

CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
NEWS RELEASE
CHICAGO OFFICE OF TOURISM

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CHICAGO--THE GREAT AMERICAN CITY!

Chicago is a city of world-class status and unsurpassed beauty, drawing visitors from around the nation and the world. Located on the shores of Lake Michigan in the heart of the Midwest, Chicago, with a population of more than 2.7 million people, is home to world-championship sports teams, an internationally acclaimed symphony orchestra, renowned architecture, award-winning theater, and much more.

Visitors to Chicago experience a virtual explosion of cultural activity, civic pride and multicultural expression. From stunning architecture and world-famous museums to lakefront parks and vibrant ethnic neighborhoods, Chicago offers a range of attractions, which keep visitors coming back again and again.

The Chicago Cultural Center, 77 E. Randolph Street, an architectural showplace for the lively and visual arts, is a great place to begin a visit to Chicago. In addition to housing one of the city's official Visitor Information Centers, the Chicago Cultural Center offers more than 600 free art programs annually. It serves as a cultural crossroads where visitors can meet and learn about Chicago and its residents.

Chicago History

The first resident of Chicago was Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, a fur trader from Santo Domingo of French-African descent. DuSable built the first settlement in 1779 at the mouth of the Chicago River.

In 1830, lots were sold to finance construction of what would become the Illinois and Michigan Canal, connecting Chicago with the Mississippi River. Three years later, with a booming population of 350, the Town of Chicago was incorporated.

In 1837, the town was incorporated as a city with a population of 4,170. Chicago cemented its role as a transportation hub in 1848 when the 100-mile Illinois and Michigan Canal was completed, and the first locomotive arrived from the Galena & Chicago Union Railroad. The city's population tripled in the following three years.

Access to transportation played a key role in the development of the Chicago Union stockyards, which served the nation between 1865 and 1971. On Sunday, October 8, 1871, a fire began on the West Side. By Tuesday morning, the Great Chicago Fire had claimed 300 lives, left 90,000 Chicagoans without homes and destroyed \$200 million worth of property. This disaster turned into an opportunity to plan and rebuild the entire city.

In 1893, Chicago hosted the World's Columbian Exposition that attracted nearly 26 million visitors during its six-month run. In order to provide transportation to the fair, the Chicago Transit Authority introduced the first elevated trains to Chicago. Today the system's "L" train encircles the city's central business district, referred to as "the Loop." Chicago's cultural interests can be traced to this era, when its orchestra, library, and major museums were established. The Columbian Exposition's Palace of Fine Arts is now home to the Museum of Science and Industry, visited by more than one million people each year.

In 1909, the newly formed Chicago Plan Commission published Daniel Burnham's comprehensive plan. The city's unobstructed lakefront, its citywide system of parks and its green belt of forest preserves were all part of this unique plan, the first ever presented to an American city. Chicago hosted the 1933 World's Fair, dubbed "A Century of Progress," to show the technological accomplishments of civilization since the city was incorporated. The fair attracted 39 million visitors in a two-year period.

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Add One/Chicago

Richard J. Daley was elected Mayor of Chicago for the first of six times in 1955. For 21 years, Daley served “the city that works.” During his time in office, O’Hare International Airport (which became the world’s busiest) began operations, the Sears Tower (one of the world’s tallest buildings) was erected and McCormick Place Convention Center (the largest in North America) opened.

In 1976, Mayor Daley died in office. Since then, Chicago elected its first female mayor (Jane Byrne in 1979) and its first African American mayor (Harold Washington in 1983). In 1989, Mayor Richard M. Daley, son of Richard J. Daley, was elected Mayor and still holds the position.

Chicago has increased its exposure as a world-class city by hosting the World Cup Soccer Tournament in 1994, the Democratic National Convention in 1996, the International Pow Wow in 1998, an International Millennium Celebration in 1999/2000, and Gay Games VII in 2006. Currently, Chicago is the United States Applicant City in the bid for the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Chicago's multicultural heritage is reflected in its neighborhoods, which now attract thousands of visitors each year. Chicago is home to nearly three million people from all over the world. As each new group has come to Chicago, their unique community spirit, typified by Chicago's motto “I will,” has enabled them to build a new community, a new life, and a new future. This spirit is responsible for a city that has never stopped dreaming, building, rebuilding, growing, and making major contributions to the world.

ARCHITECTURE

Chicago is the birthplace of the modern building. From historic landmark buildings to contemporary technological masterpieces, Chicago is home to unique and innovative designs that have shaped American architecture. Chicago is a living museum of architecture, thanks to the genius of architects such as Daniel Burnham, Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Helmut Jahn, Frank Gehry and hundreds of others.

MUSEUMS

Chicago is world-renowned for its diverse collection of museums, which explore a variety of subjects, including Chicago history, modern art, African American culture, astronomy, natural history and much more. Some museums offer free admission and many others have weekly free days.

TOURS

By foot, bus, bike, boat, or plane--on the land, lake, river, or in the sky--you can tour all of Chicago, from its famous landmarks to its world-renowned cultural institutions and attractions.

TASTE

Chicago has thousands of restaurants serving a medley of culinary delights to suit every taste, every budget and every mood. Reserve your table at one of Chicago’s award-winning restaurants, from Charlie Trotter’s signature dishes to Rick Tramonto and Gale Gand’s exceptional menu at Tru.

SHOPPING

Shopping in Chicago began on State Street, the center of the Loop. The original and flagship Marshall Field's (now Macy's) department store opened in 1852 on State Street. The famed “Magnificent Mile” that runs along Michigan Avenue from the Chicago River to Oak Street offers hundreds of designer retail stores, shops and boutiques presenting top-of-the-line goods from around the world. Be sure to stroll down Oak Street, where designs from Paris, Milan and Manhattan are mixed with Chicago’s Gold Coast atmosphere, and visit neighborhoods such as Division Street and the Southport Corridor where specialty shops carry the work of independent and Chicago-based designers.

Visitor Information

Visitors and Chicagoans planning to entertain out-of-town guests can receive Chicago brochures, reserve hotel accommodations and receive trip-planning assistance by calling toll-free 1.877.CHICAGO (1.877.244.2246), or visiting www.explorechicago.org. Brochures and information on Chicago’s exciting events and activities are also available at the Visitor Information Centers. The centers are located at Chicago Water Works, 163 East Pearson Street at Michigan Avenue and the Chicago Cultural Center, 77 East Randolph Street. The TTY toll-free number for the hearing impaired is 1.866.710.0294.

The Chicago Office of Tourism, a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, is the official City agency dedicated to promoting Chicago to domestic and international visitors and to providing innovative visitor programs and services.

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