



CHICAGO



SEE & EXPLORE



FOOD & DRINK



SHOP



STAY

- Art Institute of Chicago
- Alinea Restaurant
- Magnificent Mile
- Local Tips: Charles Joly





Chicago

Rob McGovern explores Chicago and discovers a city embracing the high life, while still celebrating its gritty roots.

Perched on the rather massive Lake Michigan, Chicago is famous for its association with Prohibition-era gangsters, deep dish pizza and the blues. But 21st century Chicago offers something for everyone – including lovers of the high life. Five-star hotels and critically lauded dining options abound, and the city's cultural scene refuses to play second fiddle to any other. And with a slew of events coming up in 2018 – including Art Design Chicago 2018 and the US debut of the Laver Cup tennis competition – now is the time to plan a visit.



SEE & EXPLORE

Chicago has more than enough galleries, theatres and public art to satisfy even the most ravenous culture vultures, but above all, the Art Institute of Chicago is an essential stop on any visit to the city. It is the permanent home of some very striking and notable pieces such as Georges Seurat's *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* and two iconic pieces of Americana: Grant Wood's *American Gothic* and Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*. For deeper insight into these, and the rest of the extensive collection, try Noble Private Art Tours (noblearttours.com).

In nearby Millennium Park, a public sculpture by Indian-born British artist Sir Anish Kapoor stands proud. *Cloud Gate* is locally known as 'The Bean' and it will stay in place until the year 3006. Also in the park is Frank Gehry's curly Jay Pritzker Pavilion, an open-air performance space that is the home of the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, and hosts numerous festivals and artists throughout the year.

The Chicago River is a central part of life in the city. Its banks are lined with architectural gems and the waters teem with taxis, boat

tours and the occasional rowing team. If you want to eschew the crowds, Bespoke Experiences (bespokeprivatetours.com/chicago) can help. You can create a custom itinerary and every group is accompanied by an 'experience architect' who acts as both a guide and a private chauffeur.

When the sun sets, take to the skies with a private heli-tour of the city. Chicago Helicopter Experience (chicagohelicopterexperience.com) offers everything from a 15-minute photo tour to the Heli-Yacht package, which includes a private yacht trip to the heliport and a private skyline tour. They also have charters that can take you further afield. Visit the founding vineyard of the region, Alto Vineyards in Alto Pass; a great place to sample regional grapes such as niagara and chambourcin. Or play a few holes at the Chicago Golf Course, considered the best in the state. Less than 50 kilometres from downtown, it is the oldest 18-hole course in North America. It is also one of the most exclusive clubs in the country, so keen golfers may need to harness their connections to get on the green.

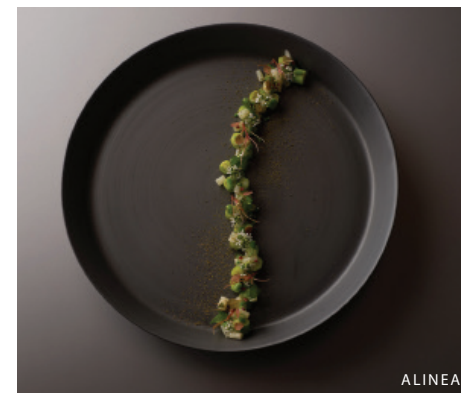


EAT & DRINK

Chicago has a dining scene to rival any city in the world. With almost three dozen Michelin stars, it offers everything from the famed deep dish pizza to arguably (and the case has been made by many) the best restaurant in the country, Alinea (alinearestaurant.com). Headed by Grant Achatz, the world-renowned culinary phenomenon was first awarded three Michelin stars in 2010 and has retained them each year since, even after a mid-2016 reinvention and reopening. As for the food, it is not an exaggeration to say that Alinea carves its own culinary path and others follow. Sheets of dehydrated scallop; deep-fried ice fish with a fermented kumquat sauce; and blueberry leaves with seasonal mushrooms and foie-gras sauce have been served, but with a tasting menu that is ever changing, it is impossible to predict what will appear next.

Chicago's other three-star restaurant is Grace (grace-restaurant.com). The Michelin guide has saluted the culinary wizardry of chef Curtis Duffy and his contemporary seasonal tasting menus, which are intricate and elaborate. Book well in advance for both.

At the other end of the dining scale, deep dish pizza is one of those must-do Chicago experiences. Lou Malnati's (loumalnatis.com) and Pizzeria Uno (unos.com) both claim to have invented the indulgent dish and you can't go wrong at either. Be sure to grab an equally famous Chicago hot dog, which according to locals should be 'dragged through the garden' (served with the lot) for a true Chicago experience.



Chicago is the spiritual home of the blues so there are a lot of blues clubs to choose from, but not all are created equal. To avoid being surrounded by tourists, try the locally recommended Chicago B.L.U.E.S. Bar (chicago-bluesbar.com) on North Halsted. Just a few hundred feet from affiliated club Kingston Mines, B.L.U.E.S. isn't as well-known by tourists, which means you are more likely to be seated next to someone who lives closer to Michigan Avenue than Melbourne.

