accessories, including notebooks and pens.
- ✓ **Brooks Brothers**, 713 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-915-0060; www.brooksbrothers.com): The East Coast preppy haven is still *the* place for men's shirts. (They look good on women, too.)
- ✓ **Burberry's Ltd.**, 633 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-787-2500; www.burberry.com): Formerly traditional, newly hip. This is the place to pick up that kilt you've wanted for years.
- ✓ **Cartier**, 630 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-266-7440; www.cartier.com): Jewels, jewels, jewels. Need I say more? The window displays alone cause sidewalk traffic jams.
- ✓ **Chalet Wine & Cheese Shop**, 40 E. Delaware Place (☎ 312-787-8555): You'll find wine, liquor, beer, a wonderful cheese counter, pâté, crackers, and anything else to make a romantic picnic or party with friends.

Magnificent Mile Shopping



- ✓ **Crate & Barrel**, 646 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-787-5900; www.crateandbarrel.com): Suburban Northbrook is this chain's headquarters, and the Michigan Avenue store is the best I've seen. Browse for stylish home furnishings and housewares in this striking, glass-enclosed, three-floor store.
- ✓ **Diesel**, 923 N. Rush St. (☎ 312-255-0157; www.diesel.com): Cutting-edge industrial-style fashion. And, of course, great jeans.
- ✓ **Eddie Bauer**, 600 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-951-5888; www.eddiebauer.com): The preppy East Coast clother has great casual styles and offers dress-casual clothing, too. Furniture and household furnishings are upstairs.
- ✓ **Filene's Basement**, 830 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-482-8918; www.filenesbasement.com): This bargain "basement" with name-brand clothing for less occupies the upper floors of a flashy Mag Mile building.
- ✓ **Georg Jensen**, 959 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-642-9160; www.georgjensen.com): Scandinavian design in jewelry, silver, and other household items. Housed in The Drake Hotel.
- ✓ **H & M**, 840 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-640-0060; www.hm.com): Cheap and chic clothing from a European style-setting chain.
- ✓ **L'Appetito**, 875 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-337-0691): An Italian grocery located in the lower level of the John Hancock Center Observatory that carries a wide selection of cheeses, sausages, and cold cuts.
- ✓ **Material Possessions**, 704 N. Wabash St. (☎ 312-280-4885): Unusual table settings, pottery, and glass make this the chicest place in town to register for a wedding — or to buy a housewarming gift. They also offer a selection of jewelry.
- ✓ **Niketown**, 669 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-642-6363; www.niketown.com): The United Center (Chapter 11) isn't the only house that Michael Jordan built. This three-level store, virtually a shrine to Chicago's favorite son, is the place to buy the shoes that will help you increase your hang time. You can also practice free throws and view a collection of MJ's shoes.
- ✓ **Original Levi's Store**, 600 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-642-9613; www.levi.com): If you can't find a pair of jeans here, you won't find a pair anywhere. Or let the staff measure you and send you a pair of custom-made jeans.
- ✓ **Polo Ralph Lauren**, 750 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-280-1655; www.polo.com): Ralph Lauren has built a giant Polo palace where you can revel in his preppy look. A small Italian restaurant named, appropriately, RL (and decorated in Ralph's signature style, of course), is attached to the palace on Chicago Avenue.



Resting at Crate & Barrel

Need a quick break during your shopping spree? The overstuffed couches on the third and fourth floors of Crate & Barrel beg to be tested out — and a few weary shoppers are always slumped against the piles of pillows. Go ahead and rest; the store's staff won't bug you. Stop by the terrace on the fourth floor for a bird's-eye view of Michigan Avenue and enjoy a moment of contemplation before rejoining the madding crowd.

- ✓ **Pottery Barn**, 734 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-587-9602; www.potterybarn.com): This large outpost of the chain boasts everything you need to decorate your home, plus furniture.
- ✓ **Salvatore Ferragamo**, 645 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-397-0464; www.ferragamo.com): Upscale Italian fashions ranging from shoes and handbags to tailored suits for men and women.
- ✓ **Tiffany & Co.**, 730 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-944-7500; www.tiffany.com): This is the home of the little blue box; you can get your engagement ring on the first floor and register for wedding gifts upstairs. Affordable silver jewelry can be had starting at about \$120.
- ✓ **Urban Outfitters**, 933 N. Rush St. (☎ 312-640-1919; www.urbn.com): Fun, funky, and offbeat clothing and accessories, from beanbag chairs to glittery nail polish.

Malls on the Magnificent Mile

North Michigan Avenue's four shopping malls are also places for a fast snack, a good meal, or a movie. The descriptions in this section are for locations from north to south.

900 North Michigan

This indoor mall doesn't have a name, but most locals call it the "Bloomingdale's Building," after the anchor store. Along with about 70 shops are some good restaurants on the fifth and sixth floors, including **Baisi Thai** and **Tucci Bennuch** (Tuscan). On the main floor of the marble-clad atrium, a branch of the celebrated **Corner Bakery** sells coffee, crusty bread, rolls, and pastries; on the lower level is the stylish **Mario Tricoci Salon and Day Spa** (highly recommended). The Four Seasons Hotel is also in this building; to get there through the mall, go to the sixth floor and walk west to the Four Seasons elevator bank. Stores in this mall include

- ✓ **Charles David** (☎ 312-944-9013; www.charlesdavid.com): High-heeled European shoes for the well-heeled. Second floor.
- ✓ **Club Monaco** (☎ 312-787-8757; www.clubmonaco.com): Affordable minimalist fashions for the young crowd. Ground level.



- ✓ **Coach** (☎ 312-440-1777; www.coach.com): Everything leather, from handbags to luggage. Second floor.
- ✓ **Glove Me Tender** (☎ 312-664-4022; www.glovetmetender.com): If you lost your mitts somewhere in your travels up and down Michigan Avenue, this boutique has a huge selection to help you replace them. Fifth floor.
- ✓ **Gucci** (☎ 312-664-5504; www.gucci.com): From loafers and leather goods to leading-edge fashion, Gucci sets the styles. Ground level.
- ✓ **J. Crew** (☎ 312-751-2739; www.jcrew.com): Sweaters, slacks, hats, belts, and other clothing featuring the scrubbed-clean look. Second floor.
- ✓ **Mark Shale** (☎ 312-440-0720; www.markshale.com): Chicago's upscale clothing store, with a fine selection of men's and women's casual and dress clothing. Especially good for men. Service is excellent, and the clothing is unique. Third and fourth floors.
- ✓ **Williams-Sonoma** (☎ 312-587-8080; www.williams-sonoma.com): Chefs love this store offering the latest in kitchen gadgets and high-quality cookware. Second floor.

Water Tower Place

Chicago's showcase mall at 835 N. Michigan Ave., with cascading fountains and waterfalls and glass-cage elevators, contains more than 100 stores spread over seven floors. Macy's is the anchor. The innovative **foodlife** food court (Chapter 10) contains more than a dozen stations, offering everything from burgers and pizza to Mexican and Moroccan, plus the **Mity Nice Grill**, a faux-1940s diner. One movie complex contains four screens. The mall contains standard mall offerings, such as Gap and Banana Republic, plus the following:

- ✓ **Accent Chicago** (☎ 312-944-1354): T-shirts, pizza pans, logo sports gear, and other souvenirs that say "Chicago." Seventh floor.
- ✓ **Eileen Fisher** (☎ 312-943-9100; www.eileenfisher.com): Women's clothing in luxurious fabrics and rich colors from a suburban Chicago-born designer. Second floor.

Chicago Place



This eight-floor, 50-store mall at 700 N. Michigan Ave. has **Saks Fifth Avenue** as its anchor. The food court on the eighth level has the usual offerings, which are not overly exciting, but it does offer a panoramic view. Stores include

- ✓ **Ann Taylor** (☎ 312-335-0117; www.anntaylor.com): Career, casual, and dressy clothing and accessories for women. Ground level.
- ✓ **The Body Shop** (☎ 312-482-8301; www.thebodyshop.com): All-natural shampoos and lotions. Ground level.

- ✓ **Talbots** (☎ 312-944-6059; www.talbots.com): Conservative, classic women's clothing in a wide range of sizes. Ground level. A **Talbots Kids** is also located here (☎ 312-943-0255).

Westfield North Bridge

Chicago's newest high-rise mall, at 520 N. Michigan Ave., features 35 stores with popular urban men's and women's clothing, jewelry, and specialty items. The third level is where you'll find children's fashions, accessories, and toys; kids love the oversize LEGO models at the LEGO store! The fourth floor is Chicago's "Magnificent Meal," an upscale food court. Shops include

- ✓ **A/X Armani Exchange** (☎ 312-467-5702; www.armanixchange.com): Urban wear for the hip among us at reasonable prices. First floor.
- ✓ **The LEGO Store** (☎ 312-494-0760; www.lego.com): Anything your child can imagine can be built with these little, colored blocks. Kids can easily spend an hour here. Third floor.
- ✓ **Sephora** (☎ 312-494-9598; www.sephora.com): *The* makeup mecca. You can find the latest and greatest from many small, chic makeup companies here. First floor.
- ✓ **Vosges Haut-Chocolat** (☎ 312-644-9450; www.vosgeschocolate.com): Truffles to die for in pretty packaging. Second floor.



Oak Street

If you want sophistication and high fashion and are prepared to pay for them, you'll be in heaven along the short stretch of Oak Street between Michigan Avenue and Rush Street. In 1 block you can find more than 40 stores in converted brownstone mansions. Included are

- ✓ **Barneys New York**, 25 E. Oak St. (☎ 312-587-1700; www.barneys.com): A mini version of New York's Barneys, the store has the latest, from makeup to shoes, bags, and clothes. If you want top-of-the-line men's suits, this is the place. Not for those who faint at high prices. Excellent for spotting trends and people-watching.
- ✓ **Elements**, 102 E. Oak St. (☎ 312-642-6574): High-end, high-design gifts and home-decorating items.
- ✓ **Hermès of Paris**, 110 E. Oak St. (☎ 312-787-8175; www.hermes.com): Hermès makes the world's most sought-after scarves and ties. Don't be intimidated: Even if you're not buying, walk in and take a look at the displays of color and design that make these silk scarves and ties stunning, season after season.
- ✓ **Jil Sander**, 48 E. Oak St. (☎ 312-335-0006; www.jilsander.com): Ultramodern clothing and shoes.



- ✓ **Kate Spade**, 101 E. Oak St. (☎ 312-654-8853; www.katespade.com): From plaid to gingham to basic black, Kate Spade does lovely bags. Her shoes are adorable, too.
- ✓ **Prada**, 30 E. Oak St. (☎ 312-951-1113; www.prada.com): So chic it's almost painful. The ultimate spot for buying the designer's signature bags.
- ✓ **Sugar Magnolia**, 34 E. Oak St. (☎ 312-944-0885): Women's clothing boutique that also has small gifts, jewelry, and handbags. Casual clothes for relaxing, sexy clothes for going out.
- ✓ **Ultimo**, 114 E. Oak St. (☎ 312-787-1171): Chicago's best-known upscale clothier offers women's clothing by big-time labels such as John Galliano, Dolce & Gabbana, and Agnona.
- ✓ **Wolford**, 54 E. Oak St. (☎ 312-642-8787; www.wolford.com): Women swear by the quality and durability of these European-made bodysuits and hosiery.

River North

Furniture, art, and objects are in abundance in the River North gallery area. Shops include

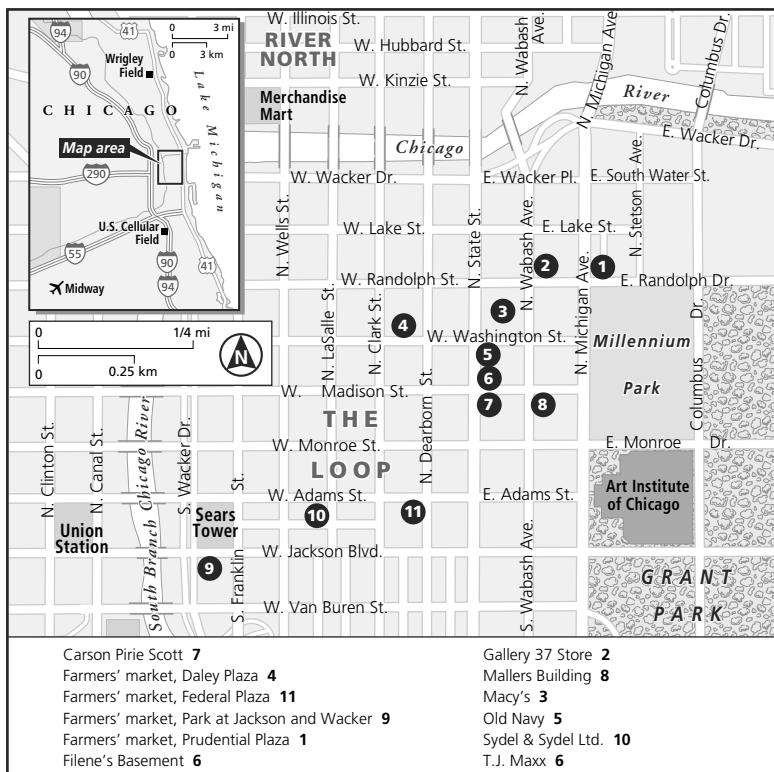
- ✓ **Mig & Tig**, 549 N. Wells St. (☎ 312-644-8277; www.migandtig.com): Monumental furniture that manages to be very charming at the same time.
- ✓ **Paper Source**, 232 W. Chicago Ave. (☎ 312-337-0798): Come here to find out how to make your own scrapbook, buy cards and small gifts, choose among reams of exotic papers, and add to your collection of rubber stamps.
- ✓ **Room & Board**, 55 E. Ohio St. (☎ 312-222-0970): This Minnesota-based furniture company has contemporary furniture. Its sister store, **Retrospect** (☎ 312-440-1270), in the same building, offers more-traditional furniture.
- ✓ **Sawbridge Studios**, 153 W. Ohio St. (☎ 312-828-0055; www.sawbridge.com): Stunningly crafted furniture with stunning prices to boot. Boasts some of the most beautiful woodworking I've ever seen.

State Street and the Loop

Before falling on hard times, State Street, in the heart of the Loop, wore the shopping mantle that now belongs to the Mag Mile. But "that great street" — according to an old Chicago song — is luring back shoppers.

State Street

Although a number of State Street department stores closed or fled to the 'burbs in the '70s, Macy's (formerly Marshall Field's) and Carson

State Street/Loop Shopping

Pirie Scott stuck it out. They now lead the renaissance along State Street. Other shops include

- ✓ **Filene's Basement**, 1 N. State St. (☎ 312-553-1055; www.filenesbasement.com): The East Coast discount department store chain's first Chicago branch.
- ✓ **Old Navy**, 35 N. State St. (☎ 312-551-0522; www.oldnavy.com): Casual wear at low, low prices.
- ✓ **T. J. Maxx**, 1 N. State St. (☎ 312-553-0515; www.tjmaxx.com): As the ads say, get the max for the minimum price. Bargain-hunter heaven with stock that changes constantly.

Elsewhere in the Loop

As State Street becomes revitalized, its environs are taking on a new shine, too. New hotels, restaurants, and theaters attract crowds to the area even on weekends. Shops include

- ✓ **Gallery 37 Store**, 66 E. Randolph St. (☎ 312-744-8925; www.gallery37.org): Paintings, jewelry, ceramics, decorated furniture, textiles, and sculptures are all made by Chicago residents ages 14 to 21 who are part of Gallery 37, a nonprofit arts training program. Experienced artists mentor these young artists, and proceeds from the sales benefit the program.
- ✓ **Mallers Building**, 5 S. Wabash Ave.: Tiny jewelers' shops cram into 16 of the 21 floors in this building that dates from 1911. Stop for a bite at the **Mallers Building Coffee Shop & Deli** (☎ 312-263-7696), a time-warp diner on the third floor.
- ✓ **Primitive Art Works**, 130 N. Jefferson at Randolph Street (☎ 312-943-3770; www.primitiveartworks.com): The owner of this store packs it with furniture, rugs, jewelry, beads, and objects from his world travels. One day you may find a giant Buddha head rescued from a Korean temple that was being destroyed; another day may reveal an exquisite embroidered rug from Turkmenistan.
- ✓ **Sydel & Sydel Ltd.**, 208 S. LaSalle St. (☎ 312-332-4653): Beautiful, high-quality jewelry.

Lincoln Park

Yuppie heaven must include shopping, right? Right. You'll find some of Chicago's best boutique shopping near Lincoln Park's tree-lined residential streets.

Starting at the intersection with Halsted Street and going west, Armitage Avenue in Lincoln Park hosts a string of charming boutiques that sell everything from shoes and designer clothing to tableware and decorations for the home. Going north on Halsted from Armitage Avenue, you find more shops, including chain stores such as Gap, Banana Republic, and Ann Taylor, as well as more boutiques and restaurants. Shops include

- ✓ **Cynthia Rowley**, 808 W. Armitage Ave. (☎ 773-528-6160; www.cynthiarowley.com): Feminine (but not too girlie) styles from the designer who's originally from Chicago.
- ✓ **Endo-Exo Apothecary**, 2034 N. Halsted St. (☎ 773-525-0500; www.endoexo.com): Colorful, fun makeup store. Let the aspiring makeup artists who work there try some of the store's latest products on you.
- ✓ **Fresh**, 2040 N. Halsted St. (☎ 773-404-9776; www.fresh.com): A fragrance boutique that puts aromatherapy to work in the form of candles, soaps, and perfumes in scents like redcurrant basil. Customize your own scent.
- ✓ **Lori's Designer Shoes**, 824 W. Armitage Ave. (☎ 773-281-5655; www.lorisdesignershoes.com): Shoe mecca. Discounted shoes from major designers. On the weekend, the store is swarming. Happy hunting!

- ✓ **Shabby Chic**, 2146 N. Halsted St. (☎ 773-327-9372; www.shabbychic.com): The famous decorating look is for sale in this furniture store.
- ✓ **Tabula Tua**, 1015 W. Armitage Ave. (☎ 773-525-3500; www.tabulatua.com): Everything you need to set the perfect table.

Old Town

One of my favorite shopping strips is North Wells Street in Old Town. Take a jaunt down one of the side streets to admire the neighborhood's restored brownstones. Shops include

- ✓ **Fleet Feet Sports**, 210 W. North Ave., in Piper's Alley (☎ 312-587-3338; www.fleetfeet.com): Runner's heaven. They'll videotape you running on the treadmill and give you the verdict on shoes that will work best for you.
- ✓ **Handle With Care**, 1706 N. Wells St. (☎ 312-751-2929; www.shophwc.com): In a little strip of shops on Wells Street north of North Avenue, this shop boasts gift items and colorful clothing.
- ✓ **A New Leaf**, 1818 N. Wells St. (☎ 312-642-8553): One of Chicago's top florists has a breathtaking storefront with a carriage house in the back, all packed with flowers, plants, pots, candles, glassware, and more.

