

What to see in Chicago 2023

Peggy Nerdahl



There are a million things to see in Chicago to fit anyone's taste. I'll describe a few highlights and then provide a link to a broader array of choices (the "Choose Chicago" link at the bottom of this article).

One way to get to all of the attractions is by **public transportation**. There is a bus / train station 1.3 miles from the hotel and the hotel has a complementary ride to the train station. To get a complementary ride, schedule with the hotel to make sure the driver is available when needed. You can do the same for the return ride – perhaps calling the hotel number when you get on the train for your return trip. There is also a train stop outside of the botanic garden. Allow over an hour to get downtown on the train and then another 30 minutes to get to your destination by combination bus and walking.

The city can be viewed by river or lake cruises or by double decker bus. Several people have recommended an **architecture river cruise** (Chicago is home to the first skyscraper). One tour is offered in partnership with the Chicago Architectural Foundation <http://www.architecture.org/> departing from 112 E. Wacker Drive. Your CAF river cruise departs from a dock just 8 blocks north of the CAF Shop and Tour Center. Located at the southeast corner of the Michigan Avenue Bridge at Wacker Drive, a blue awning marks the boat dock entrance. Another tour is offered by the Shoreline River boat tour highlighting Chicago's architecture <http://shorelinesightseeing.com/> One place to board the boat tour is

at the Navy Pier, so allow extra time to look around there, ride the 150 foot ferris wheel, see performers, shop and eat. Shoreline also runs water taxis from Navy Pier to the Museum campus by lake or to the Sears tower by river. The other place to board is on Michigan Ave. There are many options for lake or river cruises.

A way to get an overview of a lot of different sites is atop a [Big Bus Hop on and Hop off](#) that runs 10 AM – 5 PM and stops at 11 places. You can get off and on at any of the stops. Purchase your \$45 ticket on line and board at any of the stops. See top attractions like Millennium Park with the nearby Art Institute, the Magnificent Mile shopping area, John Hancock Center (with an observatory on the 94th floor) and Grant Park . Note the hours of operation: 10AM – 5 PM

<http://www.viator.com/tours/Chicago/Chicago-City-Hop-on-Hop-off-Tour/d673-2985TROLLEY?pref=02>
[Gangsters and Ghosts bus tour](#) is a unique sight-seeing experience.

If you plan to see several attractions while in Chicago, then you may want to look into the **Chicago Go Card or the Chicago City Pass** where you get discounts to see multiple attractions.

http://www.smartdestinations.com/chicago-attractions-and-tours/_d_Chi-p1.html?pass=Chi_Prod_Go
Or

http://www.viator.com/tours/Chicago/Chicago-CityPass/d673-2640CHI_TR

The Museum campus is along the lakefront and includes the Adler Planetarium, the Shedd Aquarium and the Field Museum of Natural History.

Those interested in astronomy will not want to miss the Premier **Adler Planetarium**, the first planetarium in the country and still one of the top two in the country. A basic pass for \$25 gets you admission into one of seven planetarium shows and the exhibits. All tickets must be bought online, in advance of your visit. <http://www.adlerplanetarium.org/?gclid=C16t5uiRxs0CFQ6oaQodpoEH8A>

Right close by is the **Shedd Aquarium**. <http://www.sheddaquarium.org/> It is possible to attend a planetarium show and visit the Aquarium or the Field Museum down the street in one very full day.

The **Field Museum** has the travelling exhibit of the “First Kings of Europe” and the permanent exhibits of SUE, the world’s largest Tyrannasaurus Rex and an Egyptian tomb and enough other exhibits to fill a whole day. You can purchase tickets ahead on line.

<https://www.fieldmuseum.org/?gclid=CMav05mSxs0CFVc1aQodyfYPsQ>

The famous **Museum of Science and Industry** is home to a full size “U-boat”, a working coal mine and a Boeing 727 airplane. The Museum of Science and Industry is separate from the above mentioned museum campus by the lake but well worth the trip. It is the largest science museum in the Western Hemisphere. <http://www.msichicago.org/>

The **White Sox** have home baseball games the same week as the lily show. The stadium is easily accessible by public transport <https://prod.metrarail.com/baseball>

My personal favorites are a visit either to [Frank Lloyd Wright’s](#) Home and Studio or Frank Lloyd Wright’s Robie House for a tour. The Home and Studio has the benefit of being in a neighborhood of Wright homes and an outside walking tour can be done in addition to the indoor guided tour of the home and studio.

The [Lincoln Zoo](#) is free and is outstanding with over 1000 mammals, reptiles, and birds and a couple gardens.

Shopping and eating choices are great too. One place is the historic [Water Tower Place](#) (the water tower was the building that survived the Chicago fire). While at Water Tower Place, look for the City Gallery with changing Chicago focused installations. One caution for downtown Chicago – parking

is very difficult to find and very expensive. You can easily spend \$25 to park while you have dinner. There is a buy ahead parking reservation service on line, if you need to take your car, Spathero.com

Another shopping area is Magnificent Mile, just west of Navy Pier, running north and south for a mile along Michigan Ave.

The Chicago Visitor Center is at 111 N. State Street, within the historic Macy's at State Street Shopping Center where you can get lots of help planning your Chicago visit. Just down the street at 108 N. State Street Block 37, less than one block from the visitor center is the Hot Tix Outpost, a theater discount place to get ½ price tickets for theater from more than 200 member theaters. Or, look online to purchase discount theater tickets <http://www.hottix.org/> Links to all **theater** available can be found at <http://www.choosechicago.com/things-to-do/arts-culture-and-entertainment/theater-and-performing-arts/>

Among the dedicated **art museums** are the Art Institute of Chicago (one of the best - near Millennium Park) and the Museum of Contemporary Art and the Museum of Contemporary Photography. Additionally, a lot of art can be found outdoors - <http://www.choosechicago.com/things-to-do/arts-culture-and-entertainment/chicago-public-art/>

Bird sanctuaries can be found at <https://www.choosechicago.com/articles/parks-outdoors/chicagos-bird-sanctuaries>

Our lily show at the Chicago Botanic Garden is at the best and largest garden in the Chicago area. If you haven't had enough gardens, check out this list of **gardens** to see <http://www.choosechicago.com/articles/view/chicago-gardens/978/> Note that there are at least two gardens described here within the Lincoln Zoo.

If what I have highlighted doesn't cover your interests, check the comprehensive list of attractions and links to all web sites <http://www.choosechicago.com/things-to-do/>