

Welcome to the City: Chicago

A Crowdsourced Guide by Davidson Alumni and Parents

Top “Must Do” Items in the City

- Visit Millennium Park and attend a free concert at Pritzker Pavilion.
- Visit the Art Institute of Chicago.
- Bike the 18-mile long Chicago lake front trail. Bring a camera as you’ll witness some great skyline views, especially south of the city. You’ll need to go very early in the morning to avoid crowds on pretty days. Biking North along the Chicago lake front trail to Water Front Café is delightful.
- Take the Chicago Architecture Boat Tour. It’s such a great way to see the city and learn about its incredible history and the stories behind the skyline.
- Go to a Cubs game during a summer.
- Go to a concert at Wrigley Field.
- Go to Lincoln Park Zoo. Free, and during the holidays you can participate in Zoo Lights or Brew Lights.
- Walk the riverfront path. Rent a kayak. Drink some wine.
- Find a friend with a rooftop pool and spend as much time there as possible.
- Go to the Shedd!
- Chicago History Museum. It’s a great way to ground yourself in the history of the city.
- Learn to sail at any of the yacht clubs and then join a crew for races in the summer.
- Attend a free concert at Grant Park.
- Check out the Chicago Air and Water Show.
- See movies in the park.
- Attend summer street festivals.
- Eat everything on Randolph Street.
- Enjoy beach time during the day and night. North Ave beach in the summer—great place to watch the free Navy Pier Fireworks on Wednesdays and Saturdays!
- Take advantage of the Chicago sports scene. Bulls. Sox. Blackhawks.
- Go around the city taking photos with a friend and enjoy whatever food/culture/sight is located there.
- Visit the Old Town School of Folk Music. Great entertainers and lovely venue! It’s converted from a former branch library.
- Go to a late night bar once (and probably only once).
- See improv and sketch comedy at Second City or iO.
- Take the Chicago Riverboat tour. Best way to see the city!
- Eat deep dish pizza as much as possible.
- Visit the Garfield Park Conservatory. Great indoor garden off the green line with plants from around the world. Great in the winter.
- Do a free brewery tour at Revolution or Half Acre.
- Go to the Old Town Arts Fair and Taste of Randolph Festivals.
- Go to Karaoke at Four Farthings in Lincoln Park.

- Check out the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio in Oak Park.
- Go to the Chicago Botanic Garden in Glencoe. Beautiful outdoor gardens featuring a variety of flowers and landscaping styles.
- See the Lion King at the Cadillac Palace Theatre.
- Play summer organized sports through the Chicago Sport and Social Club.
- Check out Chinatown and Greektown.

Top “Must Do” Items out of the City

- Milwaukee Art Museum.
- Go to New Buffalo, Michigan. Great lake town.
- Go to a Notre Dame game in South Bend.
- Head to Northwestern to tailgate a football game.
- Bike along Fox River Trail west of the city. You can take the Metra to Elgin, which is on the Fox River Trail.
- Evanston (purple line). Few Spirits gin and whiskey distillery.
- Day trip across the lake to St. Joseph area. Beer, beaches, sleepy Michigan beach town, berry farms, apple orchards.
- Milwaukee. A fun day trip. Lots of beer and cheese and brats, oh my! Brewers, lakefront brewery, casino if that’s your thing.
- Madison, Wisconsin. Cute college town and beautiful setting right on the lake.
- Check out the Naperville Ribfest.
- Go to Wisconsin Dells—the waterpark capital of the world.
- Check out Six Flags Great America north of the city.

What We Wish We’d Known

- That you probably don’t need a car unless you plan on traveling to the ‘burbs a lot. Public transportation are very convenient and clean.
- Never go to a Cubs home opener. The weather is miserable and the Cubs usually stink up the joint. Wrigley Field is much more pleasant July - September.
- Suburban North Shore housing is too expensive and New Trier High School - although excellent - is not worth it.
- Once you turn 25, don’t hang out in Wrigleyville past 10 p.m.
- Be prepared for any kind of weather—like a snowstorm on Easter.
- There is no bad weather. Just bad clothing.
- Buy a big coat and snow boots—they are DEFINITELY worth the investment.
- Bring a change of shoes to the office.
- Never go to Navy Pier. It is a tourist trap and nothing of value lives there.
- Shop Michigan Ave in the late morning.
- Use Google maps when venturing down to lower Wacker. It’s a labyrinth down there.
- Chicago deep dish is gross. But Chicago dogs are surprisingly good.

- Chicago has far more to it than just the Loop! Lincoln Park and Lakeview have excellent restaurants and bars with a great combo of city and neighborhood feel.
- Stay safe, and always be aware of your surroundings.
- Learn the grid of the city, the main streets and their numbers. It's easier to get around and know where places are.
- Many CTA fares require exact change. Get a Ventra card.

What to Read

- Chicago Tribune
- Barstool Chicago
- The Chicagoan
- Crain's
- Chicagoist.com
- Ohmyrockness.com for small venue music
- Eater Chicago
- DNA Info. Pages by neighborhood that can help keep you updated on the comings and goings in your specific part of the city.
- Neighborhood Parents Network: great if you have kids
- Timeout: good social calendar
- Redeyechicago.com
- Chicagoreader.com

Note from Alumni Relations: While we don't keep these guides updated year round, we do ask alumni and parents in our chapters for updates to them each fall when we send out our Welcome to the City invitation. If you'd like to add something, we'd love if you could hold your recommendation until next fall!