Southport Avenue

As recently as the early 1990s, this area was considered off the beaten path. Now gentrified, Southport Avenue retains some of its funkier past with eclectic boutiques for clothing and accessories. Shops include

- ✓ **Fly Paper**, 3402 N. Southport Ave. (☎ 773-296-4359): A card and gift store featuring exquisite gift wrap and stationery. **Paper Boy**, a ten-minute walk away at 1351 W. Belmont Ave. (☎ 773-388-8811), is under the same ownership and features a similarly eclectic collection.
- ✓ **Krista K**, 3458 N. Southport Ave. (☎ 773-248-1967) stocks newer women's designers who aren't widely available in Chicago.
- ✓ **P.O.S.H.**, 3729 N. Southport Ave. (☎ 773-529-7674; www.poshchicago.com): Tableware, including never-used vintage silver and commercial-grade china from European and American hotels, restaurants, and cruise ships.
- ✓ **The Red Head Boutique**, 3450 N. Southport Ave. (☎ 773-325-9898; www.redheadboutique.com): Women's specialty boutique featuring clothes, purses, and jewelry.
- ✓ **Shane**, 3657 N. Southport Ave. (☎ 773-549-0179), and **Jake**, 3740 N. Southport Ave. (☎ 773-929-5253), carry more casual clothes for both men and women (think trendy T-shirts and specialty-label denim).

West Lakeview

The West Lakeview neighborhood, between 1100 and 2400 West, is known as “antiques row.” More than 20 shops offer a mind-boggling range of antiques and collectibles, from books and furniture to Depression-era glass and dolls. Destinations include

- ✓ **Architectural Artifacts, Inc.**, 4325 N. Ravenswood Ave., east of Damen Avenue and south of Montrose Avenue (☎ 773-348-0622): Chicago has a handful of salvage specialists who cater to the design trades and retail customers seeking an unusual architectural piece for their homes. This one is the best and is well worth seeking out at its location next to the Metra train line in the far-northwest corner of the city's Lakeview neighborhood.
- ✓ **Broadway Antique Market**, 6131 N. Broadway (☎ 773-743-5444): Two floors of funky, fun, somewhat pricey antiques and collectibles.
- ✓ **Jay Robert's Antique Warehouse**, 149 W. Kinzie St. at LaSalle St. (☎ 312-222-0167). This mammoth River North space is within walking distance of downtown hotels, but you'll need comfortable shoes to explore all 50,000 square feet. The selection is wildly eclectic: fine furniture that includes fireplaces, stained glass, statues, tapestries, and an impressive selection of antique clocks in a variety of styles ranging from elaborate Victorian to sophisticated Art Deco.
- ✓ **Michael FitzSimmons Decorative Arts**, 311 W. Superior St. between Franklin and Orleans streets (☎ 312-787-0496): This shop is one of the top dealers anywhere for furniture and furnishings dating to the Arts and Crafts period, from Stickley chairs to antique British lamps. You'll also find top-notch reproductions, including William Morris wallpaper patterns.
- ✓ **Modern Times**, 2100 W. Grand Ave. at Damen Avenue (☎ 312-243-5706): This shop specializes in the major designers of home furnishings from the 1930s to the 1960s — the sort of pieces that style-conscious shoppers buy to furnish their newly gentrified lofts. You'll also find lighting fixtures of all types and some jewelry. **Note:** The store is only open Friday through Sunday; weekdays by appointment only.
- ✓ **Olde Chicago Ltd. Antiques**, 3110 N. Kedzie Ave. (☎ 773-935-1200): This importer of furniture from Europe specializes in the years prior to 1900. The shop is a well-kept secret that mostly serves the trade — much of the furniture is sold to out-of-town dealers — but now that you're in the know, you can stop by.
- ✓ **Salvage One**, 1840 W. Hubbard St. at Damen Avenue (☎ 312-733-0098): Like Architectural Artifacts (earlier in this list), this sprawling space stocks everything and the kitchen sink — literally: There's an entire room filled with vintage sinks. You'll find hundreds of one-of-a-kind pieces for the home handyperson, including doors, mantels, tubs, stained glass, and antique chandeliers.

Bucktown/Wicker Park

Fun, funky, and off-the-beaten-path purchases are best found in Bucktown and Wicker Park, Chicago's artist enclaves. Shops include

- ✓ **Apartment Number 9**, 1804 N. Damen Ave. (☎ 773-395-2999): Modern menswear, on the mostly casual side. You'll find suits here (or you can purchase jackets and pants separately), plus dress shirts and ties, mixed in with more casual garments.
- ✓ **Pagoda Red**, 1714 N. Damen Ave., second floor (☎ 773-235-1188; www.pagodared.com): Imported antique furniture and art objects from China, Tibet, and Burma.
- ✓ **p45**, 1643 N. Damen Ave. (☎ 773-862-4523; www.p45.com): A cool boutique that has received acclaim from East Coast fashion editors. Women's and men's clothing by young designers.
- ✓ **Red Hen Bread**, 1623 N. Milwaukee Ave. (☎ 773-342-6823): Homemade bread that's so good it's used by some of the city's best restaurants.
- ✓ **Robin Richman**, 2108 N. Damen Ave. at Dickens Street (☎ 773-278-6150): You'll feel as though you're poking through a big, antiques-filled closet as you browse around this tiny Bucktown storefront. Though Richman carries a small assortment of men's and women's separates (mostly loose, unstructured pieces), the big draw here is her exquisite sweaters.
- ✓ **Scoop NYC**, 1702 N. Milwaukee Ave. at Wabansia Avenue (☎ 773-227-9930): At this first Midwest outpost of the New York clothing boutique, you'll find a mix of major fashion names (Marc Jacobs bags, Jimmy Choo shoes), along with the requisite selection of designer denim, flirty dresses, and seemingly simple T-shirts that will make you do a double-take when you check out the price tag. (The store stocks men's and kids' clothing, too.)
- ✓ **Shopgirl**, 1206 W. Webster Ave. at Racine Avenue (☎ 773-935-SHOP): Lincoln Park 20- and 30-somethings flock to Shopgirl for the latest looks from trendy lines such as Blue Cult and Free People. It's a girly gathering place (pink walls, glittery chandeliers); the same owner runs a maternity store and kids' clothing shop across the street.
- ✓ **The T-Shirt Deli**, 1739 N. Damen Ave. between Willow Street and St. Paul Avenue (☎ 773-276-6266): For a new twist on custom clothing, stop by this cozy Bucktown storefront, where you can order up your own personalized T-shirt creation from books of vintage iron-on patches; your shirt will be printed up while you wait. When it's done, the shirt is packaged in a paper bag with a side of potato chips — just like a real deli.

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Books

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Footwear

Charles David
Fleet Feet Sports
Lori's Designer Shoes
Niketown
Salvatore Ferragamo

Jewelry

Cartier
Georg Jensen
Mallers Building
Sydel & Sydel Ltd.
Tiffany & Co.

Gifts and Toys

Accent Chicago
American Girl Place
Anthropologie
Handle With Care
The LEGO Store

Malls

900 North Michigan
Chicago Place
Water Tower Place
Westfield North Bridge

Home Accessories

Crate & Barrel
Eddie Bauer
Elements
Material Possessions
Mig & Tig
A New Leaf
Pagoda Red
Polo Ralph Lauren

Music

Barnes & Noble
Borders

Chapter 13

Following an Itinerary: Four Great Options

In This Chapter

- Hitting the highlights if your time is limited
- Enjoying Chicago with your kids
- Shopping along the Magnificent Mile

Let's say you have limited time in our fair city, and you want to see as much as possible. Perhaps the holidays are near and shopping is tops on your list. Or maybe you want to arrange a day of touring with your kids. Either way, you've come to the right chapter.

Chicago in Three Days

This itinerary covers the best that Chicago has to offer if you have a limited amount of time to visit the city.

Day 1

Spend the first day in the heart of downtown, known as the Loop. Thanks to the Great Fire of 1871 and the city leaders' determination to rebuild with style, Chicago has been a world leader in architecture for more than a century. You find some of Chicago's best architecture in **the Loop**. If you're visiting during nice weather, walk around the Loop on a self-guided tour or one organized by the **Chicago Architecture Foundation** — the early skyscraper tour is a good primer (Chapter 11). Finish your stroll at **Millennium Park**, Chicago's largest public-works project in decades (Chapter 11). The park begins at Randolph and Michigan Avenue and extends south to the Art Institute. Catch your reflection in "The Bean" and walk over Frank Gehry's curving pedestrian bridge, which has fantastic lake and city views.

When it's time for lunch, head to **Heaven on Seven** (Chapter 10) for some Cajun and Creole cooking. After lunch, visit one or two of the city's premier museums, such as the **Art Institute of Chicago** or one of the Museum Campus museums — the **Field Museum of Natural History**, the

John G. Shedd Aquarium, or the **Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum**, depending on your interests (Chapter 11). Next, return to your hotel for a little downtime before heading out to dinner (Chapter 10) followed by a show at one of the city's top theaters, like the **Goodman Theatre** (Chapter 15).

Day 2

On the morning of the second day, head for **Lincoln Park** (Chapter 11), where you can stroll among the animals at **Lincoln Park Zoo**, stop and smell the roses at **Lincoln Park Conservatory**, and take a paddleboat ride at one of the park's lagoons. Have lunch at the **North Pond Café** (if money is no object) or **Cafe Brauer** (if sandwiches are more your style). If the Cubs are playing, and you secured tickets in advance, head to **Wrigley Field** for an afternoon game (Chapter 11). You can also take a chance and try to buy tickets at the stadium. If you're not a sports fan, stroll among the boutiques of **Armitage Avenue** (Chapter 12). For dinner, sample the fare at one of the city's ethnic restaurants along Clark Street or Southport Avenue (Chapter 10). Finish your day with some down-and-dirty Chicago blues. My personal favorite venue is **Buddy Guy's Legends**, which you can get to by hopping on the subway or taking a cab (Chapter 16).

Day 3

On the morning of your last day, make a trip to the top of **The Hancock Observatory** (Chapter 11). Next, do some window-shopping up and down **Michigan Avenue**, or go gallery-hopping in **River North** (Chapter 12). Both areas have plenty of excellent restaurants for lunch. If you're not in the mood for shopping, visit one of the major museums you didn't see on the first day. Or check out the **Museum of Contemporary Art**, just off Michigan Avenue (Chapter 11).

In the evening, head to **Navy Pier**, where you can board a boat for a **dinner cruise** with spectacular views of the skyline (Chapter 11).

Chicago in Five Days

This itinerary hits more of the city's highlights. For the first three days, follow the itinerary in the preceding section.

Day 4

Begin the fourth day with a trip to **Hyde Park**, where you'll want to spend the majority of your day at the **Museum of Science and Industry** (Chapter 11). If you also want to see the University of Chicago, make some time in the afternoon for visits to the **Oriental Institute Museum** (Chapter 11) and Frank Lloyd Wright's **Robie House** (Chapter 14), both on the university's campus.

Chicago in Three Days



DAY ONE ●

1 Chicago Architecture Foundation/The Loop

2 Heaven on Seven

3 Art Institute of Chicago

4 Field Museum, John G. Shedd Aquarium, Adler Planetarium

5 Goodman Theater

DAY TWO ▲

6 Lincoln Park Zoo

7 North Pond Café, Café Brauer

8 Wrigley Field or Armitage Avenue Shopping

9 Clark Street/Southport Avenue Restaurants

10 Buddy Guy Legend's

DAY THREE ■

11 Hancock Center

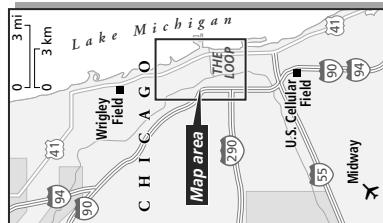
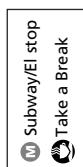
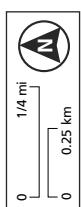
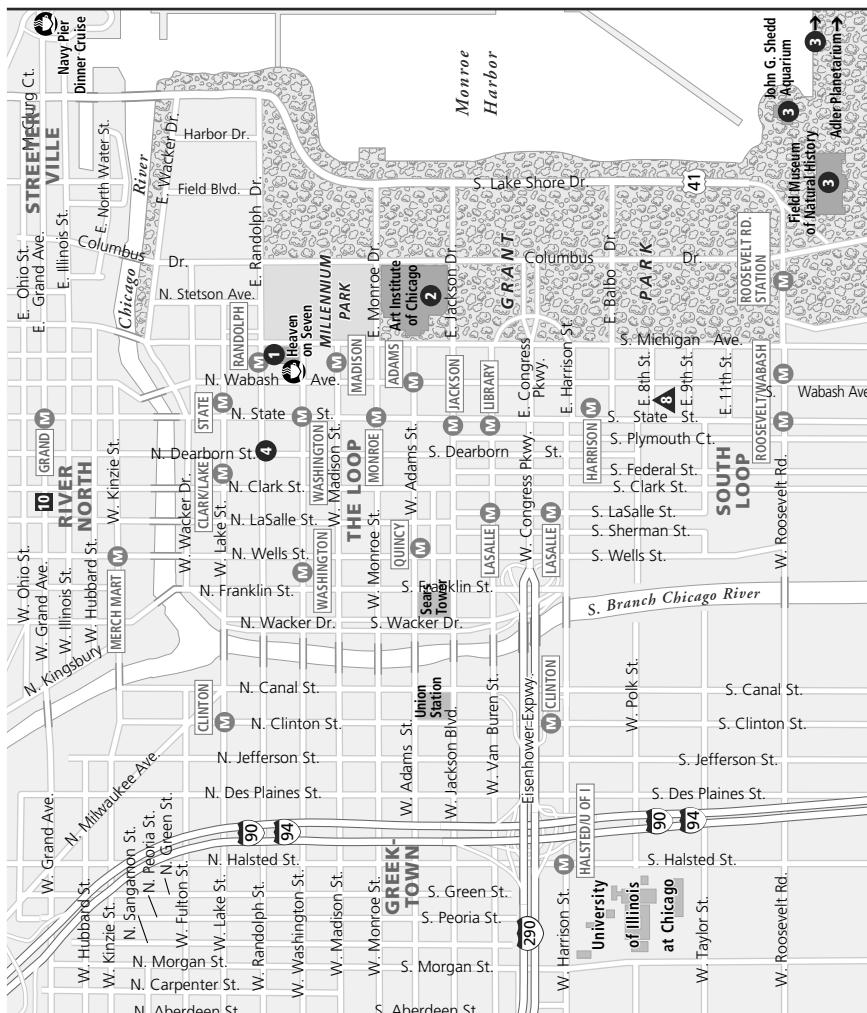
12 Observatory

13 Michigan Avenue Shopping or River North Shopping

14 Museum of Contemporary Art

15 Navy Pier dinner cruise

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After some relaxation time back at your hotel, make your way to the Bucktown/Wicker Park neighborhood for dinner. You can't go wrong at Pacific Northwest-inspired **Meritage** (Chapter 10). Afterward, hit the music scene at Wicker Park fixture **Double Door**, a great place to see local and national indie-rock and jazz acts (Chapter 16).

Day 5

If the sun is shining on your last day, head to the **lakefront** (Chapter 11) and **Oak Street Beach**. Pitch your blanket on the sand and relax. Or, burn off calories from last night's dinner by renting a bike or in-line skates from **Bike Chicago** (Chapter 11) at North Avenue Beach.

If it's cold or rainy, take a taxi to the **Glessner House** (Chapter 11) for a tour of one of Chicago's architectural treasures. End the day with tea at the **Atwood Café** or **Four Seasons Hotel** (Chapter 10).

Following dinner at the restaurant of your choosing, spend your last night at one of Chicago's outstanding jazz clubs, such as **Green Dolphin Street** (Chapter 16), which also serves dinner.

Chicago for Families with Kids

The itineraries in this section are sure to please pint-size tourists — and their escorts. If you're visiting in winter, or if the weather is inclement, substitute the outdoor activities with some of the many indoor, kid-friendly attractions in Chapter 11.

Day 1

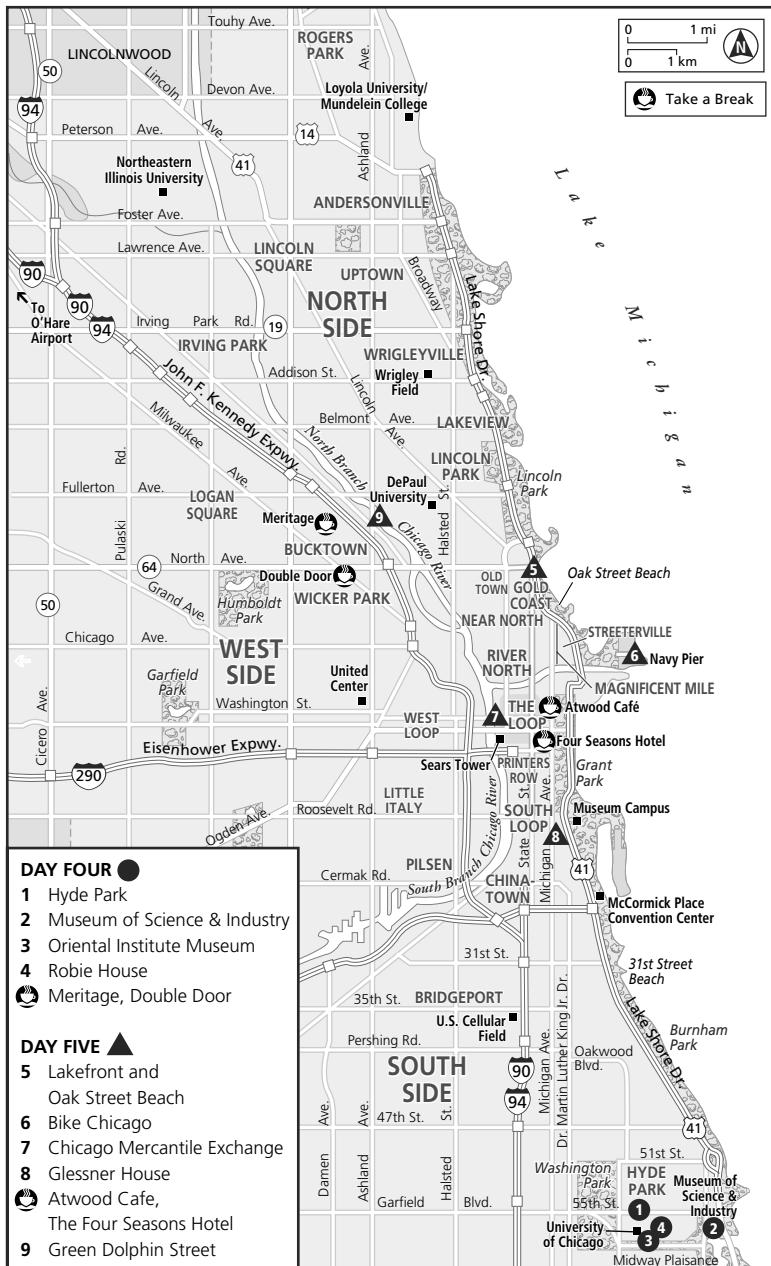
Begin your day with a **ride on the El** (subway). Riding high above the city streets gives kids a bird's-eye view. One of the best is the brown line, which you can pick up at Lake and Clark streets and ride through the heart of downtown. After your tour, head south to the **Museum of Science and Industry** (Chapter 11), the classic kids' attraction that never fails to enthrall. Spend the remainder of your day at this large museum, where you can also have lunch and catch an IMAX movie.

Return downtown for dinner, perhaps at **Ed Debevic's** (Chapter 6).

