2024 MCD Guide to Chicago

Editors’ Note: This is a list of some of the favorite Chicago attractions from two locals: Donna Ogle (+1-630-212-0989, dogle80@gmail.com) and Eric Sanders (+1-630-290-8097, eric.sanders@elmhurst.edu). Feel free to contact us if you have questions or want more information. Most of these are within walking distance of the hotel complex where AOM is meeting. If not, approximate distances are noted.

Buildings/Architecture (also see Boat Tours below)

- Sears Tower (Willis Tower) – 110-stories with restaurants & observation SKYDECK.
- John Hancock Building – 100-story building with a great observation deck, try TILT.
- Chicago River Walk – restaurants, bars, activities, and views of the river
- Navy Pier – restaurants, entertainment, and beautiful views of the lake and skyline.
- Palmer House Hilton – Hilton’s first luxury hotel with a beautiful lobby and bar; where the brownie was invented in 1893 for ladies’ box lunches at the Columbian Exposition.

Museums, Parks, etc.

- Art Institute of Chicago – One of TripAdvisor’s Best of the Best in the USA for 2024, especially noted for its collection of Impressionist art.
- Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago – where new ideas from living artists are shown and tested.
- Museum Campus – A short cab ride, with the best view of Chicago from the lake without being on a boat (where Eric took the photo above).
  - The Field Museum – “…connecting the natural world and human history.”
  - Shedd Aquarium – an amazing facility right on Lake Michigan.
  - Adler Planetarium – space for everyone.
- Griffin Museum of Science and Industry (slightly South of the museum campus) – from a coal mine to a submarine, to the technology of 007 James Bond, this place has it all.
- Millenium Park: includes Cloud Gate (aka The Bean), the Crown Fountain, gardens, the Pritzker Pavilion, and more.
- Grant Park – the park along Lake Michigan, with walking paths, beaches, and much more, including Buckingham Fountain.
Food
Where do we begin? Chicago is a GREAT food town. Deep-dish pizza, hot dogs, Italian beef, steaks and seafood, Michelin-star restaurants, we have it all. Here are a few of our favorites:

- Portillo’s Hot Dogs – has many locations and the best Chicago hot dogs and Italian Beef sandwiches. Don’t forget to try their Chocolate Cake Shake. See Gabriel Iglesias’ (Fluffy) comedy routine to understand.
- Giordano’s – home of the deep-dish pizza also has many locations, including two within minutes of the AOM hotels.
- Lou Malnati’s – deep-dish pizza. Also several locations downtown.
- The Berghoff – family-owned and operated for 125 years, has classic German food in a beautiful old-school setting.
- Roka Akor – If you love sushi, this place is for you. They have steak and seafood also, but sushi is their specialty. For a great experience, trust the chef and do their Omakase.
- Garrett Popcorn – is another Chicago classic. Get the Garrett mix of cheese and caramel.
- Billy Goat Tavern – A Chicago institution for the classic “Cheezeborger.”
- Harry Caray’s – steak, etc. Named after the famous announcer of the Cubs.
- Rick Bayless’ restaurants in Chicago
  - Frontera Grill - Mexican
  - Topolobampo - upscale Mexican
- Starbucks Reserve Roastery – A four-story luxury coffee experience.

Shopping and more
The Magnificent Mile – From designer stores to Nike and Apple, there are dozens of amazing stores on Michigan Avenue from the Chicago River to the Drake Hotel. Check out the Water Tower Place – Don’t miss the American Girl store.
Macy’s State Street – Formerly Marshall Fields. Try lunch in the Walnut Room or Seven on State on the seventh floor of the store.

Entertainment
Classical Music
- Chicago Symphony Orchestra – will be playing outdoors at Ravinia Music Festival.
- Ravinia Music Festival – Located over an hour from the Loop, this is a great venue for a picnic and concert if you can make the time for it.

Jazz
- Jazz Showcase – founded in 1947, is one of the great jazz clubs in the USA. ALL the big names in jazz have played here over the years.
- The Green Mill – located uptown (about 20 minutes by car from the AOM hotels) was a speakeasy during the 1920s, and has continued as a local bar and jazz club for over a century. They have music seven days a week, and accept CASH ONLY, so be sure to visit an ATM before you go there.
**Blues**

The blues migrated to Chicago from Mississippi many decades ago, and took root in the city. Here are three of the best blues clubs in town:

- **Buddy Guy’s Legends** – is a long walk or a short cab ride from the AOM hotels. Buddy Guy is a legend in his own right, and brings in many great musicians.
- **Blue Chicago** – is about a 20 minute walk or a 10 minute cab ride from the AOM hotels. Lots of good music.
- **House of Blues** – is a short walk from the hotels. From a comedy club to various bands, there are lots of things happening here.

**Theatre**

- **Broadway in Chicago** – Broadway shows and musicals

**Comedy**

- **Second City** – famous Chicago sketch comedy theater.
- **Late Nite Catechism** – A great send-up of Catholic school, running for 28 years and going strong, now at Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago.
- **iO Improv** - improv comedy where many famous comedians got their start.

**Boat Tours and More**

- **Chicago Architecture Center River Cruise aboard Chicago's First Lady** – The #1 boat tour in Chicago, departs from the corner of Michigan Ave. and E. Wacker Dr.
- **Dinner cruises from Navy Pier** - There are many to choose from.
- **Sea Dog** – Large speed boat tour from Navy Pier; great fun if you don’t mind getting wet.
- **Shoreline** has architectural and lake cruises. The fireworks cruise is fun!
- **Lincoln Park Zoo** is famous for its gorillas, and is just minutes away from downtown. It’s also close to lots of restaurants, music and other entertainment.
- **Brookfield Zoo** (about 30 minutes West of the Loop) is larger than the Lincoln Park Zoo, with everything from koalas to dolphins.

**Beyond Chicago**

- **Morton Arboretum** (in Lisle, about 1 hour drive with normal traffic) is one of my favorite places on earth. It has many beautiful walking/hiking trails, an outdoor sculpture exhibit, a children’s garden and even a miniature golf course.
- **Chicago Botanic Garden** (in Glencoe, about 1 hour drive with normal traffic). This amazing garden has lots to see.
- From WBEZ 91.5 FM, the Chicago National Public Radio station: [10 great day trips from Chicago that deliver nature, culture and superb food.](https://www.chicagotribune.com/travel/ct-chicago-travel-round-up-20210915-story.html)

We could go on and on, but this will give you a very good start to explore The Windy City – Chicago.