WEATHER TO GO?

The Chicago climate is extreme and the city can be ruled by the weather.



Summer

Summers are hot and muggy, with temperatures as high as 40°C in July and August. The city can also get seriously crowded during these months.



Winter

There's a good reason the locals call the city Chiberia.

Winters are bitter, with temperatures rarely rising above 0°C from December to February and can drop as low as -20°C, though wind chill can make it feel even colder. Up to 100 centimetres of snow falls each year.



Sweet spot

Visit Chicago in spring (April-May) or autumn (September-October). Temperatures are relatively mild, crowds are smaller and the city hosts a full calendar of festivals and events.

NEED TO KNOW



Getting around

Almost 400 kilometres of bike trails wind through Chicago and the city is mostly flat, so a bicycle is a great way to get around. Sign up for the Divvy bike share program and you can grab one from any of the racks around town. A day pass is just US\$9.95 (about A\$13).



Packing list

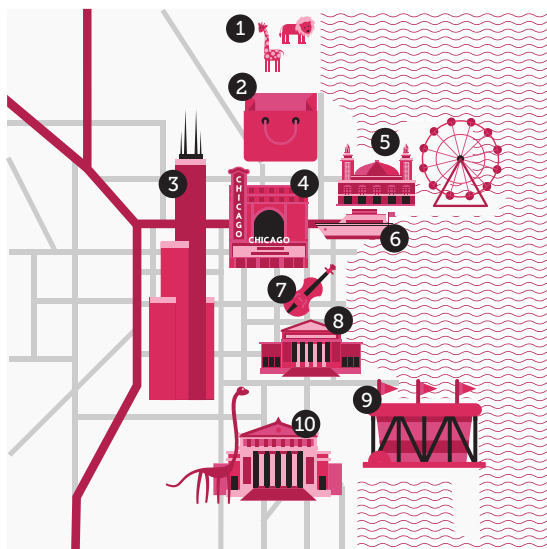
Chicago's nickname is The Windy City, so stock up on moisturiser and lip balm. And even though it's more than 1,000 kilometres from the coast, don't forget your swimsuit. There are 27 sandy beaches along the shore of the vast Lake Michigan.



Fine print

Australia is a participant in the United States' Visa Waiver Program, however travellers still need to obtain authorisation through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) before arrival. The ESTA fee is US\$14 (about A\$18) through the official website esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta. Beware of third party sites that will charge additional fees.

CITY SIGHTS



1. Lincoln Park Zoo
2. Magnificent Mile
3. Willis Tower
4. The Chicago Theatre
5. Navy Pier
6. Chicago River
7. Millennium Park
8. Art Institute of Chicago
9. Soldier Field Stadium
10. The Field Museum



SHOP

All of the big name fashion houses can be found on Chicago's Magnificent Mile (Michigan Avenue to the locals) and East Oak Street, while venturing out to the suburbs will reveal all manner of shopping options.

High-end women's fashion boutique, ikram (ikram.com) has a selection of unique and sophisticated clothing, shoes, jewellery, and bags from American, European and Japanese designers. There is also a collection of vintage clothing and accessories that has been curated by owner Ikram Goldman herself. Personal shopping is available in store and specialty services can be arranged after a consultation.

You will need to be buzzed in to the exclusive boutique Blake on West Chicago Ave, but once inside you'll find pieces by the likes of Dries Van Noten and luxury Italian label Marni. Ethically minded shoppers will like Jamie Hayes' label Production Mode. The vegetable-leather collection is conservative without being boring and can be found in several outlets in the city including at Hayes' showroom, the Department of Curiosities (departmentofcuriosities.com).

Located in the historic Tree Studio building on State Street, P.O.S.H (poshchicago.com) aims to give people something new yet old at the same time. The small store is full of antique housewares from around the world with everything from tea sets to jewellery boxes. For something less folksy, Space 519 (space519.com) has women's apparel and accessories, men's accessories, apothecary products, books, gifts and homewares. Expect everything from lip balm to vintage mid-century chairs.