Day 2

On the morning of your second day, take a **Chicago Architecture Foundation** boat tour of the Chicago River and Lake Michigan (Chapter 11). Even small kids enjoy being on the water, while adults can learn about the city's spectacular architecture. Back on land, stroll up the Magnificent Mile. Along the way, you pass such kid magnets as the **Disney Store** and **American Girl Place**. For lunch, head to the **foodlife** food court in Water Tower Place (Chapter 10), where the wide-ranging menu offers options for everyone in the family. Next, hop a ride on the

Chicago in Five Days



elevator and head to the top of **The Hancock Observatory** (Chapter 11). In the evening, make your way to **Navy Pier** for dinner and more spectacular views of the city (Chapter 11).

Day 3

If the Cubs are in town, spend day 3 at **Wrigley Field** (Chapter 11). Dine on hot dogs or bratwurst while you sip a beer and the kids polish off cotton candy and licorice. If the Cubs aren't playing, take the brood to the **Art Institute of Chicago** (Chapter 11). Make sure to check out the activity schedule at the Kraft Education Center. For lunch in the Loop, go to **Heaven on Seven** (Chapter 10) or the food court on the eighth floor of **Macy's** (formerly Marshall Field's; see Chapter 12).

After two nights out, your kids probably need a quiet evening at the hotel (and you probably need an adults-only night out!). Try to arrange a **baby sitter** through the hotel concierge so you can go out for dinner, maybe in the hotel where you're staying. Or have takeout food delivered to your hotel room — see the ethnic eats in Chapter 10 for options.

Day 4

On day 4, explore **Lincoln Park Zoo** and visit the Farm-in-the-Zoo. After lunch at **Cafe Brauer** (Chapter 11), check out the **Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum**, with its spectacular butterfly house (Chapter 11). In the evening, catch a show, such as a musical in one of the **North Loop theater district's** venues or the kid-pleasing **Blue Man Group** at Briar Street Theatre in Lincoln Park (Chapter 15).

Day 5

If the sun is shining, head to the **lakefront** (Chapter 11). Your kids can splash in the waves under the eyes of lifeguards at Oak Street or North Avenue beaches. If your family is feeling more active, rent bikes from **Bike Chicago** (Chapter 11) at North Avenue Beach. For lunch on the beach, you can stop at **Oak Street Beachstro** (**312-915-4100**), on Oak Street Beach, south of North Avenue Beach.

Alternatively, if the day isn't beach-worthy, head to the Museum Campus and the **Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum, Field Museum of Natural History, or John G. Shedd Aquarium** (Chapter 11). You can spend your whole day here, eating in one of the museum cafeterias for lunch.

Spend your last evening eating and playing games at **ESPN Zone** (Chapter 11).

Chicago for Shopaholics

What could be more magnificent than strolling Michigan Avenue, admiring the shops and people-watching? For the true shopaholic, the experience

can't be beat. The Magnificent Mile, Chicago's main shopping artery, makes a straight shot along Michigan Avenue from the Chicago River to Oak Street. The shops along the way are countless.



The Magnificent Mile is packed to the gills during summer weekends and holidays. Follow the cues of real Chicagoans and shop on weekdays to avoid the jostling crowds.



Before hitting the stores, fortify yourself at the **Corner Bakery**, 676 N. St. Clair St. at Erie Street (☎ 312-266-2570). Along with crowds of locals, you find dozens of breads, from olive ciabatta to walnut and raisin rolls, and an array of pastries. Among the many excellent choices are egg frittatas, and oatmeal studded with dried cranberries, almonds, and brown sugar.

Shopaholics can easily fill a day along Michigan Avenue. **Chain stores**, on the high and low ends include Virgin Records, Crate & Barrel, Sony, Nike, Tiffany & Co., Banana Republic, and Borders. Among the **major department stores** are Nordstrom, Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman Marcus, Lord & Taylor, and Bloomingdale's. Designer stores include everything from Burberry to Chanel. Rounding out the selections are **four big malls**: Westfield North Bridge, Chicago Place, Water Tower Place, and 900 North Michigan. (For descriptions and locations, see Chapter 12.)



For more details on the shopping scene, check out the annual shopping guide on the **Chicago Magazine** Web site at www.chicagomag.com.

When hunger strikes and you don't want to waste valuable shopping time on a sit-down restaurant, head to **L'Appetito**, an Italian grocery store in the plaza of the John Hancock Center, 875 N. Michigan Ave. Order a sandwich to go and head across the street to the courtyard of the ivy-clad **Fourth Presbyterian Church**, between East Delaware Place and East Chestnut Street. Sit by the fountain to enjoy your mini-picnic.

If shopping wears you down, treat yourself to a little pampering at **Mario Tricoci Salon & Day Spa** (☎ 312-915-0960) on the lower level of the Bloomie's building, 900 N. Michigan Ave.

If you're still near Michigan Avenue at dinner, you may want to get decked out in all your new finery for a gourmet meal. Try the nearby **Bice** or **Bistro 110** (Chapter 10). After dinner, have a drink at **Cru**, 888 N. Wabash Ave. at Delaware Street (☎ 312-337-4078), a European wine bar decorated with a zebra-wood bar, gold-tone paint accents, and chandeliers. Get a sofa next to a fireplace, watch the stylish crowd, and relax.

Part V

Living It Up after Dark: Chicago Nightlife

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"That's the third time tonight that's happened. They start out playing the blues, but by the end, everyone's playing a polka. I blame the new bass player from Milwaukee."

In this part . . .

Chicago after dark means world-class performances by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. It means improv comedy at The Second City or a new play or revival at the Steppenwolf or Goodman theaters. Chicago's theater district is booming in the North Loop, with shows that are on their way to Broadway — or touring after a successful Broadway run.

Going out in Chicago can also be as simple as a game of pool at a neighborhood pub or a glass of Shiraz in front of the fireplace at a wine bar. Chicago has a thriving music scene, including first-rate jazz joints and some of the planet's best blues clubs. After reading this part, you'll be able to navigate Chicago's theater, performing arts, and bar and club scenes with ease.

Chapter 14

Going Beyond Chicago: Five Day Trips

In This Chapter

- Exploring the roots of American literature and architecture: Oak Park
- Jonesing for chocolate: Long Grove
- Touring the tony North Shore
- Visiting university towns: Evanston and Hyde Park

Even with all that the city has to offer, if you’re in town for more than a few days (or staying with friends and relatives in the suburbs), you may want to explore beyond the city limits. In this chapter, I describe the best attractions in the Chicago suburbs and offer day-trip suggestions.

Meeting Oak Park’s Native Sons

Two fiercely independent men — both innovators with controversial personal lives — left their marks on this quiet, leafy suburb. Frank Lloyd Wright perfected his Prairie School style of architecture here, leaving behind numerous examples of his work. Ernest Hemingway was born in Oak Park and lived here into his late teens. (For locations of the stops on this tour, see the “Oak Park” map in this chapter.)

Getting there

Suburban Oak Park is 10 miles west of downtown. **By train**, take the Green Line to Harlem Avenue, about a 25-minute ride from downtown. To reach the Oak Park Visitor Center (see the next section), get off at Harlem and walk 2 blocks north to Lake Street. Take a right onto Lake, and then walk to Forest Avenue, where you make a left.

By car, take the Eisenhower Expressway (I-290) west to Harlem Avenue (Ill. 43, about 10 miles from downtown) and exit north. Continue on Harlem north to Lake Street. Take a right on Lake Street and continue to Forest Avenue. Turn left. Immediately on the right, you see the Oak Park Visitor Center.

Taking a tour

The Oak Park Visitor Center, 158 Forest Ave. (☎ 708-848-1500; www.visit oakpark.com), is open daily April through October from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and November through March from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. You can get maps and guidebooks there, a few blocks from the heart of the historic district and the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio.

Seeing the sights



The must-see attraction in Oak Park is the **Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio**, which is open by guided tour only (see Chapter 11 for details). You can also take a **guided walking tour** of the neighborhood on weekends at noon, 1 p.m., and 2 p.m. (tour times are more limited Nov–Feb). You see houses designed by Wright, as well as the charming Victorian homes that he hated so intensely. Tours last one hour and cost \$12 for adults and \$10 for seniors and children 7 to 18 (free for children under 7). Tours depart from the **Ginkgo Tree Bookshop** in the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio, 951 Chicago Ave. (☎ 708-848-1976). At the shop, you can also rent an audiocassette for a self-guided tour of the historic district, available daily from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The rental cost is \$12 for adults and \$10 for seniors and children.

Wright fans will also want to visit nearby **Unity Temple**, 875 Lake St. (☎ 708-383-8873). Guided tours that last 45 minutes depart on Saturdays and Sundays on the hour from 1 to 3 p.m. Admission is \$8 for adults and \$6 for seniors, students, and children.

The other two highlights in Oak Park are the restored **Hemingway Birthplace**, 339 N. Oak Park Ave. (the home of his maternal grandparents), and the **Ernest Hemingway Museum**, down the block at 200 N. Oak Park Ave., both operated by the Ernest Hemingway Foundation (☎ 708-848-2222; www.ehfop.org). The museum traces the author's life from his first job out of high school as a reporter with the *Kansas City Star* to his work as a war correspondent in Europe during World War II. Videos of 15 films made from his work, from *A Farewell to Arms* (1932) to *Islands in the Stream* (1977), are shown. Both places are open Sunday through Friday from 1 to 5 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. An admission charge of \$7 for adults and \$5 for seniors and students (children under 5 are free) covers both the birthplace and the museum.

Dining locally



If you need to refuel between walking tours, many restaurants, cafes, and ice-cream shops are on and around Oak Park Avenue, near Unity Temple. My favorite is the **Avenue Ale House**, 825 S. Oak Park Ave. (☎ 708-848-2801), a tavern that offers steaks, chops, sandwiches, French onion soup, and giant salads. Eight beers are on tap, and 50 more are available bottled. An outdoor dining area is open in summer.

Oak Park Attractions



Wide lawns, narrow minds

At one time, the Oak Park city fathers shunned one of their most famous sons, Nobel laureate Ernest Hemingway. They apparently took umbrage at his supposed description of Oak Park as a town of "wide lawns and narrow minds." Today, all seems to be forgiven — the community welcomes visitors to Ernest Hemingway Museum, to tours of the Hemingway Birthplace, and to an annual festival that includes readings, a "Papa" lookalike contest, and other shenanigans.

Shopping in the Historic Village of Long Grove

Nestled among the northwest suburbs is Long Grove Village. Settled in the 1840s by German immigrants, Long Grove has preserved its old-fashioned character and makes a fine day trip for those looking for a break from the big-city noise and commotion. You feel like you stepped into a rural village at the turn of the 20th century. Set on 500 acres of oak and hickory tree groves, Long Grove is a browsers' and shoppers' destination, and special events throughout the year keep the businesses hopping. The historic buildings contain more than 100 specialty shops, galleries, and restaurants.

Getting there

Long Grove is about 30 miles northwest of Chicago. From the Loop, take the I-94 tollway north until it separates at I-90, another tollway that travels northwesterly. Follow I-90 until you reach Route 53, and drive north on 53 until it dead-ends at Lake Cook Road. Take the west exit off 53 and follow Lake Cook Road to Hicks Road. Turn right on Hicks Road and then left on Old McHenry Road, which takes you into the center of town. It's also possible to take the Metra to Long Grove (if you're without a car), though it involves a cab ride from Arlington Park or Antioch (10–20 minutes). For information, call ☎ 312-322-6900 (press 3) or visit www.rtachicago.com.

Taking a tour

The **Long Grove Tourist Information Center**, near the Fountain Square (☎ 847-634-0888; www.longgroveonline.com), has information about events in town. You can pick up a map showing the locations of local businesses — many of the streets are small and winding, so addresses alone won't be of much help.

Seeing the sights

The village hosts several cultural and entertainment events, festivals, and art fairs during the year. The annual **Strawberry Festival** is the biggest, held during the last weekend in June. An **Apple Festival** is held in October, and a **Chocolate Festival** is held in May.

Don't miss the **Long Grove Confectionery**, 220 Robert Parker Coffin Rd. (☎ 800-373-3102), one of Chicago's last remaining candy companies, where you can eat hand-dipped chocolate-covered strawberries in the summer and gigantic caramel apples in the fall. Another standout is the **Pine Cone Christmas Shop**, 210 Robert Parker Coffin Rd. (☎ 847-634-0890), a year-round wonder of decorated trees and Charles Dickens villages.

Dining locally

For lunch, stop at **Village Tavern**, 135 Old McHenry Rd. (Route 22) at Country Lane (☎ 847-634-3117), a Long Grove institution offering soups, sandwiches, and other comfort food.

Discovering Evanston's College-Town Charm

Northwestern University contributes to the liberal, intellectual culture of Evanston, Chicago's oldest suburb — and one of the most scenic. Evanston manages to combine the peaceful feeling and green space of a suburb with the culture and lively atmosphere that you expect of an urban center. Evanston's downtown offers sophisticated dining and shopping. From downtown Chicago, the drive to Evanston on Lake Shore Drive and Sheridan Road takes about 25 minutes. But time your trip, because at rush hour, it can take much longer — up to 45 minutes.

Getting there

By car from the Loop, drive north on Lake Shore Drive to Sheridan Road. Continue north on Sheridan. As you enter Evanston, Northwestern University is located along the lakeshore, on your right.

By public transport, take the Metra North train line from Northwestern Station in the Loop to the Davis Street stop, and walk east on Davis Street into the heart of downtown Evanston. The ride takes about 20 minutes. (See Chapter 8 for information on Metra.)

Taking a tour

Lighthouse Park, 2601 Sheridan Rd. at Central Street (☎ 847-328-6961), is the site of a lighthouse built in 1873 after the wreck of the *Lady Elgin*. Nature-center tours, a wildlife trail, a small museum, and an experimental greenhouse are all part of the park. Tours of the lighthouse start at 2, 3, and 4 p.m. on weekends from June to September. Admission to the lighthouse is \$5 for adults and \$3 for seniors and students, but kids under 8 are not allowed for safety reasons.

Seeing the sights

Relive college life at **Northwestern University** — the lakefront campus is worth wandering for a couple of hours. From Sheridan Road, turn toward

the lake on Campus Drive, and park in the lot that fronts Sheridan Road. From there, walk down Campus Drive toward the lake into the heart of the campus. Be sure to check out the stained-glass windows at **Alice Millar Chapel** and the art at **Mary and Leigh Block Gallery** during your walk.

The former mansion of Charles Gates Dawes, 225 Greenwood, now houses the **Evanston Historical Society** (☎ 847-475-3410; www.evanstonhistorical.org), which gives free tours of this century-old national landmark. Dawes, a wealthy financier, served as vice president under Calvin Coolidge and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1925 for his smooth handling of German reparations on behalf of the League of Nations following World War I.

Dining locally

While on the Northwestern campus, head to the **Norris Student Center** near the lake for snacks or ice cream. To experience Evanston's bohemian side, grab a cup of coffee or enjoy breakfast or lunch at **Blind Faith Café**, 525 Dempster St. (☎ 847-328-6875), where organic and vegetarian specialties include scrambled tofu, huevos rancheros, granola, and pancakes. Stop in, soak in the atmosphere, and feel healthier by the minute.

Ambling Up the North Shore: Wilmette and Environs

A long string of suburbs run along Lake Michigan going north from Chicago; many of them are among the nation's wealthiest zip codes. As a friend of mine put it as we strolled Lake Forest, passing one luxury car after another: Either everyone should live like this, or no one should live like this!

Getting there

By car, take Lake Shore Drive out of the city, which turns into Sheridan Road. Sheridan winds through the campus of Northwestern University in Evanston and into the upper-crust North Shore suburbs of Wilmette, Kenilworth, and Winnetka. (You'll recognize them by the multimillion-dollar homes that flank the road.)

Taking a tour

Admission is free at the **Baha'i House of Worship**, 100 Linden Ave. at Sheridan Road (☎ 847-853-2300), a gleaming stone temple designed by the French-Canadian Louis Bourgeois and completed in 1953. Essentially a soaring nine-sided 135-foot dome, draped in a delicate lacelike facade, the temple reveals the eastern influence of the Baha'i faith's native Iran. Surrounded by formal gardens, it is one of seven Baha'i temples in the world, and the only one in the Western Hemisphere.



The dome's latticework is even more beautiful as you gaze upward from the floor of the sanctuary, which, during the day, is flooded with light.

Temple members offer informal tours of the building to anyone who inquires; older children and adults with an interest in architecture will get the most out of a tour of the interior. Not only is the temple itself really a sight, but the drive on Sheridan Road is one of the most beautiful in the Chicago area. The visitor center is open daily May through September 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and October through April 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The temple is open daily from 7 a.m., and devotional services are held Monday through Saturday at 12:15 p.m. and Sunday at 1:15 p.m. (with choral accompaniment).



A word of caution if you're driving: The temple seems to appear out of nowhere as you round a particularly tight curve on Sheridan Road, and it can distract even the most focused of drivers. Take it slowly, and wait until you're safely parked before gazing skyward.

Seeing the sights

If you've made it up to the Baha'i Temple, take a stroll across Sheridan Road to **Gilson Park** for a taste of north-suburban life. Check out the sailors prepping their boats for a lake tour, families picnicking, and kids frolicking on the sandy beach. Access to the beach is restricted in the summer (the locals like to keep the Chicago riffraff out), but in the fall and spring you're welcome to wander (just don't expect to take a dip in the frigid water). You'll have a wonderful opportunity for a photo either in front of the lake or on one of the small grassy dunes.

Dining locally

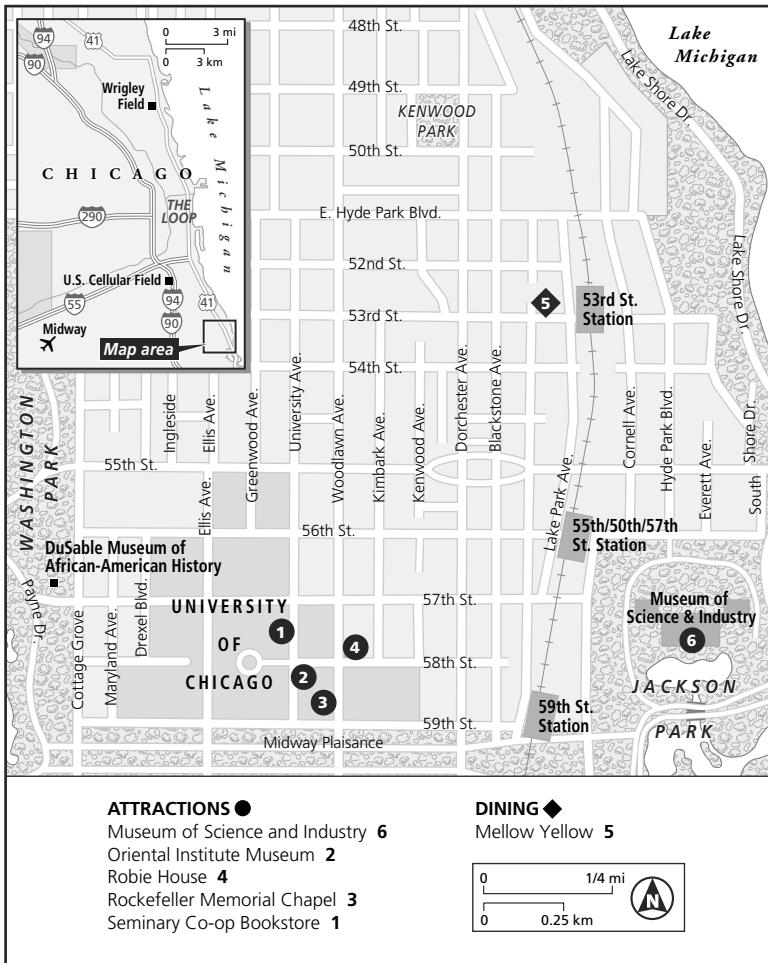


Breakfast is served all day at **Walker Bros. Original Pancake House**, 153 Green Bay Rd. (☎ **847-251-6000**), a favorite North Shore breakfast spot. Expect a long wait on weekends. Top choices are apple pancakes (a kid favorite), German pancakes served with fruit, and oven-baked omelets. The restaurant serves lunch and dinner, too.

