

Why Chicago Matters

Chicago is a great American city with a lot going for it. I say “American” because Chicago is very much the vision of how we have built cities over the past decade. In the late 1800’s the city was largely destroyed by fire and Chicago has essentially rebuilt itself from scratch over the last 100 years or so. In the early 1900’s, noted city planner and architect Daniel Burnham authored The Chicago Plan to shape the redevelopment and expansion of Chicago. It is one of the most comprehensive and over-arching city planning documents ever completed for an American city. Many elements of Burnham’s plan have been implemented and Chicago is an attractive city in many aspects. It does in fact feel very “planned” and logically organized, thus making it easy to visit and get around. It has one of the great urban park systems in the world and has utilized its waterfront in a beautiful way. Millennium Park is probably the most well known urban park of the past decade and is a great example of how to create active and meaningful public space. In many ways, because of the opportunity to “build new”, Chicago is the centerpiece of American architecture. Many architectural and engineering innovations, especially related to high-rise construction, are rooted in Chicago. However, this also led to some undesirable characteristics. Modern and post-modern architects that were active in Chicago were notoriously uninterested in the public realm. Some parts of Chicago seem very institutional and plain. Chicago has mass transit, but it is underwhelming for a city of this size and is not connected to large parts of the city. While there are many positives, and some negatives, the best thing is that Chicago does care deeply about itself as a city and planning, design and architecture are important. The Chicago Architecture Foundation is a great community asset. It offers a variety of tours and a wonderful bookstore and it is the most comprehensive city architecture and design organization that I’ve ever seen. Chicago has many great restaurants and shops, but it does lack a certain grit, diversity or creativity as compared to some other great American cities. And then there is the weather. In a city with great parks and some outstanding “urban walks”, it can be very cold and windy for several months of the year so pay attention to when you visit.

Hotels

Hotel Burnham (a boutique hotel, part of the Kimpton Hotel group, in “the Loop” downtown)
1 West Washington Street
312.782.1111
www.burnhamhotel.com

Park Hyatt Chicago (contemporary classic, feels like a big city apartment, great views, right on Michigan Avenue/Magnificent Mile)
800 North Michigan Avenue
312.335.1234
www.parkchicago.hyatt.com

Sofitel (contemporary architecture, near bars and restaurants at Rush Street)
20 East Chestnut Street
312.324.4000
www.sofitel.com

Swissotel (modern, great architecture, convenient location between River North and Grant Park)
323 East Upper Wacker Drive
312.565.0565
www.swissotel.com/hotels/chicago

Hotels (continued)

The Drake (historic, classic, great lobby for piano bar and drinks even if you don't stay here)
140 East Walton Street
312.787.2200
www.thedrakehotel.com

The Gwen (previously Conrad Chicago, great location, in River North adjacent to Magnificent Mile)
521 North Rush Street
312.645.1500
www.starwoodhotels.com/TheGwen

Trump Hotel (big new hotel, on the river, Rebar and Terrace Bar are great for cocktails)
401 North Wabash Avenue
312.588.8000
www.trumphotelcollection.com/chicago

Jazz and Blues

Need to ask hotel concierge where to go. I never can remember the names, but there are a couple of good ones on Rush Street and I have been to Blue Chicago a few times.

Restaurants

Adobe Grill (great margaritas and guacamole made tableside, two locations – Old Town and Wicker Park)
1610 North Wells Street
312.266.7999
www.adobogrill.com

Bavette's Bar & Boeuf
218 West Kinzie Street
312.624.8154
www.bavetteschicago.com

Bin 36 (neat casual wine bar and great cheese plates)
161 North Jefferson Street
312.995.6560
www.bin36.com

Blackbird (creative American bistro, on Randolph Street where there are lots of the trendier places)
619 West Randolph Street
312.715.0708
www.blackbirdrestaurant.com

C Chicago
20 West Kinzie Street
312.280.8882
www.cchicago.net

Restaurants (continued)

Chicago Cut Steakhouse
300 North La Salle Street
312.329.1800
www.chicagocutsteakhouse.com

Frontera Grill (Mexican, great chef, not “tex mex”)
445 North Clark Street
312.661.1434
www.frontera-grill.com

Gene & Georgetti (old school steak)
500 North Franklin Street
312.527.3718
www.geneandgeorgetti.com

Gibson’s Steakhouse (best steakhouse in the city)
1028 North Rush Street
312.266.8999
www.gibsonssteakhouse.com

Girl & the Goat
809 West Randolph Street
312.492.6262
www.girlandthegoat.com

GT Fish & Oyster
531 North Wells Street
312.929.3501
www.gtoyster.com

Hugo’s Frog Bar and Fish House (next to Gibson’s, more casual)
1024 North Rush Street
312.640.0999
www.hugosfrogbar.com

Lawry’s the Prime Rib (a true classic supper club)
100 East Ontario Street
312.787.5000
www.lawrysonline.com

Mastro’s Steakhouse
520 North Dearborn Street
312.521.5100
www.mastrosrestaurants.com

Restaurants (continued)

Naha (foodie place, creative American)
500 North Clark Street
312.321.6242
www.naha-chicago.com

NoMi Kitchen (in Park Hyatt, nice restaurant and wonderful outdoor terrace)
800 North Michigan Avenue
312.239.4030
www.NoMiKitchen.com

RPM Italian
52 West Illinois Street
312.222.1888
www.rpmitalian.com

RPM Steak
66 West Kinzie Street
312.284.4990
www.rpmsteak.com

Tru (upscale gourmet, kind of “over the top” but a great experience)
676 North Saint Clair Street
312.202.0001
www.trurestaurant.com

Drinks & Cocktails

Allium Lobby Bar at Four Seasons Hotel
120 East Delaware Place
312.280.8800
www.alliumchicago.com

Cindy’s Rooftop
12 South Michigan Street
312.792.3502
www.cindysrooftop.com

Nico Osteria
1015 North Rush Street
312.994.7100
www.nicoosteria.com

RL Bar & Grill
115 East Chicago Avenue
312.475.1100
www.rlrestaurant.com

Drinks & Cocktails (continued)

Sable

505 North State Street

312.755.9704

www.sablechicago.com

Siena Tavern

51 West Kinzie Street

312.595.1322

www.sienatavern.com

Signature Room at the 95th (located at the John Hancock Center, best for cocktails and view)

875 North Michigan Avenue

312.787.9596

www.signatureroom.com

Tavern on Rush (in the middle of the Rush Street district where there are lots of good restaurants)

1031 North Rush Street

312.664.9600

www.tavernonrush.com

Places to see

Art Institute Chicago, new Modern Wing opened in May 2009

Chicago Architecture Foundation, store on Michigan Avenue across from Grant Park, best river cruises (an architecture river cruise is a must)

Grant Park, Buckingham Fountain

Millennium Park, Cloud Gate (the “Bean”) and Crown Fountain

Lakefront, Navy Pier, Oak Street Beach, North Avenue Beach, you can walk or bike (use Divvy bike share) the entire waterfront and this is the best part of Chicago

Museum of Contemporary Art (just off Magnificent Mile, towards the lakefront)

Second City Comedy Club, an improv-based sketch comedy club (famous alumni John Belushi, Gilda Radner and Mike Myers)

Segway Tour, Grant Park

Shopping on North Michigan Avenue, Magnificent Mile

Lincoln Park Neighborhood, Armitage Avenue, Halsted Street

Bucktown / Wicker Park Neighborhood

The 606 / Bloomingdale Trail & Park