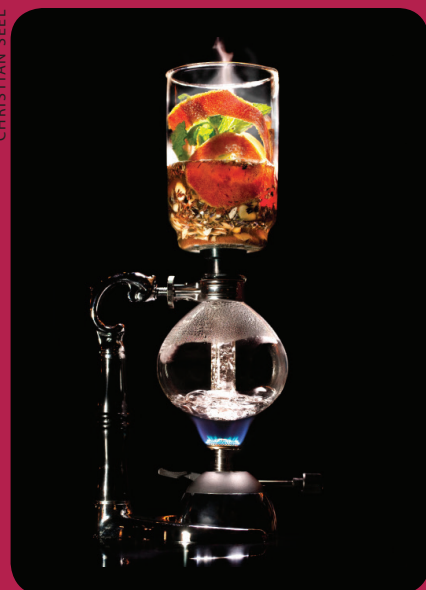
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LOCAL TIPS



Charles Joly,
Global Bartending
Champion



CHRISTIAN SEEL

Aviary

Aviary is my old stomping ground and a truly unique experience. Perhaps not an everyday belly-up spot, but we need venues that push boundaries and question the way we have always done things. The cocktails are innovative and experiential, and the service is top notch. No detail is overlooked. Afterwards, head downstairs to The Office, a warm and inviting speakeasy where classic techniques meet a flavour arsenal. If you're not in the mood for a cocktail, one of the most impressive vintage spirit selections and well-curated beer programs awaits. theaviary.com



SHELBY ALLISO

Lost Lake

Chicago is a city of neighbourhoods and I recommend exploring beyond downtown. Approachable and understated, Lost Lake is a fantastic neighbourhood tiki spot in booming Logan Square. There's an incredible rum selection, honest cocktails and stellar service. lostlaketiki.com



The Drifter

Tucked away with a bar-in-a-bar entrance, The Drifter is a true gem. Bartender owned and operated, this bar delivers the speakeasy vibe without the cheese. Expertly executed cocktails, a welcoming vibe and live shows from burlesque to ukulele greet you in this intimate space. thedrifterchicago.com

STAY

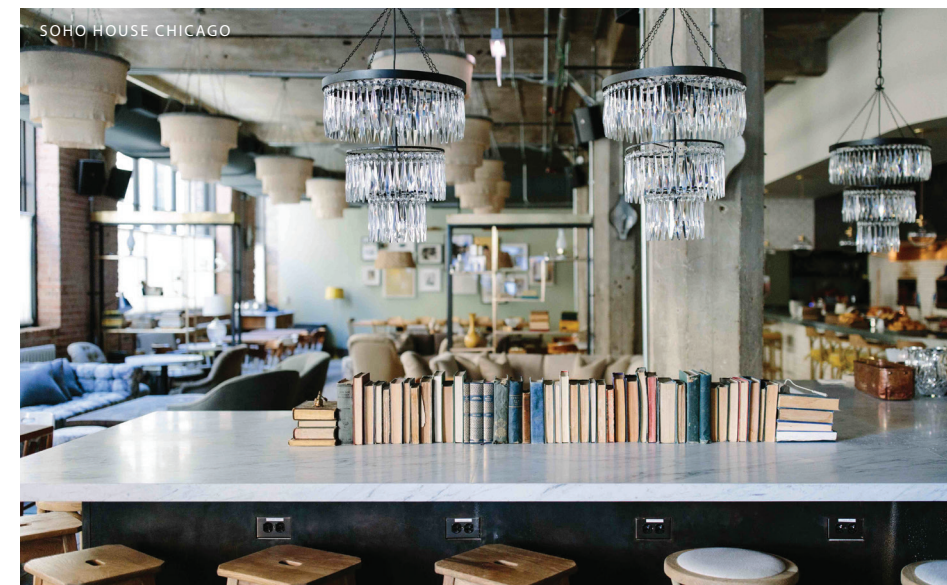
Littered with five-star hotels, Chicago has an extravagant property for everyone, but for classic, old-world luxury, look no further than The Peninsula (chicago.peninsula.com). Bringing colonial Asian-style hospitality to America's Midwest, The Peninsula underwent a US\$38 million (about A\$48.3 million) renovation in 2016 and reopened to plenty of fanfare. Located on the city's Magnificent Mile, the 330-room property is arguably the most luxurious hotel in the city. Thanks to the renovation, it's possibly the city's most tech-forward hotel too with multi-lingual tablets that control everything from the TV to the curtains. If you really want to splash out, the three-bedroom Peninsula Suite is a snip at just over US\$10,000 (about A\$12,700) a night.

For something a little more historic, the InterContinental (icchicagohotel.com), also on the Magnificent Mile, is hard to beat. The hotel's south tower was originally constructed in 1929 to be the home of the Medinah Athletic Club, which explains why the property has what is likely the best pool in the entire city. Located on the 14th floor, the pool, known to some as the Weissmuller Pool in honour of the Tarzan actor who trained there, is decked out in Spanish tiles and has stadium-style seating that harks back to the days when swimming was a more popular spectator sport than it is today.



INTERCONTINENTAL CHICAGO

For a more boutique option, Soho House (sohohousechicago.com), like all properties in the Soho Portfolio, is an exclusive hotel and members club that caters for creatives, and often welcomes famous clientele. Housed in a former industrial warehouse in Chicago's West Loop, the renovated interiors elegantly fuse old and new, and facilities include a heated rooftop pool, a plush 30-seat cinema, and a music room which hosts monthly members-only events.



SOHO HOUSE CHICAGO