Hanging Out in Hyde Park

Anchoring Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood is the Museum of Science and Industry, a perennial favorite with kids and one of Chicago's most popular tourist attractions. What many visitors don't know is that the museum is located in a leafy neighborhood that is also the home of the sprawling 175-acre campus of the University of Chicago. Many fine attractions sit amid the Gothic architecture and tree-lined streets of the university campus. (For the locations of the attractions in this section, see the "Hyde Park" map in this chapter.)

Hyde Park Attractions



Getting there

By car, take Lake Shore Drive south to 59th Street. Follow 59th Street west (you pass the Museum of Science and Industry) into the heart of the University of Chicago campus (59th Street and Ellis Avenue). The drive takes about 20 minutes from downtown.

By train, you can reach Hyde Park from downtown in 15 minutes with Metra. Trains run at least every hour Monday through Saturday from 5:15 a.m. to 12:50 a.m. and Sundays and holidays from 5 a.m. to 12:55 a.m. Pick up the train at Randolph and Michigan, Van Buren and Michigan, or

Roosevelt and Michigan. The 55th-56th-57th Street Station is nearest the Museum of Science and Industry; the 59th Street Station is nearest the University of Chicago campus. Fare is about \$2. (See Chapter 8 for information on Metra.)

By bus, the no. 6 Jeffrey Express from the Loop takes about 30 minutes. Pick up the bus on Wacker Drive on weekdays from 5:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., and on weekends and holidays from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Another way to go is local bus no. 1, which originates at Union Station on Jackson Boulevard and Canal Street.

By taxi, the fare to Hyde Park from downtown is about \$20.

Taking a tour

Fans of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie School architecture will want to see the 1909 **Robie House**, 5727 S. Woodlawn Ave. (☎ 773-834-1847), a masterpiece of 20th-century architecture. The house is undergoing a massive renovation not slated for completion until 2010. Although the house is open during the process, your photos may include lots of scaffolding! Forty-five-minute tours start at 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m. on weekdays and every half-hour from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on weekends. Admission is \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors and children 7 to 17. The former three-car garage (a rarity at the time) houses a gift shop stocked with Wright items.

Seeing the sights



For details on the main attraction, the **Museum of Science and Industry**, see Chapter 11.

About 10 blocks west of the Museum of Science and Industry on the campus of the University of Chicago is the stunning **Rockefeller Memorial Chapel**, 5850 S. Woodlawn Ave. (☎ 773-702-2100). The Gothic chapel, built in 1928, is home to the world's second-largest carillon, donated by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., in memory of his mother, Laura, in 1932. Choir concerts, carillon performances, and other musical programs are presented throughout the year, usually for a small donation. The building is open to the public daily from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., except during religious services.

Also on the campus of the University of Chicago is the **Oriental Institute Museum**, where you find mummies, gold jewelry, and other treasures of ancient Egypt, Syria, Iran, and other Middle Eastern countries. (See Chapter 11 for details on this free museum.)

Before his death in 2005, Nobel Prize-winning novelist Saul Bellow occasionally returned to the Chicago-area neighborhoods that he wrote about in novels such as *Herzog*. One of his favorite stops was the **Seminary Co-op Bookstore**, 5757 S. University (☎ 773-752-4381).

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This rambling bookstore has an amazing array of titles and is a treasure-trove of academic and scholarly books.

Dining locally

For lunch, travel north to **Mellow Yellow**, 1508 E. 53rd St. (☎ **773-667-2000**), where you can get a bowl of Cincinnati-style five-way chili. University of Chicago students and faculty members go to this Hyde Park institution for potent chili (including a vegetarian version) and to linger over coffee and dessert. Quiche and hamburgers are other reliable choices.

Chapter 15

Applauding the Cultural Scene

In This Chapter

- Keeping up with the hottest groups and spaces
- Finding out what's on when
- Tracking down hot tickets
- Getting your theater, opera, or symphony fix

Culture is alive and accessible in Chicago. The performing-arts scene — theater, symphony, opera, and dance — keeps things hopping just about every night, making Chicago a city that certainly doesn't sleep *much*.

With such fixtures as the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Joffrey Ballet of Chicago, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the question is not so much "Should we see a performance?" as "How many of these fabulous performances can we see?"

Chicago's thriving theater scene offers something for everyone, from flashy musicals to intimate dramas. Because Chicago audiences have a knack for mimicking the reactions of their Broadway audience counterparts, the city has become a favorite pre-Broadway testing ground. Most recently, the success of shows such as *Spamalot* in Chicago has led to those shows getting a chance on Broadway.

This chapter reveals the best of the local offerings and other helpful details, such as how to get tickets and find pre-theater dining.

Be sure to check out "The Loop after Dark" and "Lincoln Park and Wrigleyville after Dark" maps in Chapter 16 to locate this chapter's listings.

Getting the Inside Scoop

Chicago's performing-arts scene is centered on the Loop, with another cluster of theaters on the city's North Side. The theater scene is changing

faster than you can shout “Bravo!” Not so long ago, the Loop was comatose after business hours. No more. Lively bars and bistros, hotels, and a number of theaters have pumped new life into the area.

Be sure to check out the “Dining before or after the show” sidebar for tips on where to eat.

Taking a look at Chicago's hot performing-arts spots

The Chicago Theatre added an intimate, 281-seat theater on its lower level and opened it with a long-running Chicago favorite (and *Guinness World Records* record-holder for the longest-running play in U.S. theater history), *Shear Madness*.

The LaSalle Bank Theatre (formerly the Schubert) was refurbished in 2005 and reopened with a fresh new look. Built in 1906 as a home for vaudeville, it books mostly big-name musicals and sometimes, comedy performers. (If you’re interested in those big musicals, check out www.broadwayinchicago.com to see a schedule of the latest shows). In late 2006, the Hampton Inn opened a boutique hotel on top of the theater, the Hampton Majestic (Chapter 9).

Joan W. and Irving B. Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph Dr. (☎ 312-334-7777; www.madtc.com), a 1,500-seat facility in Millennium Park, has a stark aesthetic but wonderful sightlines, thanks to its stadium seating, and hosts a full slate of performances from its 12 resident companies. From classic opera such as *Le nozze di Figaro* by Chicago Opera Theater, to modern dance by River North Chicago Dance and Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and jazz dance by Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago, this theater and dance space boasts performances that are worth checking out.

The **Goodman Theatre** is in an attractive building on Randolph and Dearborn streets (you’ll recognize it by the exterior panels that change colors, creating a mosaic effect). The building was a total-gut rehab of the historic Harris and Selwyn theaters. The focal point is the 830-seat main-stage theater, a limestone-and-glass structure in the center of the block. Completing the complex are a 400-seat studio theater, two restaurants, and retail space.



Two other prominent Loop theaters are the **Cadillac Palace Theater** and the **Ford Center for the Performing Arts/Oriental Theater**. The Palace, connected to the hip Hotel Allegro, is a refurbished 1926 vaudeville house that offers 2,400 seats and stages first-run and touring Broadway musicals. The Oriental features a fantastical Asian décor; today, both theaters book major touring shows.

The **Lookingglass Theatre Company** also has a prominent space, in Water Tower Works. This convenient location on the Magnificent Mile next door to Water Tower Place has two stages to showcase the company’s distinctive physical style.

Dining before or after the show

I prefer dining before a show because sitting in a theater with a growling stomach for two hours is no fun. (I wind up thinking about food more than the entertainment in front of me!) Whether you choose to dine before or after the show, I have recommendations for you.

Many venues cater to the theater crowd and are accustomed to getting diners in and out on time. A number of quality restaurants, such as **Atwood Café** and **Trattoria No. 10** (Chapter 10), are within walking distance of the Loop theaters. Other good options are **Petterino's**, 150 N. Dearborn St. at Randolph Street (☎ 312-442-0150), a steakhouse in the Goodman Theatre building (call early for reservations), and **312 Chicago**, 136 N. LaSalle St. at Randolph Street (☎ 312-696-2420), an Italian restaurant in flashy Hotel Allegro.

If you're more comfortable eating after the show, Chicago has plenty of restaurants whose kitchens stay open late. Standouts open until at least 1 a.m. include **Bin 36**, **Café Iberico**, **Jake Melnick's**, **Kamehachi**, **Nine** (open until 3 a.m. on Sat!), and **Tango Sur**. See Chapter 10 for descriptions of all these spots.

If you crave more entertainment, nightclubs (Chapter 16) usually are just getting up to speed around the time the curtain falls. Some clubs also provide good food late at night. One notable example is **Green Dolphin Street**, 2200 N. Ashland Ave. at Webster (☎ 773-395-0066; www.jazzitup.com).

Visitors to Navy Pier will find the **Chicago Shakespeare Theater** — an intimate 550-seat space patterned after the Swan Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon in England.

Despite all the change in Chicago's theater scene, you can rely on some constants. A robust contingent of long-running shows play here. Some of the most popular include **Late Night Catechism** (at Royal George Theatre Center), **Blue Man Group** (at Briar Street Theatre) and **Tony and Tina's Wedding** (at Piper's Alley, 210 W. North Ave.; ☎ 312-664-8844).

Getting hip to theater etiquette

Ready for a big night at the theater? Before you face the bright lights, you may want to know a few things. First, some general tips:



- ✓ **Don't use cameras or camcorders in theaters.** Taping is prohibited by law.
- ✓ **Don't talk during a performance.** (Not that *you'd* ever do that!)
- ✓ **Do shut off all beepers and cellphones.** (And for goodness' sake, if yours goes off, *don't* answer it!)

Chicago is a relaxed Midwestern city. Patrons of the theater and of theater-district restaurants dress relatively informally. In most cases, a sweater

and slacks or jeans, perhaps with a light jacket, work for men. For women, similarly low-key attire is appropriate — pants and shirt or skirt and blouse.

For most theatergoers, the bottom line is how comfortable they feel about the appropriateness of what they're wearing. They're likely to dress up for a hot-ticket blockbuster musical and dress down for storefront repertory. Most prefer the safety of the middle ground to feeling self-conscious about being over- or underdressed.

Happy news: Ushers in Chicago theaters don't expect tips. Acknowledging their help with a thank-you or a pleasant nod or smile is all that's required. However, if you battle your way to the bar during intermission, the beleaguered bartender appreciates your tip.



The show must go on — and on time. Chicago-area theaters tend to be punctual, and tardy patrons usually must wait to be seated until the conclusion of the scene or musical number in progress. Arriving late for the opera can be especially troublesome. With acts lasting for over an hour, you'll find yourself watching on a monitor in the lobby.

Finding Out What's On and Getting Tickets

Getting connected to the Chicago fine-arts scene requires only a phone call. The **Chicago Dance and Music Alliance** information line (**312-987-1123**; www.chicagoperformances.org), can give you listings of upcoming events.

Fine arts in the Windy City pick up when the leaves start to fall. The **Chicago Symphony Orchestra** and the **Lyric Opera of Chicago** begin their seasons in September. The opera concludes its schedule in March; the symphony continues into June. (See "Raising the Curtain on the Performing Arts," later in this chapter, for information on all the organizations mentioned in this section.)

Area dance troupes are active all year. Highlights of their seasons include performances at the **Ravinia Festival** in late summer (see the "Bach in the 'burbs" sidebar in this chapter) and at the annual month-long festival **Dance Chicago**, which takes place at the **Athenaeum Theatre** (**773-935-6860**; www.dancechicago.com) in autumn. Other noteworthy happenings are **Joffrey Ballet of Chicago**'s *Nutcracker* over the holidays and the **Hubbard Street Dance Chicago**'s spring engagement. For all other dance news, check the Chicago Dance and Music Alliance information line at **312-987-1123** or visit www.chicagoperformances.org.

In addition to the Ravinia Festival, summer traditions include concerts by the **Grant Park Symphony and Chorus**, which now take place in the Frank Gehry-designed Pritzker Pavilion. Featuring Gehry's signature sinuous lines, the pavilion is surrounded by dramatic ribbons of curved

steel. The Grant Park Symphony will not only look better than ever, it should sound great, too — thanks to a state-of-the-art sound system. Concerts are held Wednesday through Sunday, with most performances beginning at 7:30 p.m. Seats (about 4,000 of them) are reserved for subscribers, but unclaimed places are offered to the public 15 minutes before the concert starts. There's also plenty of lawn seating; so bring a blanket and enjoy a picnic dinner.

Chicago's vibrant theater scene is in a constant state of flux, with openings, closings, revivals, and extensions. Useful tools to help you scope out a show are the ***Chicago Tribune*** (www.chicagotribune.com), ***Chicago Sun-Times*** (www.suntimes.com), and ***Daily Herald*** (www.dailyherald.com), which offer comprehensive weekly listings in their Friday entertainment sections. The papers also run reviews of larger shows around town; for older reviews, check their Web sites. Other reliable sources of reviews and commentary are ***Chicago*** (www.chicagomag.com) and ***North Shore*** (www.northshoremag.com) magazines. To find out about out-of-the-mainstream performances, pick up the ***Chicago Reader*** (www.chicagoreader.com) and ***New City*** (www.newcitychicago.com), the leading free alternative newspapers. These tabloids cover nearly every upcoming production, from traveling Broadway musicals to avant-garde performance art.

Some Chicago theaters have specially designed performances (usually on weekdays, or weekend matinees) that cater to families. These shows often offer discounted children's tickets or special discounts for large groups. You can find out about these performances in the papers (see "Finding Out What's On and Getting Tickets" earlier in this chapter). You can also get details on kid-friendly productions from the **League of Chicago Theatres** (☎ **312-554-9800**; www.chicagoplays.com).



If you're surfing the Web, check out the following sites, which bring the Chicago theater world to your fingertips:



- ✓ www.metromix.com, supported by the *Chicago Tribune*
- ✓ www.centerstage.net/chicago, run by a group of Northwestern alumni in association with MediaOne
- ✓ <http://chicago.citysearch.com>, the local CitySearch Web site, offers valuable theater information and reviews

Getting tickets to symphony, opera, ballet, and theater performances is largely a function of what's hot and what's not. Try the **Ticketmaster** arts line (☎ **312-902-1500**; www.ticketmaster.com) and the **Ticket Exchange** (☎ **800-666-0779** or 312-902-1888) — if tickets are available, you can get them there. Another tactic is to wait until you get to town, show up at the venue around lunchtime on the day of the performance, and ask for turn-back tickets; you may luck out.



Traveling to the show by El or bus

For \$2 (plus 25¢ for transfers), you can travel by bus or El (train/subway) to your venue. For details on Chicago's public-transportation system, see Chapter 8. For a map of the El, see the Cheat Sheet at the front of this book. Following is a list of transportation directions to the major venues:

- ✓ **Chicago Theatre:** Green, Purple, Orange, or Brown line to State and Lake, or the State Street bus (no. 2, 6, 10, 11, 29, 36, 44, 62, or 146) to the corner of State and Lake
- ✓ **Ford Center for the Performing Arts/Oriental Theater:** Green, Purple, Orange, or Brown line to Randolph, or the State Street bus (no. 2, 6, 10, 11, 29, 36, 44, 62, or 146) to the corner of Randolph and State
- ✓ **Goodman Theatre:** Green, Purple, Orange, or Brown line to Adams, or the Michigan Avenue bus (no. 3, 4, 60, 145, 147, or 151) to the corner of Michigan and Monroe
- ✓ **LaSalle Bank Theatre:** Red Line to Monroe, or the State Street bus (no. 2, 6, 10, 11, 29, 36, 44, 62, or 146) to the corner of Monroe and State
- ✓ **Lyric Opera of Chicago:** Metra train to Northwestern station, or take the Green, Purple, Brown, or Orange line to Washington. Take the Madison Street bus (no. 14, 20, 56, 131, or 157) to the corner of Madison and Wacker
- ✓ **Millennium Park's Pritzker Pavilion:** Green, Purple, Brown, or Orange line to Randolph, or the Michigan Avenue bus (no. 3, 4, 60, 145, 147, or 151) to the corner of Michigan and Randolph
- ✓ **Steppenwolf Theatre Company:** Red Line to North and Clybourn or bus no. 33 or 41 to corner of North and Halsted
- ✓ **Symphony Center:** Green, Purple, Brown, or Orange line to Adams, or the Michigan Avenue bus (no. 3, 4, 60, 145, 147, or 151) to the corner of Michigan and Jackson



If you're unable to land the tickets you want, try talking to the concierge at your hotel. If that fails, try a licensed ticket agency. Brokers include **Gold Coast Tickets** (☎ 800-889-9100 or 312-644-6446) and **Union Tysen Entertainment Ticket Service** (☎ 800-372-7344 or 312-372-7344). Supply and demand rule: You could end up paying double or triple face value (or even more) for those coveted tickets.



Another good tactic is to stop at the box office around noon on the day you want to see the show. You can often pick up a cancellation. This is definitely the case at the Lyric Opera, where patrons have a long-standing tradition of turning in unused subscription tickets at the box office. You can purchase those tickets and often obtain great seats.



Bargain hunters have several options for buying discounted tickets:

- ✓ The **League of Chicago Theatres** (☎ 312-554-9800; www.chicagoplays.com) has a daily telephone listing of discounted shows, as well as information about upcoming shows and a current theater guide. The call costs \$1 per minute, with calls lasting an average of three minutes.
- ✓ **Hot Tix** (☎ 312-554-9800; www.hottix.org), operated by the League of Chicago Theatres, sells same-day half-price tickets on the day of the show for about 125 city and suburban theaters. On Friday, you can buy tickets for shows throughout the weekend. Tickets are available starting at 10 a.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 11 a.m. Sunday at a number of locations, including **Water Works Visitor Center**, 163 E. Pearson St.; and at the **Chicago Tourism Center**, 72 E. Randolph St., just east of Clark Street.
- ✓ The **Steppenwolf Theatre Company**'s box office (see the listing later in this chapter) usually has a limited number of half-price same-day seats.
- ✓ The "Tix at Six" program at the **Goodman Theatre** offers half-price, day-of-show tickets; many of them are excellent seats that have been returned by subscribers. Tickets go on sale at the box office at 6 p.m. for evening performances, or noon for matinees.
- ✓ Many theaters offer **discounts for full-time students and seniors** on off-peak days during the week. To find out if the show you want is discounted, call the theater. These specials aren't always well advertised, so many low-cost seats go unclaimed.

Raising the Curtain on the Performing Arts

Draw back the curtain on this town's theater scene and you find everything from splashy Broadway musicals to gritty small productions. This section guides you to the best, organized by neighborhood.

Do you love the string section? Is your secret dream to belt out "La Donna e Mobile" with the likes of Luciano Pavarotti? Symphony, dance, and opera lovers find plenty to love in Chicago.

Civic duty

The Civic Opera House has played host to scores of famous operas, and when it comes to staging great plays, the Civic Theatre is perhaps best known for the 1944 premiere of Tennessee Williams's classic *The Glass Menagerie*. The theater (☎ 312-419-0033; www.civicoperahouse.com) is now part of the Civic Opera House. See the "Opera" section for information on the opera house.

