

7 things to do in... Chicago

Architecture, culture, music,
great food and high-rise thrills,
the Windy City has it all...

WHY GO?

Chicago is second to none for museums, street art, its wonderful waterside location – and that skyscraper skyline. Its centre is surprisingly walkable and easy to find your way around. All thanks to Mrs O'Leary's cow. As locals will tell you, the animal kicked over a lantern in 1871, starting the Great Chicago Fire, which destroyed the homes of a third of the population. After this, the city was redesigned on a grid system.



Look out for the corn-cob-shaped Marina City towers

Reach for the sky

The world's first skyscraper, a 10-storey edifice called the Home Insurance Building, was built here in 1884. Take a Chicago Architecture Foundation boat tour (architecture.org) for high-rise highlights, spotting examples that look like corn cobs, a stack of pancakes and a wine bottle. Then head for the Willis Tower's 103rd floor Skydeck, and step out onto The Ledge for bird's-eye views.



Step out onto The Ledge for an amazing view

Magnificent Mile of shops

North Michigan Ave is home to over 400 upscale shops including big-name stores Macy's and Bloomingdale's. Landmarks include Chicago Water Tower, built in 1889 and now a gallery, and the Wrigley Building (1921), and the John Hancock Center, home to 360 Chicago and TILT, an enclosed platform that leans out over Michigan Avenue.



So many shops, so little time!

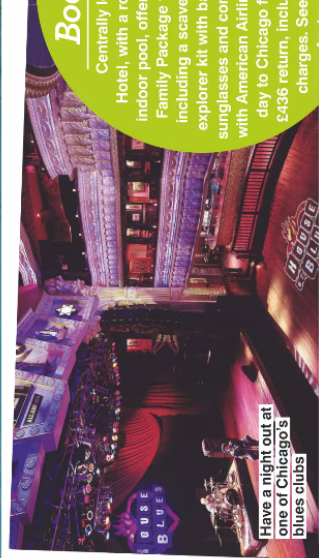
Save money and time on sightseeing

A Chicago CityPASS (citypass.com/chicago) lasts nine days and gives priority entry to top attractions for £78.13, saving around half on admission fees. For just £1.68, take a rickety rollercoaster-style ride on the 'L' train perched on rails. Plan your route with the Chicago Transit Authority (transitchicago.com), which has a sightseeing by public transport guide.



See a show

As the home of the blues – there's a mural of the father of modern Chicago blues Muddy Waters on State Street, and a free Blues Festival in June – where better to go to a gig? House of Blues (houseofblues.com/chicago) is central, or for a more intimate atmosphere head to Chicago B.L.U.E.S. Bar (chicagobluesbar.com). Put a smile on your face at Second City (secondcity.com), where the likes of Bill Murray and Joan Rivers started out. Tuck in to comfort food, cocktails and craft beer at 1939 Kitchen & Bar, during the show.



Have a night out at one of Chicago's blues clubs

Book it

Centrally located Loews Hotel, with a rooftop terrace and indoor pool, offers an Urban Explorer Family Package from £149 per night, including a scavenger hunt and junior explorer kit with backpack, water bottle, sunglasses and compass. British Airways, with American Airlines, flies seven times a day to Chicago from Heathrow, from £436 return, including taxes, fees and charges. See choosichicago.com for travel tips and city insights.

Famous for its skyline, Chicago stands on the shores of Lake Michigan

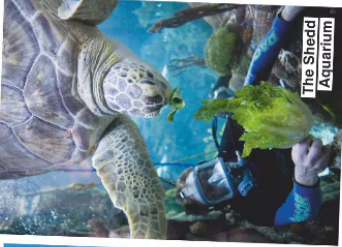
The great outdoors

Lake Michigan (over 300 miles long and 118 miles wide) makes a brilliant cityscape backdrop. Some of the city's top attractions lie alongside the lake, from Navy Pier, with the play-based Chicago Children's Museum, plus a wealth of entertainment and events, to the Shedd Aquarium, where you can watch otters, sharks and stingrays, and walk through a coral reef. America's first planetarium, the Adler, is housed in a stunning Art Deco building, and also displays lots of space memorabilia. Art abounds on the streets, with works including Cloud Gate (or The Bean, as it's also known) by Anish Kapoor at Millennium Park, an untitled sculpture by Picasso on Daley Plaza, Chicago by Joan Miró, and the Four Seasons by Marc Chagall, plus the undulating silvery walkway by Frank Gehry from the recently planted Maggie Daley Park to Millennium Park. Don't miss the Art Institute of Chicago, with the largest Impressionist collection outside Paris, and a certain Seurat painting seen on screen in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*.

The Adler was the USA's first planetarium



The Shedd Aquarium



Travel
You deserve a break