

Whatever your appetite, Chicago covers the bases

If you go . . .

What to do
Millennium Park
 312-742-1168
 millenniumpark.org

Hosts year-round concerts, theater and dance performances, and other events. Outdoor skating rink. Skate rental \$9.

Art Institute of Chicago
 111 South Michigan Ave.
 312-443-3600; artic.edu/aic/
 One of the world's leading museums. Adults \$12, students and seniors \$7, Thursdays free.

Buddy Guy's Legends
 754 South Wabash Ave.
 312-427-0333; buddyguys.com

Monday-Friday 11 a.m.-2 a.m., Saturday 5 p.m.-3 a.m., Sunday 6-2. Cover varies.

Where to stay

The Ritz-Carlton Chicago
 160 East Pearson St.
 312-266-1000

fourseasons.com/chicagorc
 A five-star hotel in the heart of the city, from \$345.

Sofitel Chicago
 20 East Chestnut St.
 312-324-4000
 sofitelchicagowatertower.com
 A four-star property with a bustling lobby bar, from \$295.

Majestic Hotel
 528 West Brompton Ave.
 800-727-5108; cityinns.com
 A boutique inn a short walk from Wrigley Field, from \$139.

Where to eat

Takashi
 1952 North Damen Ave.
 773-772-6170
 takashichicago.com
 Contemporary French-American fare with Japanese influences. Entrees \$20-\$30.

Avec
 615 West Randolph St.
 312-377-2002
 avecrestaurant.com
 Artfully prepared cuisine in a boisterous setting. From \$15.

By Jerry Soverinsky
 GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

CHICAGO — There's no place I'd rather call home than the Windy City. While many short-term visitors select Chicago for predictable reasons — a trade show, a bachelor party, or some high-powered shopping — the city offers far more to a visitor interested in a rich cultural experience.

"I absolutely love being in Chicago," said September Mirghanbari, a California petroleum industry consultant in town recently for a conference, who was browsing the shops in a northside neighborhood.

"Twice a year I make my way here. One of my very favorite things to do is walk through the neighborhoods, see all the gorgeous flowers . . . then run along the lakeshore and take in the beautiful view of the lake."

Joe Trendl, a lifelong resident, said, "The city puts a lot of effort into 'City in a Garden' [a Chicago motto]. . . . That's why you see tons of plantings around the city. . . . We'll give up other things to get more green buildings; it adds to the neighborhoods. . . . Of course, having a great park system helps, too."

Spread among 7,500 acres, the city's 552 public spaces are immaculately maintained. Mayor Richard M. Daley, an outdoors enthusiast, is focused on making his city the greenest in the country. In 2003 he ordered the demolition of Meigs Field, a lakefront single-strip airport that since 1948 had been used mainly by corporate jets and recreational fliers. Today, the site, now North-erly Island, is a sprawling, evolving peninsular park and concert venue, with wild, heather-like grass that helps set it apart from the skyscrapers nearby.

A short walk away, next to the Art Institute of Chicago, is Millennium Park, another jewel in Daley's public development projects. This world-class park, technically part of the larger Grant Park, is a 25-acre lakefront landmark that features internationally acclaimed architecture and design in its sculptures, pub-



Millennium Park is a jewel of many facets, such as ice-skating against the glittering city skyline.

lic-access pavilions, and gardens.

Along its coveted Lake Michigan frontage, Chicago also has 33 public beaches. Bordering the lakefront is an 18-mile multiuse path frequented year-round by cyclists, joggers, walkers, in-line skaters, and dog walkers. Visitors can rent bikes, pedal carts, or even use Segways.

"The parks, that's one of the things I miss most about Chicago," said Daniel Stone, who moved to Florida this year. "It's uninterrupted, you run or bike for miles north or south, and you've got unobstructed access. No houses, no commercial buildings, just lakefront, beaches, and parks. It's fantastic."

Perhaps the city's best known park is one dedicated to baseball, at the corner of Addison and Sheffield on the north side. Wrigley Field, home to the Chicago Cubs, is visited year-round by baseball lovers who congregate outside by the marquee, snapping photographs and snatching up souvenirs. Their affection stems from the stadium's rich tradition, and is fueled perhaps by its association with a team that enters its second century of

championship-free play. "I can tell you that when we have people come in from out of town, Wrigley Field is always one of the top five places that we visit," said Trendl. "If you could take in a game, you should. It will transport you back to how baseball was played 75 years ago."

Chicago's architecture is world-renowned. Some of the first modern skyscrapers were erected here with steel-frame construction, a pioneering achievement by the famed Chicago School. Over the next century, prominent architects Daniel Burnham, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe left their trademark touches on scores of buildings.

For an unprecedented architectural experience, you can join a four-day workshop in Wright's Oak Park studio, a 15-minute drive west of downtown. At the Architecture Fantasy Camp, you'll learn an overview of architectural design while working in the same studio where Wright designed nearly 100 projects during his 72-year career.

Any visit to the city would be incomplete without time spent at

the venerable blues or jazz clubs. One of the most popular and authentic is Buddy Guy's Legends.

Home of the Rock and Roll Hall of Famer, Legends delivers traditional, Chicago-bred live blues nightly to fans from around the globe. And when Guy's not touring, he is almost always on hand, eager to share his musical passion and stories.

The music is "as close to Chicago's original blues as you can get and I'm trying to carry on," Guy said recently.

Sightseeing rouses the appetite, but Chicago has that covered, with more five-star restaurants (seven) than any city in the nation.

"It's the emergence over the last 15 years of small, owner-occupied spaces that has made the difference," said Steven Schwartz, owner of Campagnola and Union, two restaurants in nearby Evanston. "These small-environment, chef-driven stores are really raising the creative bar."

With more than 7,000 restaurants in every price range and culinary specialty, there's one for every budget and taste.

And don't forget the shopping, which is first-class here. In addition to popular Michigan Avenue's Magnificent Mile ("Mag Mile"), there are dozens of other unique districts spread throughout the neighborhoods.

"The thing about shopping in Chicago," said Mirghanbari, "is that whether you find what you're looking for or not, the days here for me are almost always about the city. It's great walking from place to place, people-watching, and finding something new."

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