Theater

You'll likely find yourself headed to one of several neighborhoods that form the base of Chicago's theater scene. What follows is the lowdown on each.

The Loop: An awakening theatrical giant

Chicago's Loop imports the best and biggest of Broadway's musicals and dramas. The largest theaters often play host to extended runs of popular shows, filling out their schedules with special events and one-night-only performances by big-name artists. Major Loop theaters include the following:

- ✓ **Auditorium Theatre**, 50 E. Congress Pkwy. at Michigan Avenue
(☎ 312-922-2110; www.auditoriumtheatre.org)
- ✓ **Cadillac Palace Theater**, 151 W. Randolph St. between North LaSalle and North Wells streets (☎ 312-384-1510)
- ✓ **Chicago Theatre**, 175 N. State St. at Lake Street (☎ 312-443-1130)
- ✓ **Ford Center for the Performing Arts/Oriental Theatre**, 24 W. Randolph St. at State Street (☎ 312-782-2004)
- ✓ **Goodman Theatre**, 170 N. Dearborn St. at Randolph Street (☎ 312-443-3800; www.goodman-theatre.org)
- ✓ **LaSalle Bank Theatre**, 22 W. Monroe St. at State Street
(☎ 312-977-1700)



Oriental Theatre's reversal of fortune

Among the success stories in the Loop theater revival is the **Ford Center for the Performing Arts**, a renovation of the former **Oriental Theatre**. But the road to success was long and winding:

- 1903 On December 30, fire sweeps through the Iroquois Theater killing 603 people during a Christmas show.
- 1926 On the site of the Iroquois, the Oriental Theatre opens — one of the first movie palaces to feature Far East-inspired décor, including turbaned ushers. The theater becomes Chicago's top spot to see first-run films and stage shows. Bob Hope, Judy Garland, the Three Stooges, and Danny Kaye are among those who tread its boards.
- 1970s The theater falls into disrepair and is shuttered, becoming the terrain of theatrical ghosts and rodents.
- 1998 After a makeover, the theater reopens as the Ford Center for the Performing Arts with a lavish production of the Broadway hit *Ragtime*.
- 2005 The theater is home to the kickoff for the award-winning Broadway hit *Wicked*.

Finding a better seat

Most of Chicago's grand old theaters have balconies that go way, way up toward the ceiling — and if you're stuck in the cheap seats, you'll be straining to see what's happening on stage. Although theaters are strict about checking tickets when you arrive, the ushers relax during intermission. So scope out empty seats during the first act, and then move down to better (and much pricier) spots for the rest of the show. (I've had great success with this tactic at the Auditorium Theatre, which is so huge that it rarely sells out.)

Lincoln Park: The cutting edge

Theaters in Lincoln Park leave the glitzy Broadway shows to larger venues and focus on original, edgy drama. **Steppenwolf Theatre Company** on Halsted Street launched the careers of Joan Allen, John Malkovich, and Gary Sinise, who often return to direct and act. In 2001, the **Victory Gardens Theater** became the third Chicago theater (after the Steppenwolf and the Goodman) to win a Tony for sustained excellence by a resident theater. It celebrated, in part, with a move to the historic, 299-seat Biograph Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln Ave. (☎ 773-871-3000). Its former location at 2257 N. Lincoln Ave. is now known as **Victory Gardens Theater Greenhouse**, and is home to smaller resident companies such as About Face.

Other Lincoln Park theaters offer popular performances by traveling troupes, such as Blue Man Group at the **Briar Street Theatre**. Following are some key Lincoln Park venues:

- ✓ **Apollo Theater**, 2540 N. Lincoln Ave. (☎ 773-935-6100; www.apollochicago.com)
- ✓ **Briar Street Theatre**, 3133 N. Halsted St. at Briar Street (☎ 773-348-4000)
- ✓ **Royal George Theatre Center**, 1641 N. Halsted St. at North Avenue (☎ 312-988-9000; www.theroyalgeorgetheatre.com)
- ✓ **Steppenwolf Theatre Company**, 1650 N. Halsted St. at North Avenue (☎ 312-335-1650; www.steppenwolf.org)
- ✓ **Victory Gardens Theater at the Biograph**, 2433 N. Lincoln Ave. (☎ 773-871-3000; www.victorygardens.org)

Around town: A few notables

Other major theaters around town include

- ✓ **Chicago Shakespeare Theater**, 800 E. Grand Ave. at Navy Pier (☎ 312-595-5600; www.chicagoshakes.com)



- ✓ **Lookingglass Theatre Company**, Water Tower Works, 821 N. Michigan Ave., Magnificent Mile (☎ 312-337-0665; www.lookingglasstheatre.org)
- ✓ **Rosemont Theatre**, 5400 N. River Rd., in the northwestern suburb of Rosemont (☎ 847-671-5100), a top stop for musicals and concerts
- ✓ **North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie**, 9501 Skokie Blvd., in the northern suburb of Skokie (☎ 847-673-6300), home to the well-respected Northlight Theater, the Skokie Valley Symphony Orchestra, and a series of touring acts, including comics, dance troupes, and children's programs

Symphony



Tickets to the world-renowned **Chicago Symphony Orchestra** are always in demand. (We're talking one of the great orchestras in the world, so what do you expect?) Classical is far from the only kind of music on tap, however. The "Symphony Center Presents" series has included top jazz, world, Latin, and cabaret artists in recent years.

Performances are held at the **Symphony Center**, 220 S. Michigan Ave. at Jackson (☎ 312-294-3000; www.cso.org). Now entering its second century, the symphony reserves most seats for season subscribers — but don't fear. You can call in advance for a limited number of tickets or order tickets over the Web site. Good seats may also be available on the day of the performance at the box office. Call Symphony Center or stop by the box office to check availability.

The **Chicago Cultural Center**, 78 E. Washington St. (☎ 312-744-6630), books a number of ensembles throughout the year, including the

Solti and Barenboim: Men with batons

If you try to conjure up the names of multiple Grammy winners, what performers spring to mind? Perhaps The Beatles, Whitney Houston, or Tony Bennett? How about the late, great Georg Solti? As the longtime director of the **Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO)**, Sir Georg Solti won many honors during his illustrious career. His 32 Grammy Awards make Solti the most decorated musician in both classical and popular music.

After Solti's death in 1997, Daniel Barenboim from the Orchestre de Paris became the CSO's musical director. Barenboim introduced more modern works by 20th-century composers to the orchestra's repertoire. But, of course, the ensemble still performs many of classical music's greatest hits by Beethoven, Brahms, and Mozart.

In 2006, the next era of the Chicago Symphony began when Barenboim moved on, and Bernard Haitink, an Amsterdam-born conductor with an international career spanning five decades, took the helm.



Rhapsody at Symphony Center: Dining before the overture

Symphony Center resulted from a \$105-million renovation that connected the original Orchestra Hall, home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, to the surrounding buildings, expanded the stage and seating area, and created an on-premises education center and restaurant, **Rhapsody**, 65 E. Adams St. at Wabash Avenue (☎ 312-786-9911). The restaurant serves contemporary American cuisine in a warm setting overlooking a small park. Concertgoers can savor every bite of the signature dessert — a chocolate brownie with a gooey, molten center, topped with chocolate sorbet and a treble-clef chocolate leaf — knowing that they're just steps from the concert hall.

Chicago Chamber Musicians. Many performances are free. For schedules, call the **Chicago Dance and Music Alliance** (☎ 312-987-1123; www.chicagoperformances.org).



Opera

The **Lyric Opera of Chicago** (☎ 312-332-2244; www.lyricopera.org) is one of the world's premier opera companies and performs at the Civic Opera House, at the corner of West Madison Street and North Wacker Drive. The Art Deco building is the country's second-largest opera house, with 3,563 seats, offering patrons a setting that's pleasing to the eye *and* the ear. Opening night in September remains the quasi-official kickoff of the Chicago social season, but don't be scared off by the snooky factor; audiences here are relatively casual (to the dismay of all those opera snobs).

You can always count on a spectacular set and outstanding music at the Lyric. The season sells out far in advance, but you can usually get turn-back tickets just before the performance.

Chicago Opera Theater (☎ 312-704-8414; www.chicagooperatheater.org) appeals to a broader audience that appreciates its emphasis on English-language productions, lower prices, and an abundance of available seats. Performances are at the Joan W. and Irving B. Harris Theater for Music and Dance in Millennium Park, at 205 E. Randolph Dr., just north of the Pritzker Pavilion.

Dance

Millennium Park — the high-profile cultural and recreational center in Grant Park — is home to the Joan W. and Irving B. Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph Drive (just north of the Pritzker Pavilion), a state-of-the-art 1,500-seat music and dance theater where all of Chicago's major dance troupes perform. For complete information on

local dance performances, call the Chicago Dance and Music Alliance information line at ☎ 312-987-1123 or check out www.chicagodances.com.



Founded in 1956 in New York and transplanted to Chicago, the **Joffrey Ballet of Chicago** (☎ 312-739-0120; www.joffreyballet.org) focuses on classic works of the 20th century, and experiments with contemporary music by pop stars have made this troupe popular with a wide range of audiences. The Joffrey continues to draw crowds to its popular rock ballet, *Billboards*, which is set to the music of Prince and continues to tour internationally. The company is usually in town in the spring (Mar or Apr), October, and December, when it stages a popular rendition of the holiday favorite *The Nutcracker*.

Dance lovers have flocked to contemporary dance performances by **Hubbard Street Dance Chicago** (☎ 312-850-9744; www.hubbardstreetdance.com) since 1978. The 22-member ensemble blurs the lines separating traditional forms and comes up with a truly American and original style. You can see elements of jazz, modern, ballet, and theater dance in their performances. Sometimes whimsical, sometimes romantic, the 22-member ensemble incorporates a range of dance traditions, from Kevin O'Day to Twyla Tharp, who has choreographed pieces exclusively for Hubbard Street. Although the troupe spends most of the year touring, it has regular two- to three-week Chicago engagements in the fall and spring. In the summer, the dancers often perform at Ravinia Festival, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's lovely outdoor pavilion in north-suburban Highland Park.



Bach in the 'burbs

In summertime, music lovers pack their picnic hampers and spread their blankets on the lawns at the **Ravinia Festival** (☎ 847-266-5100; www.ravinia.org) in Highland Park. The festival runs from mid-June through Labor Day weekend. Ravinia is the unofficial summer home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; the orchestra plays most weekends beginning at the end of June. The festival also features performances by the Joffrey Ballet and Hubbard Street Dance Chicago. Other offerings include jazz and pop performers such as Tony Bennett, Oscar Peterson, Lyle Lovett, and more. A program of Saturday-afternoon performances is geared toward kids. Tickets for the lawn run from \$8 to \$10; pavilion seating costs \$25 to \$50. For big names, call well in advance for tickets.

To get to the festival, take the **Metra** (☎ 312-322-6777; www.metrarail.com) commuter train from the Loop to Ravinia. The train stops conveniently at the gate and has schedules to coincide with showtimes.

Airwaves in the Windy City

Chicago's National Public Radio station WBEZ-FM (91.5 FM) is home to Ira Glass's *This American Life* program every Friday night at 7 p.m. and Saturday afternoon at 1 p.m. On your Chicago TV screen, WGN-TV (Channel 9), part of the Tribune Company media empire, can fill you in on Chicago's sports teams' progress — or lack thereof.

In addition, *Wait, Wait... Don't Tell Me!*, the weekly, hour-long NPR news quiz show, is taped most Thursday nights at the Chase Auditorium, 10 S. Dearborn Street. Tickets are \$20, and seating begins at 7 p.m. (The show is taped from 7:30–9:30 p.m.) It's a chance to play along and test your current-events knowledge with some of the best and brightest in the news and entertainment world, while trying to figure out what's real and what's made up. (Laughs abound!) Tickets can be booked in advance at www.npr.org.



The **Old Town School of Folk Music**, 4454 N. Lincoln Ave. between Wilson and Montrose avenues (**773-728-6000**; www.oldtownschool.org), covers a variety of indigenous musical forms, from country, folk, and bluegrass to Latin and Celtic. The school is best known as a training center offering a slate of music classes, but it also hosts everyone from the legendary Pete Seeger to bluegrass phenom Alison Krauss. Shows are reasonably priced, with tickets ranging from \$10 to \$25. The school's home, in a former 1930s library, is the world's largest facility dedicated to the preservation and presentation of traditional and contemporary folk music. The Old Town School also houses an art gallery showcasing exhibitions of works by local, national, and international artists; a music store offering an exquisite selection of instruments, sheet music, and hard-to-find recordings; and a cafe. The school hosts an annual **Chicago Folk and Roots Festival** in July in Wells Park at Lincoln and Montrose, with stage performances and an activity and craft tent for kids. Headliners are name-brand performers such as Patti Smith. The school maintains another retail store and a schedule of children's classes at its first location, 909 W. Armitage Ave.

Chapter 16

Hitting the Clubs and Bars

In This Chapter

- Hanging out at Chicago's best bars
- Feeling the vibes on the music and club scene
- Laughing out loud on the comedy circuit
- Getting fabulous at gay and lesbian bars and clubs

Is your perfect night out spent in a seedy but hip bar in an up-and-coming part of town, or nestled in a sofa in a wine bar? Do you want to dance the night away, or laugh until you cry at a comedy club? Maybe you'd like to experience the quintessential Chicago hangout — the neighborhood Irish bar, with patrons quaffing pints as folk singers perform ballads? Chicago has whatever gets you going after dark.



The legal drinking age is 21, and bars and clubs in the Lincoln Park area are especially tough on checking IDs. Some require patrons to be 23 — a policy aimed at circumventing the use of fake IDs. So if you're blessed with a baby face, don't forget your driver's license!



When stepping out, consider leaving your rental car in the garage. You won't have to deal with parking — which can often be difficult to find — or assign a designated driver. Instead, travel to your destination by public transportation or taxi, and return to your hotel by taxi. I don't recommend that you ride the bus or take the El late at night.

Hanging Out: Chicago's Best Bars

Prime areas for bars include River North; the Clybourn Corridor (along Clybourn Avenue north of West North Avenue); Lincoln Park, especially along Lincoln Avenue and Halsted Street; Bucktown and Wicker Park; and the Randolph Street Market District west of the Loop.

Most bars stay open until 1 or 2 a.m. Unless noted otherwise, the bars in this section don't charge a cover.

The Loop after Dark



- Auditorium Theatre **10**
 Buddy Guy's Legends **11**
 Cadillac Palace Theater **5**
 Chicago Cultural Center **4**
 Chicago Theatre **3**
 Civic Opera House **6**
 Ford Center for the Performing Arts/
 Oriental Theatre **2**
 Goodman Theatre **1**
 Kitty O'Shea's **12**
 LaSalle Bank Theatre **7**
 Pritzker Music Pavilion **8**
 Symphony Center **9**



Get Your Beer Here: Goose Island Brewery

In the heart of Lincoln Park, Goose Island's Clybourn Brewery is the perfect spot to sample the beers produced by Chicago's best-known brewery. Since 1988, Goose Island has been brewing up hand-crafted ales and lagers. You'll find ten drafts to choose from, and each Tuesday at 6 p.m., the pub premieres a new beer. Food is a step above the usual pub fare, and those in the know go for the Stilton burger. Also noteworthy are the prime steak salad and fish and chips, or, for those who just want a salty snack with their drink, baked Bavarian pretzels or homemade Clybourn pub chips. You can tour the brewery every Sunday at 3 p.m. for \$5. For Cubs fans, there's a second location in Wrigleyville, 3535 N. Clark St. (☎ 773-832-9040). 1800 N. Clybourn (at the three-way intersection with Sheffield and Willow). ☎ 312-915-0071. www.gooseisland.com. CTA: Red Line to North/Clybourn. Reservations not required. Main courses: Lunch \$15; dinner \$20. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Open: Thurs–Sat, 11 a.m.–10 p.m. (bar stays open until 1 a.m. and a late-night menu is served in the bar); Sun–Wed, 11 a.m.–10 p.m. (bar open until midnight).

The popular neighborhood pub **Brehon's**, 731 N. Wells St. at Superior Street, River North (☎ 312-642-1071), is a good place to shoot the breeze with the locals. Irish and Chicago memorabilia hang on the walls. Order a pint, get to talking, and you just may find that the fellow on the barstool next to you is a Chicago politician.

Celtic Crossings, 751 N. Clark St. near Chicago Avenue, River North (☎ 312-337-1005), is a warm, dark, friendly pub with two fireplaces and no TV. A diverse crowd of young and old, corporate and the artistically minded, gathers for quiet conversation over pints of Guinness and Harp. Go on Sunday evening for the traditional Irish music jam, and you're sure to meet some natives of the Emerald Isle.

Baseball fans vent before or after games at **Cubby Bear**, 1059 W. Addison St. across from Wrigley Field, Wrigleyville (☎ 773-327-1662; www.cubbybear.com). You'll find pool tables, darts, and TV screens are the focus. At night, the club is one of Chicago's premier rock venues, drawing a youngish crowd. There's no cover during the day or after games; otherwise, tickets usually are less than \$10 for most music, which really begins to rock out after 10 p.m.



Cullen's Bar and Grill, 3741 N. Southport Ave., Lakeview (☎ 773-975-0600), is a classic Irish bar with great food, including grilled shrimp appetizers, huge Caesar salads, mashed potatoes, and the requisite Irish dishes such as shepherd's pie. Combine dinner here with a movie at the old-time **Music Box Theatre** next door, 3733 N. Southport Ave. (☎ 773-871-6607), and you have a perfect evening. Sunday nights are among the liveliest here.

Delilah's, 2771 N. Lincoln Ave., Lincoln Park (☎ 773-472-2771), is a punk-rock bar smack-dab in the middle of yuppie Lincoln Park. Showcasing the best whiskey selection in town and arguably the most rocking jukebox, Delilah's is home to hard-core punk rockers, plus neighborhood regulars.

Fado, 100 W. Grand Ave. at Clark Street, River North (☎ 312-836-0066), is a reproduction of a Dublin pub. Traditional Irish music plays nonstop, and you can order up authentic Irish food and drink plus standard pub grub, including sandwiches, burgers, fries, and salads. The bar charges a cover on holidays.

Gamekeepers, 1971 N. Lincoln Ave., Lincoln Park (☎ 773-549-0400), appeals to a young, sports-minded crowd intent on watching the game on big-screen TVs.

Near the heart of Uptown, **Holiday Club**, 4000 N. Sheridan Rd. (☎ 773-348-9600), is home to Chicago's most diverse jukebox, offering Englebert Humperdink, Social Distortion, Naked Raygun, and Ray Charles. Holiday not only shakes out gallons of martinis a night but also has a decent beer selection. Groups of singles and couples in their 20s and 30s hang out here.

Hopleaf Bar, 5148 N. Clark St. (☎ 773-334-9851), is considered one of the best taverns in Chicago by those in the know. Serving excellent Belgian fare in a casual-cool Euro dining area, the bar offers an extensive Belgian beer list. Don't miss the mussels and frites.



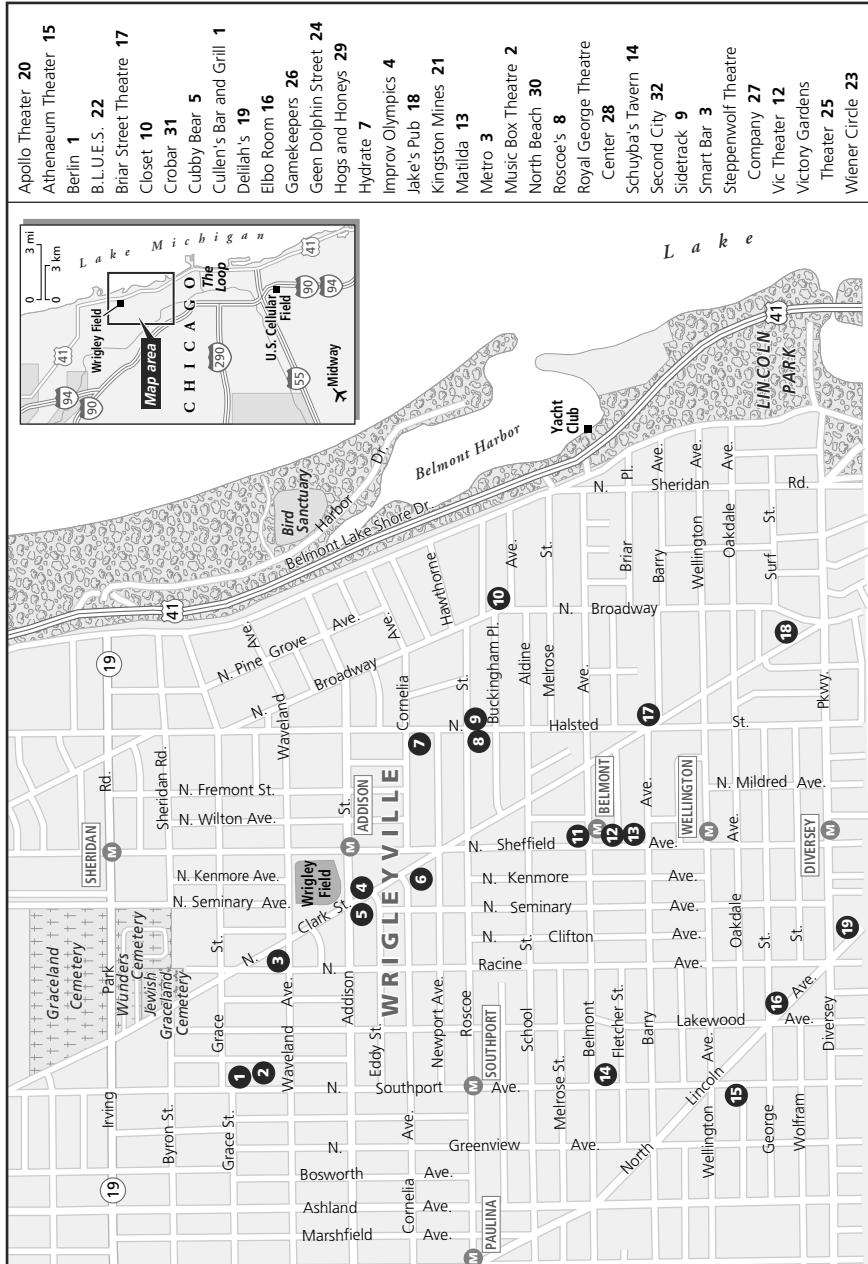
Jake's Pub, 2932 N. Clark St., Lincoln Park (☎ 773-248-3318), is a Chicago neighborhood bar on busy Clark Street. More than just a regular haunt for the local barflies, Jake's hops on Friday and Saturday nights with an eclectic mix of regulars, college kids, and people looking for an alternative to the sports-bar scene. Imported beers, a nicely stocked jukebox, and a pool table make Jake's a great hangout.

At **Kitty O'Shea's** in the Chicago Hilton and Towers, 720 S. Michigan Ave. between Balbo and Eighth streets, the Loop (☎ 312-922-4400), the brogues are as authentic as the Jameson and Guinness that are on offer. Most of the waitstaff are hired through an Irish government work-permit program. You find live Irish entertainment, a jukebox stacked with favorite Gaelic tunes, a collection of shillelaghs, and Irish pub food such as lamb stew. Main courses range from about \$8 to \$12.

Lemmings, 1850 N. Damen Ave., Bucktown/Wicker Park (☎ 773-862-1688), is the Bucktown version of Jake's Pub. A perfect place to escape the craziness of other overpopulated Bucktown bars, Lemmings exemplifies the neighborhood's laid-back atmosphere.

Matilda, 3101 N. Sheffield Ave., Lincoln Park (☎ 773-883-4400), is a low-key hipster (but not hip) meet-market (but not meat-market) bar. The 20- and 30-something crowd downs drinks while listening to college radio selections from the jukebox. In two large rooms with ample seating, Matilda's serves food and a wide selection of beers. The menu boasts

Lincoln Park and Wrigleyville after Dark







Late-night bites in Lincoln Park

When the Lincoln Park bars shut down at 2 a.m., the action moves to the **Wiener Circle**, 2622 N. Clark St. (☎ 773-477-7444). This hot dog stand is no-frills: You shout your order across the drunken crowd, and the only spots to sit are a few picnic tables out front. Open until 4 a.m. during the week and 5 a.m. on weekends, the Wiener Circle is the center of pre-dawn life in Lincoln Park — and I know people who swear that the greasy cheese-topped fries are the perfect hangover prevention.

the famed 1-pound “Heartstopper” burger, plus sandwiches, salads, and appetizers. The bar offers 30 types of martinis, plus 26 beers on tap — with a heavy emphasis on Chicago microbrews.

North Beach, 1551 N. Sheffield Ave. at North Avenue, Lincoln Park (☎ 312-266-7842), is a cavernous bar and entertainment complex that provides outdoor sports indoors. Sand volleyball, basketball, bowling, table tennis, and miniature golf entertain a youngish, corporate crowd. North Beach charges a cover on some nights, but you get your money back via drink specials.

You'll find a cozy atmosphere of booths and tables, as well as an inviting bar that caters to hipsters at the **Rainbo Club**, 1150 N. Damen Ave., Bucktown/Wicker Park (☎ 773-489-5999). This place is packed with a mix of “scenesters” and young professionals on the weekends; you may have a better experience if you go on a weekday night. Be sure to take some photos in the antiquated photo booth.

Getting the Beat: Music Venues

Chicago is home to the world's most popular and widely heard style of blues and is an important venue for jazz. The city offers just about anything you're looking for, including music for listening, dancing, and damaging your hearing (not recommended!). You can find comfortable piano bars and wild clubs with wilder people.



Many music venues don't get hopping until after 11 p.m., but arrive between 9 and 10 p.m. to allow time to get seats in the club, have a drink, and relax before the show. Most clubs continue to pulse until the wee hours, depending on what's happening onstage. So you're not turned away, call ahead before heading somewhere at 2 a.m.

Catching the blues

Celebrate the women of blues at **Blue Chicago**, 736 and 536 N. Clark St., River North (☎ 312-642-6261; www.bluechicago.com), which showcases top female talent. The cover charge (\$5–\$8) is good for both locations.

B.L.U.E.S., 2519 N. Halsted St. between Wrightwood and Fullerton avenues, Lincoln Park (☎ 773-528-1012; www.chicagobluesbar.com), satisfies the most ardent fans with live music 365 days a year. The dark, narrow club puts patrons up close to performers. Expect to spend the evening standing. The cover is \$5 to \$8.



If Chicago is the body and soul of blues music, then **Buddy Guy's Legends**, 754 S. Wabash Ave. between Balbo and Eighth streets, South Loop (☎ 312-427-0333; www.buddyguys.com), is its heart. Everyone from Eric Clapton to Muddy Waters has stopped in to jam and listen to the best in blues at this club owned and operated by blues legend Buddy Guy. Every January, Guy plays a series of shows that sell out early. The cover charge is usually under \$10.

Keep an eye out for Jake and Elwood at the **House of Blues**, 329 N. Dearborn St. at Kinzie Street, River North (☎ 312-923-2000; www.hob.com). Dan Aykroyd, also known as Elwood, is an owner. The hotel, restaurant, bar, and concert venue books a wide variety of acts and stages a popular Sunday gospel brunch for about \$35 with seatings at 9:30 a.m. and noon. The cover starts at \$10 and goes up to \$50 for a big name.

Kingston Mines, 2548 N. Halsted St. between Wrightwood and Fullerton avenues, Lincoln Park (☎ 773-477-4646; www.kingstonmines.com), has two stages' worth of blues greats. It may not be up to par with Buddy Guy's, but it's certain to satisfy your craving for down-home blues. Performances last until 4 a.m. on Saturdays. The cover charge is \$12 Sunday to Wednesday, \$12 on Saturday.



Smoke Daddy Rhythm and Bar-B-Que, 1804 W. Division St., Wicker Park (☎ 773-772-6656; www.thesmokedaddy.com), serves dinner in plastic baskets like your favorite barbecue joint, and tops it off with live music seven nights a week. The result is great blues and jazz in a laid-back, intimate atmosphere.

A lesson in blues

Chicago grew to be a blues music center in the 1930s and 1940s, when thousands of Mississippians migrated north for factory work. Blues musicians from the Delta created a hybrid form that became known as Chicago-style blues, probably the most popular and widely heard style of blues. These early musicians captured the rawness of the Delta style and combined that with a fully amplified sound. In the 1950s and beyond, Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon, Big Bill Broonzy, Howlin' Wolf, and other greats pioneered what became the early electric Chicago blues, featuring highly amplified harmonica, slide guitar, and piano. Today, Chicago bluesmen such as Buddy Guy, Lonnie Brooks, and the "Queen of Chicago Blues," vocalist Koko Taylor, continue to evolve the Chicago style. The blues is truly America's music — in fact, it's one of America's only indigenous art forms — so make sure to catch a show while you're in Chicago.

Jazzing up the night

Live jazz is performed practically 'round-the-clock, mostly by nationally known musicians, at **Andy's Jazz Club**, 11 E. Hubbard St. between State Street and Wabash Avenue, River North (☎ 312-642-6805; www.andysjazzclub.com). This loud, grungy hangout for serious jazz fans offers three-hour sets at lunch on weekdays and music throughout the evening all week. The kitchen stays open late; pizza and burgers are decent. The cover charge is \$5 Sunday through Thursday and \$10 and up Friday and Saturday; no cover is charged during lunch.

Green Dolphin Street, 2200 N. Ashland Ave. at Webster Avenue, Lincoln Park (☎ 773-395-0066; www.jazzitup.com), is a retro supper club that's slick — and pricey. Stylish patrons in their 30s, 40s, and 50s enjoy seafood and contemporary American cuisine from a celebrated kitchen and then head to an adjacent room that accommodates 200 people for live jazz. The music ranges from headliners, such as Wynton Marsalis, to experimental artists, plus Latin jazz and big-band music. The cover varies; on Sunday there is no cover charge. Main courses range from \$20 to \$30.



Known for great jazz in a historic setting, **Green Mill**, 4802 N. Broadway at Lawrence Avenue, near Andersonville (☎ 773-878-5552; www.greenmilljazz.com), was established in 1907 and frequented by mobster Al Capone. You can hear Latin jazz, big-band jazz, jazz piano, and more. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, jitterbugging hipsters come in for swing and big-band music. On Sunday, the club hosts Chicago's best-known poetry slam. The cover ranges from free to \$8.



Joe Segal, founder of **Jazz Showcase**, 59 W. Grand Ave. at Clark Street, River North (☎ 312-670-2473; www.jazzshowcase.com), has created this family-friendly venue that books some of the hottest names in the business. With two performances each night (open to audiences of all ages) and a 4 p.m. Sunday matinee, this club is ushering in the next generation of fans. The cover charge is usually \$20.

If you're in the mood for bubbly, **Pops for Champagne**, 601 N. State in River North (☎ 312-266-7677), offers more than 100 labels, plus live jazz combos. The jazz lounge cover varies.

Rockin' 'n' rollin' to live music

Drawing a 20-something crowd for bands near Wrigley Field is **Cubby Bear** (see "Hanging Out: Chicago's Best Bars" earlier in this chapter), a popular bar during the day.

A Wicker Park fixture, **Double Door**, 1572 N. Milwaukee Ave. at North Avenue (☎ 773-489-3160; www.doubledoor.com), attracts a broad audience by inviting edgy new groups to its stage nightly, from hip-hop to new country. The cover is \$5 to \$10, more for special performances.



Elbo Room, 2871 N. Lincoln Ave. at George Street, Lincoln Park (☎ 773-549-5549; www.elboroomchicago.com), defies classification. The eclectic acts range from hip-hop to Goth to rockabilly, and the crowds are equally diverse. The cover charge is \$3 and up; no cover is charged in the lounge.

Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western Ave., Bucktown/Wicker Park (☎ 773-276-3600; www.emptybottle.com), is the place to see local and national indie-rock and jazz acts. On the West Side, the Empty Bottle has been a bastion of ultracool for quite some time. The bar also features pool tables and pinball machines, as well as Pabst Blue Ribbon (in a bottle) for \$1.50. The annual Polyester Fest (each fall) is the best time to catch the interesting mix of local artists along with some national acts. Tickets rarely cost more than \$15.

Tiny Fireside Bowl, 2646 W. Fullerton Ave. between California and Western avenues, Bucktown/Wicker Park (☎ 773-486-2700), hosts occasional live music of the hip-hop, punk, and rock genres at 9 p.m. on Sundays — but it's still primarily a bowling alley. No cover charge.



One of Chicago's best and most famous concert venues, **Metro**, 3730 N. Clark St. at Racine Ave., Wrigleyville (☎ 773-549-0203; www.metrochicago.com), packs in a capacity crowd of about 1,100 people for local and national acts. (If you're going to see a popular act, get tickets in advance to avoid getting stuck outside.) The best bet is to hit the late-night, 18-and-over shows, when the crowd is subdued and into the music onstage. Admission varies from \$5 to \$40 but is usually around \$10.



Schuba's Tavern, 3159 N. Southport Ave. at Belmont Avenue, Lincoln Park (☎ 773-525-2508; www.schubas.com), is best known for local and national folk singers and songwriters and attracts rock and country-western acts as well. **The Harmony Grill**, the tavern's restaurant, has a capable kitchen that offers inexpensive late-night dining (some dishes are under \$10), including the usual bar appetizers, hearty sandwiches, thin-crust pizzas, and a small but eclectic selection of entrees ranging from Southern-style fried chicken to a large Mexican salad called the "Galexico." The cover is \$4 to \$15.



The Vic Theatre, 3145 N. Sheffield Ave. at Belmont Avenue, Lincoln Park (☎ 773-472-0449; www.victheatre.com), stages a variety of acts as well as the popular **Brew 'n View** (☎ 773-618-8439), where crowds of local 20-somethings enjoy second-run movies and an open bar. Cover prices vary depending on the show; Brew and View movie nights are \$5.

Tickling the ivories: Piano bars

An evening spent hanging in a piano bar is a relaxing escape from the bustle of the city, whether you choose to sit near the piano and exchange small talk with the performer or crawl into a cozy booth.

Chicago's big music venues

The roar of jet engines from nearby O'Hare greets visitors to the **Allstate Arena** (formerly the Rosemont Horizon), 6920 N. Mannheim Rd., Rosemont (☎ 847-635-6601; www.allstatearena.com). The host of Chicago Wolves minor league hockey team and DePaul University basketball doubles as a concert hall where big-name artists, from Fleetwood Mac to the Beastie Boys, take the stage. Two levels of seating in the round arena create a total of 18,500 seats. Renovations intended to improve acoustics and the views from the seats (some were obstructed) have improved the venue. Ticket prices vary.

The **Riviera Theatre**, 4746 N. Racine Ave. at Lawrence Avenue in Uptown (☎ 773-275-6800; www.rivieratheatre.com), is a moderately large theater that usually books new acts of the MTV variety. It's a classy venue that attracts a head-bobbing, standing-room-only crowd.

Just down the street from the Riviera, the **Aragon Ballroom**, 1106 W. Lawrence Ave. (☎ 773-561-9500; www.aragon.com), caters to guitar-heavy rockers and rapping emcees. With an open floor and festival seating, this venue is not for the faint of heart.

Piano bars, and some upscale bars without ivories, lie along the Magnificent Mile and adjoining streets, especially in hotels such as The Drake Hotel, the Raphael, and the InterContinental Chicago. Unless indicated otherwise, the piano bars in this section don't charge a cover.

Coq d'Or in The Drake Hotel, 140 E. Walton St. at Michigan Avenue, Magnificent Mile (☎ 312-787-2200), showcases pianists and vocalists seven nights a week from 9:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. Indulge in a martini, a specialty here, and enjoy the dark, speak-easy atmosphere.

Rush Street is home to **Jilly's**, 1007 N. Rush St. at Oak Street, Gold Coast (☎ 312-664-1001; www.jillyschicago.com). Jazz trios and piano stylists play this dark room, named after Frank Sinatra's manager. Photos of the Rat Pack decorate the walls. This lively place attracts a crowd in their 30s to 50s.

The upscale **Pump Room**, in the Omni Ambassador East Hotel, 1301 N. State Pkwy. at Goethe Street, Gold Coast (☎ 312-266-0360; www.pumproom.com), attracts an older crowd. Piano stylists and trios play smooth, soft standards and there's a small dance floor. Jackets are preferred for men. Reservations for the restaurant are strongly recommended. Come right after dinner.

Redhead Piano Bar, 16 W. Ontario St., River North (☎ 312-640-1000; www.redheadpianobar.com), is a favorite with the locals and located near many fine restaurants. This makes a great after-dinner spot.



The most striking element of the **Zebra Lounge**, 1220 N. State Pkwy. between Division and Goethe streets, Gold Coast (☎ **312-642-5140**), is its décor. Zebra-skin rugs and pictures of wildlife cover the walls. Go late and stay for the nightly singalong led by the pianist.

Staying Up Late: The Club Scene

Prime areas for clubs are River North; the Clybourn Corridor (along Clybourn Avenue north of West North Avenue); Lincoln Park, especially along Lincoln Avenue and Halsted Street; Bucktown and Wicker Park; and the Randolph Street Market District west of the Loop.



Clubs generally open late and close in the early morning, so traveling to and from them by taxi is best.

Used to be that this club offered a taste of post-apocalyptic décor in an industrial neighborhood, but these days the atmosphere is open and airy, and a bit more welcoming. **Crobar**, 1543 N. Kingsbury St. south of North Avenue, Lincoln Park (☎ **312-337-5001**; www.crobarchicago.com), is where young, hip patrons wag their tails to trip-hop, techno, and old-school beats in one of Chicago's largest dance halls. Cover charge ranges from nothing to \$20.

Level, 1045 N. Rush St. (☎ **312-397-1045**; www.levelchicago.com), is a late-night club with an elevated dance floor, and martinis that you can order by number. Level 5, for example, is a peach Bellini made with Grey Goose, peach schnapps, and champagne. The look is sparse and modern, and no one comes to eat — this is dancing and drinking only. Cover ranges from \$5 to \$20.

At **Hogs & Honeyes**, 1555 N. Sheffield Ave. (☎ **312-377-1733**; www.hogsandhoneys.com), you can dance on the bar, ride the mechanical bull, and enjoy the sounds of Kid Rock on the sound system. Cover is \$5; if you're brave, you can pay \$3 for a ride on the bull.

The music is throbbing, the dancing is rhythmic and the atmosphere is romantic at **Rednolive**, 440 N. Halsted St., River West (☎ **312-733-6699**; www.rednofive.com), where the city's top DJs spin techno until 4 a.m. The cover charge is \$5 to \$20.

Smart Bar, 3730 N. Clark St., Wrigleyville (☎ **773-549-4140**; www.smartbarchicago.com), in the basement of Metro (see "Rockin' 'n' rollin' to live music," earlier this chapter), is one of the coolest clubs in Chicago. The bar often fills when shows end at Metro. The DJs do some serious spinning. Every night features a different style of music, so ask before you enter. The bar stays open until 5 a.m. on weekends. There's no cover before 11 p.m. during the week; at other times, the cost is \$5 to \$15.

Dreadlocks and Red Stripe beer abound at the **Wild Hare** (the original name was the Wild Hare and Singing Armadillo Frog Sanctuary), 3530 N.

Clark St. between Addison and Roscoe streets, Wrigleyville (☎ 773-327-4273; www.wildharereggae.com). Chicago's premier reggae bar has hosted such notables as the Wailers and Yellowman. There's no cover until 9:30 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday; afterward, the charge ranges from \$7 to \$15.

Laughing the Night Away: Comedy Clubs



The Second City, 1616 N. Wells St. at North Avenue, Lincoln Park (☎ 312-337-3992; www.secondcity.com), packs a comic punch line — with a pedigree. Alan Alda, Alan Arkin, Ed Asner, Dan Aykroyd, John Belushi, John Candy, Dan Castellaneta (also known as "Homer Simpson"), Chris Farley, Shelley Long, Elaine May, Tim Meadows, Bill Murray, Brian Doyle-Murray, Mike Nichols, Gilda Radner, Joan Rivers, Martin Short, George Wendt . . . whew! The list goes on, but you get the point: The

Mixing humor and history: The Second City Neighborhood Tour

Those who like their history sprinkled with improv comedy — and who doesn't? — should not miss The Second City Neighborhood Tour. A joint effort between the Chicago Historical Society and The Second City, these humorous and historic guided tours of Chicago's Old Town neighborhood (where the improv theater has had its home since 1959) take place on Sunday afternoons from April through September.

The tours are more than just fun: You can also gain real insight into the impact of popular entertainment on the history of Chicago and the role that humor has played — sometimes unintentionally — throughout the decades.

The walking tours begin at the Historical Society, at Clark Street and North Avenue, and are led by actors from The Second City. The route starts with a rapid history of America since 1492, and includes stops at the Old Town Ale House (the favorite bar of many Second City performers), Chris Farley's former apartment (above a Mexican restaurant on Wells), St. Michael's Church, Twin Anchors (Frank Sinatra's favorite rib joint), and the Crilly Court Apartments. The tours end with a visit to The Second City on Wells Street.

It's \$15 for the two-hour tours, which begin at 4 p.m. each Sunday. I highly recommend buying the \$31 discounted package deal for the tour plus a show at The Second City (every tour ticket also allows free admission to the Historical Society galleries). After the tour, you'll have time to eat dinner in the Old Town neighborhood, then catch the 8 p.m. performance. You may purchase tickets directly from **The Second City box office** at 1616 N. Wells St., over the phone (☎ 312-337-3992), via The Second City Web site (www.secondcity.com), or through a link at the CHS Web site (www.chicagohistory.org). Advance reservations are recommended, especially for groups of eight or more.

alumni of The Second City — Chicago’s comic breeding ground — read like a laundry list of American comedic talent. Some of the alums hail from the Toronto branch, but they’re all part of this improv factory, one of the most prolific training grounds in American theater history. You rarely see a bad show here. Tickets are easy to get, and shows change frequently — no doubt you’ll see at least one rising star. You can choose between two sketch-comedy productions on the main stage and ETC (et cetera), a smaller venue. The cover charge runs \$8 to \$16.

A block away at **Zanies Comedy Club**, 1548 N. Wells St. between North Avenue and Schiller Street (☎ 312-337-4027; www.chicago.zanies.com), high-caliber comedians treat sold-out houses to the best in standup. The cover charge is \$18 to \$20, with a two-item food/drink minimum.



ImprovOlympics, 3541 N. Clark St. at Addison Street, Wrigleyville (☎ 773-880-0199; www.iochicago.net), engages the audience as the talented cast solicits suggestions and creates original performances. You pay a \$5 to \$14 cover charge.

Stepping Out: Gay and Lesbian Scene

The gay and lesbian scene plays out in clubs and bars in the Lakeview neighborhood (especially along Belmont Avenue) and along North Halsted Street, also known as Boys Town.

At **Berlin**, 954 W. Belmont Ave. at Sheffield Avenue (☎ 773-348-4975; www.berlinchicago.com), the party doesn’t start until midnight. The dance club showcases male dancers (sometimes on tables in G-strings). The room is dark and the music loud. Weeknights, it’s a mostly gay crowd, and weekends bring a more eclectic group. It’s open nightly, with a \$3 cover Tuesday to Thursday and a \$5 cover on Friday and Saturday.

Big Chicks, 5024 N. Sheridan Rd. between Argyle Street and Foster Avenue (☎ 773-728-5511; www.bigchicks.com), appeals to the culture-hungry. The club generally attracts gay men and a few lesbians interested in checking out the artwork displayed on the bar and bathroom walls. There’s no cover.

A bank of television monitors cycling through music videos and sporting events greets visitors to the **Closet**, 3325 N. Broadway at Buckingham Street (☎ 773-477-8533; www.theclosetbar.com). The bar attracts mostly lesbian regulars. There’s no cover.

A lounge and dance club, **Hydrate**, 3458 N. Halsted St. at Newport Avenue (☎ 773-975-9244; www.hydratechicago.com), opens onto Halsted Street with garage door-like windows.

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One of Chicago's best-known gay bars, **Roscoe's Tavern**, 3356 N. Halsted St. at Roscoe Street (**773-281-3355**; www.roscoes.com), has six bars, a huge dance floor, and antique décor. Check out the patio garden. The \$4 cover applies only after 10 p.m. on Saturday.

Across the street from Roscoe's, **Sidetrack**, 3349 N. Halsted St. (**773-477-9189**; www.sidetrackchicago.com), draws a diverse gay crowd with its snappy video bar. The patio holds outdoor seating in the summer. There's no cover.

Part VI

The Part of Tens

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant

BY RICH TENNANT

I enjoyed yelling out improvisational situations at Second City last night too. But this is The Joffrey Ballet...



In this part . . .

In the Part of Tens, you prioritize (with the top ten Chicago experiences) and brainstorm (with ten creative ideas for days when the weather isn't cooperating). Avoid tourist traps and Chicago clichés with my tips on ten Chicago experiences to avoid. Soon, you'll be experiencing Chicago as the locals do!

Chapter 17

Ten Oh-So-Chicago Experiences

In This Chapter

- Experiencing the city like a local
- Sightseeing, shopping, and cheering the best of Chicago
- Going beyond the typical tourist destinations

In this vibrant, diverse city, you'll be faced with a serious dilemma: One person can't possibly see and do everything. (Particularly on summer weekends, when festivals, the beach, and Lincoln Park all beckon, I'd love to be able to clone myself!) To get you started, this chapter includes a list of what I consider quintessential Chicago experiences.



Every activity in this chapter qualifies as a local pastime.

Strolling the Lakefront

Chicagoans use the lakefront every possible way: for walking, inline skating, biking, running, swimming, picnicking, and playing volleyball. Whatever you do, be sure not to miss Chicago's endless blue inland sea. The lake is a year-round destination. Summers on the lakefront can get crowded, but that's part of the fun. Even in winter, you can see hardy souls out for a run while waves crash onto the shoreline. Most activity takes place around Oak Street Beach (just north of the Magnificent Mile) and North Avenue Beach (several blocks north of Oak Street).

Sightseeing on the Chicago River and Lake Michigan



By far the best way to scope out the city is by taking a boat tour. My favorite is the Chicago Architecture Foundation's "Architecture River Cruise," which travels up and down the north and south branches of the Chicago River. Getting onto the water gives you a fresh perspective on a

city that grew up around a lake and a river. Nothing beats being on the water on a warm day with the sun glinting off Chicago's glorious skyscrapers and a cool breeze at your back. Other options include dinner cruises, the "ducks" (amphibian land/water transports), speedboats, and tall ships. To find a boat trip, see Chapter 11 for more information, or head for the Michigan Avenue Bridge (Michigan Avenue and the Chicago River) or Navy Pier, where most tours start.

Shopping on Michigan Avenue

Tourists aren't the only ones crowding Michigan Avenue on the weekends: Chicagoans love to shop. Whether you want to browse, buy, or people-watch, hit Michigan Avenue. And try, just try, to resist its temptations, from Niketown to Nordstrom, Burberry's to Bloomingdale's. (See Chapter 12 for more on shopping.)

But don't get so caught up in retail frenzy that you miss the charming points of the avenue: Fourth Presbyterian Church, the plaza of the John Hancock Center, and Water Tower (the actual tower, not the mall of the same name). And do not — I repeat, *do not* — miss the best view of the city from the Michigan Avenue Bridge, looking up and down the Chicago River at the architectural gems lining the banks. Go at night when the colored lights shine on the river and the Wrigley Building, and I guarantee you'll fall in love with Chicago.

Visiting State Street around the Holidays

Between the Daley Plaza Christmas tree, the Christkindlmarket featuring vendors from all over Germany as well as Chicago, and the windows at Macy's (formerly Marshall Field's), State Street puts on a real show during the holidays. The unveiling of the Macy's windows is a much-anticipated event, and having breakfast or lunch around the gigantic Christmas tree in the stately Walnut Room is a time-honored tradition for generations of Chicagoans. (See Chapter 12 for more info.)

Cheering the Cubbies



Wrigley Field is not to be missed. In fact, Chicagoans regularly play hooky to hang out in the bleachers on a perfect summer afternoon. Eat a hot dog. Exercise your lungs during the singing of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame." Take a kid with you. I'm sure you'll leave agreeing with me that Wrigley Field is the most charming ballpark in America. (See Chapter 11 for more on Wrigley Field.)

Getting the Blues

This most American of music forms is venerated by Chicagoans, who keep the blues alive nightly in the city's clubs. Chicago-style blues is what most people think of when you mention live blues in a nightclub setting. You can still find tiny bandstands in smoky bars where musicians jam away on electric guitar, amplified harp (or harmonica to the uninitiated), piano, bass, and drums. You can find a remarkable range of clubs, from down-to-earth Buddy Guy's Legends in the South Loop to Kingston Mines in Lincoln Park, where musicians perform continuously on two stages. (See Chapter 16 for more on the blues.)

Hearing Music under the Stars

Ah, summertime. In Chicago, summer is the season for spreading blankets and picnicking on the lawns at the Ravinia Festival, located in suburban Highland Park. Ravinia is one of the nation's best-known — and just plain *best* — summer music festivals. It runs nightly throughout the summer and offers Saturday matinee concerts especially for kids. Ravinia is the unofficial summer home of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and also features pop performances. On summer eves, you can see many people toting picnic baskets to catch the Metra train to Ravinia from downtown. Grab your own refreshments and join them. (See Chapter 15 for more on the Ravinia Festival.)

Taking in a Show

Chicagoans love their homegrown theater companies, including the Goodman (which has a spectacular home in the Loop) and the innovative Steppenwolf Theatre. You can also choose from shows in the revitalized North Loop Theater District with its Broadway-style theaters. The city's resident Shakespeare troupe is well-loved and makes its home on Navy Pier. (See Chapter 15 for the Chicago theater scene.)

Riding the El

New York City buried its elevated train decades ago, but the noisy, dirty El (Chicago's elevated train), which blocks sunlight from the streets beneath its tracks, is a quintessential part of Chicago. Even if you have nowhere in particular to go, hop on the El and ride around the Loop. The brown line heading south takes you on an up-close-and-personal view of Chicago's financial center. (See Chapter 8 for more on the El.)

Discovering Wonders at Chicago's Museums

Generations of Chicagoans recall certain exhibits at Chicago museums with nostalgia. I remember Colleen Moore's Fairy Castle at the Museum of Science and Industry — the most fantastic dollhouse you'll ever see. My brother will never forget the Santa Fe Model Railway at the same museum. Whatever your fancy, you can find an exhibit about it somewhere among the Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum, Field Museum of Natural History, Art Institute of Chicago, Museum of Science and Industry, John G. Shedd Aquarium, or Museum of Contemporary Art. (See Chapter 11 for more on Chicago's museums.)

Chicago's Museum Campus is home to a trio of museums — the Field Museum, Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum, and John G. Shedd Aquarium — on a landscaped 57-acre area with terraced gardens and broad walkways. In my humble opinion, the Museum Campus is the most impressive collection of museums in the most beautiful setting anywhere in the United States, so don't miss out!

Chapter 18

Ten Things to Do in Bad Weather

In This Chapter

- Making the best of a cold or rainy day
 - Hanging out indoors
 - Keeping your spirits high when the wind blows
-

Face it: Chicago's weather can throw you a curveball at any moment. From sunny and warm to windy and cold, you can easily find yourself wanting to take shelter from the city's occasionally inclement weather. If the weather gets in the way of enjoying Chicago, try one of these indoor activities.

Taking Tea

For about \$30, you can be served in one of Chicago's finest hotels and linger for hours over pots of tea, finger sandwiches, scones, and pastries. Civilized, relaxing, and, best of all, sheltered from the storm, having a civilized, sit-down tea is a great way to while away the day. Try **The Drake Hotel**, the **Ritz-Carlton**, the **Peninsula**, or the **Four Seasons**. (See Chapter 10 for more on the best teas in town.)

Hitting a Michigan Avenue Mall

Chicago has a unique innovation: the downtown, high-rise mall. The **900 North Michigan**, **Water Tower Place**, **Chicago Place**, and **Westfield North Bridge** malls can keep you warm, dry, and entertained for hours. (See Chapter 12 for more on shopping.)

Immersing Yourself in the Art Institute



When storms lash the lakefront, head straight for the **Art Institute of Chicago**. The museum's renowned Impressionist collection includes one of the world's largest collections of paintings by Monet. A little

Impressionistic romance is just the thing on a rainy or snowy day. (See Chapter 11 for details on the Art Institute.)

Luxuriating at a Spa

Indulge yourself in a massage, facial, or manicure at one of Chicago's many spas. Ask your concierge for a spa near you, or check out my favorite, **Mario Tricoci Salon and Day Spa**, 900 N. Michigan Ave. (☎ 312-915-0960; www.tricoci.com). Also nearby is **Kiva**, 196 E. Pearson St. (☎ 312-840-8120; www.premierspacollection.com), named after sacred healing places in the Southwest, offering a peaceful, soothing atmosphere, massage therapy, facials, and spa services.

Reading at a Cafe

Go to **Borders** on Michigan Avenue across from Water Tower Place, pick up a book, and head for a comfy cafe. Farther north, in the Southport neighborhood is a local favorite, **Julius Meinl Café**, 3601 N. Southport Ave. (☎ 773-868-1857; www.meinl.com/southport/home.html). At this first U.S. cafe by the venerable Viennese coffee and fine food purveyor, Mr. Meinl himself has had a hand in translating the classic Viennese coffeehouse for the U.S. market. Pastries are out of this world — I love the white chocolate mousse cake with layers of raspberry filling, covered in a soft and creamy white chocolate icing — and coffee is served to you on a silvery tray, accompanied by a small glass of water. Order a steaming *mélange* (coffee with milk), settle into a booth in front of the large picture windows that front Southport Avenue, and enjoy the live music that's frequently on offer here.

Working Out in a Health Club

Ask your concierge about your hotel's health-club facilities. If your hotel doesn't have its own club, it may have an agreement with a nearby club that you can visit for a minimal fee. Chicago's largest athletic club is the **East Bank Club**, located in River North at 500 N. Kingsbury (☎ 312-527-5800; www.eastbankclub.com). It features a mammoth 25,000-square-foot cardiovascular room, two large indoor pools, two restaurants, and a carryout food shop.

Seeing the Stars at the Planetarium

Even in cloudy weather, you can see the stars during the sky shows at the **Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum** (☎ 312-922-7827; www.adlerplanetarium.org). Choose from a tour of the solar system or of the Hubble Telescope's view of the visible universe. You can also take a

voyage to the edge of a black hole. Shows change frequently, so call ahead for the latest. (See Chapter 11 for details on this museum.)

Catching Up on a Movie

Time it right, and you may even get the matinee rate at one of Chicago's many theaters (see Chapter 11 for some listings). To find out what's on, call **MovieFone** at **312-444-3456** or visit www.fandango.com. Buy some candy and popcorn and you won't mind that rain and blowing wind so much.

One of my personal favorites is the **Music Box Theatre**, 3733 N. Southport Ave. (**773-871-6604**; www.musicboxtheatre.com). The ornate theater opened in 1929 and has a hodgepodge Spanish-Italianate décor built to suggest that you're watching a movie in an outdoor plaza somewhere in Italy. The theater, which shows mostly independent films, still has its own organist who plays before shows.

During the holidays, the Music Box sponsors a holiday movie marathon and singalong. In between showings of movies such as *White Christmas* and *Holiday Inn*, the organist and Santa lead the audience in singing carols. Bring your jingle bells and Santa hat and get into the spirit.

Watching the Weather from the Oceanarium



John G. Shedd Aquarium is home to a 3-million-gallon saltwater oceanarium. A wall of windows reveals the lake outside, creating the illusion of miles of sea. You'll find beluga whales, dolphins, otters, and seals, none of which could care less that it's raining or snowing outside. (See Chapter 11 for more on the aquarium.)

Going Out for Dinner

When the weather gets bad in wintertime, Chicagoans don't hole up at home. You'll find them overcoming cabin fever by dining at the city's many fabulous restaurants. Go out, lounge at the bar, eat a leisurely meal, and dream of the day that you can run off your meal on the lake-front. (See Chapter 10 for restaurants.)

Chapter 19

Ten Chicago Don'ts

In This Chapter

- Keeping it real in Chicago
- Skipping tourist traps
- Spending your money wisely

It's easy to go astray when you're visiting an unfamiliar city. From coping with weather hazards to dressing the part, you can make a lot of missteps before you figure out how to do things the way the locals do.

In this chapter, I reinforce the importance of avoiding tourist traps, and give you some general advice for your visit to help you get the most enjoyment out of it. You'll be amazed at how much fun it is to bring your kids along, find out about architecture, delve into neighborhoods that aren't packed with chain stores and restaurants, and experience some of the new and exciting activities that Chicago offers, from Millennium Park to the John G. Shedd Aquarium, and the hot shopping and dining areas of Bucktown/Wicker Park, Lakeview, Southport Avenue, and more.

Don't Get Blown Away

True story: Chicago's famous winds once blew me off my feet and would have rolled me into traffic on Lake Shore Drive if it were not for a light pole, which I (fortunately) hit and clung to for dear life. It seems there's one day each year, usually in February or March, when the Windy City becomes downright hazardous. I once saw a woman blown off her feet while crossing Michigan Avenue — she landed flat on her back in the middle of an intersection. Don't get yourself into that position. (On such days, you should definitely avoid construction sites, where building materials may come loose.) Severe winds don't usually last for more than a day. Take shelter, and see Chapter 18 for ideas on how to stay entertained inside until the winds subside.

Don't Fall Prey to the Chain-Store Mentality

Like most large cities, Chicago is bursting with chain stores and restaurants, from Niketown to the Hard Rock Cafe. Now, I'm not against these

places in every circumstance. Yes, I have seen a great concert at the Hard Rock, and yes, I have purchased sporting goods at Niketown, but please make an effort to strike out into lesscharted territory during your stay. So many amazing stores, restaurants, and activities can only be experienced in Chicago, from riding the El to eating a gigantic sundae in a conch shell at Margie's Candies, to viewing the skyline from the 15-story Ferris wheel at Navy Pier. It's all about having an authentic Chicago experience, as opposed to having an experience you could have in any one of a dozen big cities.

Don't Relive Tired Clichés about Chicago

Yes, gangsters did live here in the 1920s; and yes, our politics are stormy; and yes, a big fire caused by a cow did ravage the city once; and yes, we had stockyards that weren't particularly clean and nice; and yes, Michael Jordan did play here; and yes, Oprah does live here. But don't fall prey to a dozen gangster tours and spend all your money on Michael Jordan jerseys. You'll miss the cosmopolitan, forward-thinking place that Chicago is today. Head for Millennium Park, John G. Shedd Aquarium on Museum Campus, and the lovely tree-lined streets and refurbished brownstones of Lincoln Park, Lakeview, and Wrigleyville to see the people and places that are making Chicago great today.

Don't Fear That Appreciating Architecture Is beyond You

One of Chicago's main claims to fame is its skyline, and you'd be missing out by not learning a little about the buildings and architects who shaped our city. The docents for the Chicago Architecture Foundation's tours do a good job of making the tours enjoyable for visitors with all levels of architectural knowledge. In addition to pointing out famous buildings — Marina City, the Civic Opera House, the Sears Tower, and the Merchandise Mart, to name a few — they approach the sites thematically, explaining, for example, how Chicagoans' use of, and attitudes toward, the river have changed in the past two centuries. You'll hear not just about architectural styles, but stories that bring the city to life.

On a recent tour of South Michigan Avenue, a docent pointed skyward and asked us, "Did you notice that buffalo statue on top of that skyscraper?" It turns out that not only was there a buffalo statue perched on top of a skyscraper, but the skyscraper next door was topped by something just as interesting — a blimp port. Turns out that back in the day, blimps were thought to be the next great mode of transportation, and buildings installed landing ports in anticipation. Who knew? These and many more fascinating facts come to light during a tour.

Don't Leave Your Kids at Home

Of the largest cities in the United States, I think Chicago is easiest to navigate with kids in tow. Our streets are busy but not impossibly congested, and you don't have to drive long distances on snarled freeways to get to attractions. Cultural attractions that please kids as well as adults are many, from the Museum of Science and Industry to Navy Pier to Millennium Park and Wrigley Field.

In the wintertime, stay in a hotel with a pool, and you'll find yourself in good company: Plenty of Chicago families check themselves in for the weekend to swim and escape cabin fever (and the city's great hotel deals in Jan and Feb make these getaways completely affordable).

Chicago has the added benefit of the lakefront and a long string of emerald parks — perfect for letting kids blow off steam after a day of touring. Midwesterners have a friendly attitude that's laid-back enough to put most parents and kids at ease, so bring the kids along. Soon you'll find that you've established some family lore — from exploring the U-505 at the Museum of Science and Industry, to having brunch at Macy's Walnut Room, to standing in the spray of Buckingham Fountain in Grant Park.

Don't Choose Vanity over Practicality

In the wintertime, even the most stylish Chicagoans dress for the weather. Parkas, scarves, boots with rubber soles, fuzzy hats, and mittens are all very much required here. If you're teetering along icy sidewalks in impossibly high heels and you've left your hat in your hotel room for fear of ruining your carefully coiffed hair, Chicagoans are going to look at you cross-eyed. Wear sensible boots so you don't slip and break your neck, and for goodness' sake, cover your head!

Don't Be Afraid to Venture into Neighborhoods

Some of the most authentic Chicago experiences can't be found along Michigan Avenue. Hyde Park's unique combination of academia and magnificent mansions, Andersonville's Swedish bakeries, Lincoln Square's German delicatessens, Pilsen's Mexican murals and taquerias, Greektown's candle shops and outdoor rooftop restaurants, Devon Avenue's Indian "chat" (or snack) shops in Rogers Park, Uptown's historic theaters and Asian grocery stores — you have a whole world of neighborhoods to explore. Try to visit at least one to gain an understanding of how Chicagoans really live.

Don't Be Naive about Dangerous Areas



Now that I've encouraged you to explore, I have to add a caveat: Don't be naive about the city. Hyde Park, for example, is one of Chicago's most interesting neighborhoods and definitely merits a visit, but venture beyond its borders, and you'll find yourself in some of the most blighted, crime-ridden areas of the city. It's no joke. Keep your head on straight, don't wander into new areas at night, and keep within established neighborhood borders. When in doubt, turn back to an area that you know is safe.

Don't Get Stuck in Tourist Traps

Chicago can drain your resources, from pricey museum admissions to pricey wares on the Magnificent Mile, to pricey meals in tourist areas (especially those tourist areas where you're a captive audience, such as Navy Pier). Even if you're not on a tight budget, you don't want to feel like you're being taken advantage of. (And you may not want to waste money on an overpriced cup of coffee when you could spend it on a souvenir in the Chicago ArchiCenter gift shop.) Use this book and its Bargain Alert icons to save yourself some cash. Take advantage of museum free days. Stock up on drinks and snacks at local grocery stores before you head to Navy Pier. That way, you can eat, drink, and be merry that night with dinner at the Atwood Café and a show in the North Loop Theater District — a much better use of your money.

Don't Go Fest-Crazy

In the summertime, Chicago becomes one big festival. By the middle of summer, one seems to blend right into the next — from Puerto Rican Fest to garden walks (really, just neighborhood street festivals in disguise) to music fests from country to gospel. Some of these festivals are worthwhile (Jazz Fest, Blues Fest, and the Air & Water Show come to mind) and some are not (Taste of Chicago is an example). There's a point when many festivals become one sticky, humid, mess of humanity, blended with the smells of grilled meat, funnel cakes, and Port-A-Potties. Yuck! Plan your fest-going carefully. Go early in the morning, leave before the crowds arrive, and head for another attraction. Think of it this way: If everyone else in Chicago is at Grant Park for Taste of Chicago, you'll have the Field Museum all to yourself.

Appendix

Quick Concierge

Fast Facts

AAA

For general information and emergency road service, call **800-222-4357**.

Ambulance

Call **911**.

American Express

You find two locations in Chicago: 55 W. Monroe (**312-541-5440**) and 605 N. Michigan (**312-943-7840**).

Area Codes

The **312** area code covers the Loop and all neighborhoods south of North Avenue. The rest of the city has a **773** area code. Suburban area codes are **847** (northern), **708** (west and southwest), and **630** (far west).

ATMs

ATMs are widely available. The Cirrus (**800-424-7787**; www.mastercard.com) and Plus (**800-843-7587**; www.visa.com) networks are the most popular. Check the back of your ATM card to see which networks your bank belongs to; then use the toll-free number to locate ATMs in Chicago.

Baby Sitters

Check with the concierge at your hotel, who is likely to have worked with sitters in the past. One referral service is American Childcare Service (**312-644-7300**), a

state-licensed and insured service. This agency requires that its caregivers undergo background checks, furnish references, and be trained in infant and child CPR.

Business Hours

Most businesses operate on a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. schedule. Banks are open during the week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon. Monday through Saturday, store hours are usually 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., with many stores open until 8 p.m. on Thursday. On Sunday, department stores are usually open from noon to 6 p.m., while smaller stores may close by 5 p.m. or not open at all.

Cameras and Photo Developing

Wolf Camera has a convenient downtown location at the corner of Chicago and Rush streets (**312-943-5531**). You can get instant reprints and enlargements as well as one-hour film processing.

Convention Centers

McCormick Place, located at 23rd Street and Lake Shore Drive (**312-791-7000**; www.mpea.com), is Chicago's major convention hall.

Credit Cards

Toll-free emergency numbers include American Express, **800-528-4800**; Visa, **800-847-2911**; and MasterCard, **800-307-7309**.

Doctors

Hotel concierges often keep lists of doctors (and dentists). If you have an emergency, call for the hotel physician or go to the nearest emergency room. Northwestern Memorial Hospital has an excellent emergency room located at 250 E. Erie St. near Fairbanks Court (☎ 312-926-5188).

Emergencies

For police, fire, and ambulance, call ☎ 911.

Hot Lines

Travelers Aid Society is ☎ 312-660-1300. The Chicago police department runs a number of hot lines in addition to ☎ 311, the city's nonemergency number. One such number is the Superintendent's hot line, at ☎ 312-939-5555.

Hospitals

Northwestern Memorial Hospital is located right off North Michigan Avenue at 251 E. Huron St. (☎ 312-926-2000).

Internet Access and Cybercafes

You can easily get on the Web at Screenz, 2717 N. Clark St. (☎ 773-348-9300). Visit www.cybercafe.com for locations of hundreds of Internet cafes around the globe.

Liquor Laws

The minimum legal age to buy and consume alcoholic beverages in Illinois is 21. Most bars have a 2 a.m. license that also allows them to stay open until 3 a.m. Sunday (Sat night). Others have a 4 a.m. license that also allows them to stay open until 5 a.m. Sunday.

Mail

Chicago's main post office is at 433 W. Harrison (☎ 800-275-8777) and has free parking. Another convenient branch is

located at 227 E. Ontario, 2 blocks east of Michigan Avenue.

Maps

Barnes & Noble and Borders bookstores have sections devoted to Chicago travel books and maps (see Chapter 12 for more).

Newspapers and Magazines

The two major daily newspapers are the *Chicago Tribune* (☎ 312-222-3232; www.chicagotribune.com) and *Chicago Sun-Times* (☎ 312-321-3000; www.suntimes.com). *Chicago Reader* (☎ 312-828-0350; www.chicagoreader.com) is a free weekly that has extensive entertainment listings. *Chicago Magazine* is the city's glossy monthly (☎ 800-999-0879; www.chicagomag.com).

Pharmacies

Walgreens, 757 N. Michigan Ave. (at Chicago Avenue), is open 24 hours.

Police

Dial ☎ 911 for emergencies; ☎ 311 for non-emergencies.

Radio Stations

WBEZ (91.5 FM) is the local National Public Radio station. WXRT (93.1 FM) is a progressive-rock station that deserves a listen. WGN (720 AM) and WLS (890 AM) are talk-radio stations with solid sports coverage. WBBM (780 AM) is all news, traffic, and weather.

Religious Services

Your hotel can provide you with the locations of houses of worship and the times of their services. Episcopalians seeking to attend Sunday services may contact Chicago's Episcopalian Diocese at 65 E. Huron (☎ 312-751-4200; epischicago.org). Catholics can call ☎ 800-627-7846 (www.masstimes.org).

Shabbat services throughout Chicago are listed online at www.jewishchicago.com.

Restrooms

Public restrooms do not exist on Chicago's streets. You need to visit a mall, large hotel, or fast-food restaurant. Department stores and museums are other safe bets.

Safety

At night, stick to well-lit streets in busy areas such as the Magnificent Mile, Gold Coast, River North, and Lincoln Park. Stay out of parks and off dark residential streets. Use caution when walking in the Loop's interior after dark and in outlying neighborhoods. Take a taxi late at night, instead of waiting for a bus or the El on a deserted platform.

Smoking

Chicago restaurants are more smoker-friendly than those in New York and Los Angeles. Most restaurants still have smoking sections. Most hotels have smoking and nonsmoking rooms.

Taxes

Chicago has a 9 percent sales tax. Restaurants in the central part of the city are taxed an additional 1 percent, for a whopping total of 10 percent. Hotel room tax totals 15.3 percent in the city.

Taxis

You can easily catch a taxi in the Loop, Magnificent Mile, Gold Coast, River North, and Lincoln Park. In outlying areas, you may need to call. Cab companies include Flash Cab (☎ 773-561-1444), Yellow Cab (☎ 312-829-4222), and Checker Cab (☎ 312-243-2537).

Time Zone

Chicago is on central standard time.

Transit Info

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) operates the train and bus systems in the city (☎ 312-836-7000 for information, 5 a.m.–1 a.m.; www.transitchicago.com). Pace buses (☎ 312-836-7000) cover the suburbs. The Metra commuter railroad (☎ 312-322-6777, Mon–Fri 8 a.m.–5 p.m.; at other times call the Regional Transit Authority at ☎ 312-836-7000; www.metra rail.com) has 12 train lines serving the six-county area around Chicago.

Weather Updates

For current conditions and forecast, call ☎ 312-976-1212 (for a fee) or check the weather on the Web at www.weather.com. Most television stations (CBS 2, NBC 5, and ABC 7) show the current temperatures in the bottom-right corner of the screen during morning news shows.

Toll-Free Numbers and Web Sites

Airlines

Air Canada

☎ 888-247-2262

www.aircanada.ca

Airtran Airlines

☎ 800-247-8726

www.airtran.com

American Airlines

☎ 800-433-7300

www.aa.com

American Trans Air

☎ 800-225-2995

www.ata.com

America West Airlines

☎ 800-235-9292
www.americawest.com

Continental Airlines

☎ 800-525-0280
www.continental.com

Delta Air Lines

☎ 800-221-1212
www.delta.com

Frontier Airlines

☎ 800-432-1359
www.frontierairlines.com

Jet Blue Airlines

☎ 800-538-2583
www.jetblue.com

Northwest Airlines

☎ 800-225-2525
www.nwa.com

Southwest Airlines

☎ 800-435-9792
www.southwest.com

United Air Lines

☎ 800-241-6522
www.united.com

US Airways

☎ 800-428-4322
www.usairways.com

Major car-rental agencies**Alamo**

☎ 800-327-9633
www.goalamo.com

Avis

☎ 800-831-1212
www.avis.com

Budget

☎ 800-527-0700
www.budget.com

Dollar

☎ 800-800-4000
www.dollar.com

Enterprise

☎ 800-325-8007
www.enterprise.com

Hertz

☎ 800-654-3131
www.hertz.com

National

☎ 800-227-7368
www.nationalcar.com

Rent-A-Wreck

☎ 800-535-1391
www.rent-a-wreck.com

Thrifty

☎ 800-367-2277
www.thrifty.com

Major hotel and motel chains**Best Western International**

☎ 800-528-1234
www.bestwestern.com

Clarion Hotel

☎ 800-262-7466
www.hotelchoice.com

Comfort Inn

☎ 800-228-5150
www.hotelchoice.com

Courtyard by Marriott

☎ 800-321-2211
www.courtyard.com

Days Inn

☎ 800-325-2525
www.daysinn.com

DoubleTree Hotel

☎ 800-222-8733
www.doubletreehotels.com

Econo Lodge

☎ 800-553-2666
www.hotelchoice.com

Fairfield Inn by Marriott

☎ 800-228-2800
www.marriott.com

Hampton Inn

☎ 800-426-7866

www.hampton-inn.com

Hilton Hotel

☎ 800-445-8667

www.hilton.com

Holiday Inn

☎ 800-465-4329

www.basshotels.com

Howard Johnson

☎ 800-654-2000

www.hojo.com

Hyatt Hotels & Resorts

☎ 800-228-9000

www.hyatt.com

InterContinental Hotels & Resorts

☎ 888-567-8725

www.interconti.com

Marriott Hotel

☎ 800-228-9290

www.marriott.com

Motel 6

☎ 800-466-8357

www.motel6.com

Quality Inn

☎ 800-228-5151

www.hotelchoice.com

Radisson Hotels International

☎ 800-333-3333

www.radisson.com

Ramada Inn

☎ 800-272-6232

www.ramada.com

Red Roof Inns

☎ 800-843-7663

www.redroof.com

Residence Inn by Marriott

☎ 800-331-3131

www.marriott.com

Ritz-Carlton

☎ 800-241-3333

www.ritzcarlton.com

Sheraton Hotels & Resorts

☎ 800-325-3535

www.sheraton.com

Super 8 Motel

☎ 800-800-8000

www.super8motels.com

Travelodge

☎ 800-255-3050

www.travelodge.com

Westin Hotels & Resorts

☎ 800-937-8461

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Where to Get More Information

Everything you need to know, you can find in this book. But if you want to be really thorough, you can arm yourself with stacks of free information, such as maps; brochures; calendars of events; and schedules for sports, theater, concerts, and other happenings in the Windy City.

Contacting and visiting tourist offices

Chicago has two major sources of tourism information. Information from the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau isn't as comprehensive

because much of the content is from the establishments that are its members.

- ✓ **Chicago Office of Tourism**, 78 E. Washington St., Chicago, IL 60602 (**877-244-2246** or 312-744-2400; www.877chicago.com): The staff will mail you a free package of information including maps and details of upcoming events. Request the information and find out more on the Web site. The agency has visitor centers at 77 E. Randolph St. (in the Chicago Cultural Center) and at 163 E. Pearson St. (in the pumping station of Chicago's landmark Water Tower).
- ✓ **Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau**, 2301 S. Lake Shore Dr., McCormick Place on the Lake, Chicago, IL 60616-1490 (**800-226-6328** or 312-567-8500; www.choosechicago.com): The bureau distributes lodging, dining, and sightseeing information, as well as the free "Chicago Official Visitors Guide."

Surfing the Web

This section points you toward the most useful sites, all packed with information including detailed maps and occasional sound effects!

- ✓ www.877chicago.com: Chicago from A to Z — art and architecture to zoos. The Chicago Office of Tourism site offers a calendar, a roundup of festivals, and listings of the current month's activities. An interactive clickable map of downtown features photos, addresses, historical information, and trivia about attractions and landmarks.
- ✓ www.enjoyillinois.com: The Illinois Bureau of Tourism will send you a packet of information about the city, the 'burbs, and beyond.

Hitting the books

You can find these two books at your local bookstore. Web shoppers can buy them online from www.amazon.com or www.barnesandnoble.com:

- ✓ **Frommer's Chicago** by Elizabeth Canning Blackwell (Wiley): This thorough guide features color photos of the sights and experiences that await you. The book covers all the traditional tourist favorites but also lets you in on finds, neighborhood hangouts, and little-known gems.
- ✓ **Frommer's Chicago with Kids** by, well, your humble author of *Chicago For Dummies* (Wiley): This book is useful for the family that travels together, with all kinds of details and activities useful for parents and kids of varying ages and interests.

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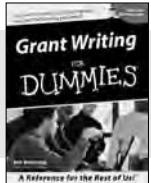
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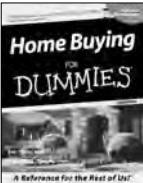
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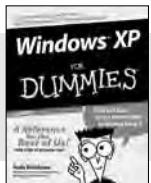
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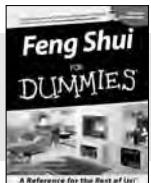
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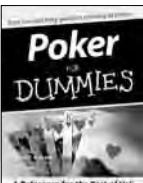
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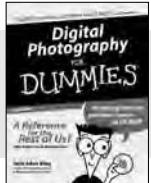
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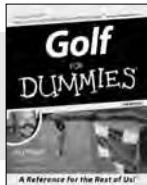
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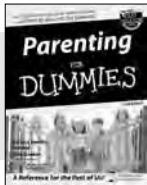
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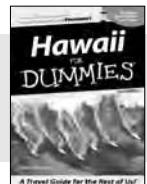
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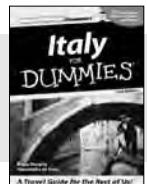
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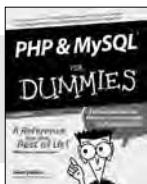
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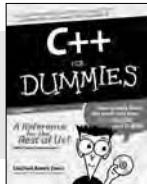
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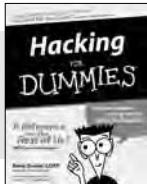
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