

DAY TRIPS & EXCURSIONS

Certainly Chicago has enough sky-high buildings, rockin' live-music clubs, beaches, boozers and ballparks to keep you occupied for weeks. But let's say you want to scale sand dunes, go surfing or nibble a hunk of freshly made cheese – you're out of luck in the city limits. Which means you'll have to hit the road to broaden your experience. The destinations in this chapter range from 20-minute jaunts to 3½-hour journeys, many reachable by bus or train for those without a car, and they fan out beyond Illinois into Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan.

Oak Park is a short El ride from downtown, though it seems a world away with its huge old houses, wrap-around porches and sprawling green yards. Frank Lloyd Wright designed many of the town's buildings and had his studio here. Ernest Hemingway was born a few blocks away, and his home is now a museum.

Beach bums will want to proceed east to Indiana Dunes, where heaps of sand provide opportunities for shoreside lounging or dune hiking. Just beyond in New Buffalo, adventure seekers can surf or skimboard over Lake Michigan's waves.

Turning the wheel north to Wisconsin rewards the road-tripper with two worthy cities: down-to-earth Milwaukee, which admirably balances Harleys and beer with world-class art and cultural festivals; and liberal, leafy Madison, the small state capital loaded with coffee shops, bookstores, farmers markets and cheap, international places to grab a bite. And, of course, there's no escaping the Dairy State without cheese, so we provide a jaunt to the nation's densest cheese-making area.

Back in Illinois, Route 66, the nostalgic 'Mother Road', starts in downtown Chicago in front of the Art Institute, and carries travelers south through a trail of kitschy roadside attractions, drive-in movie theaters and scattered shrines to local hero Abe Lincoln. Genteel Galena, a B&B-stuffed, Civil War-era town near the Mississippi River, transports visitors back to a slower, horse-drawn age.

And finally, Michigan's Gold Coast provides sand, antiques and mango-colored sunsets.

The prices listed here are for peak season, which runs from late May to early September. During the off-season, many places reduce their hours and some even close entirely.

ACTIVE ENDEAVORS

C'mon, haul your buns off the couch and get out there. The region offers activities to match a variety of weather moods and personal tastes, and the scenery will knock your socks off. Visitors can kayak and bicycle in Madison (p241); hike, swim and cross-country ski in Indiana Dunes (p237); and tramp over rugged, wooded sandbanks in the parks along Michigan's Gold Coast (p245). And get this: visitors can surf or skimboard, as well as bike and swim, in New Buffalo (p239). Woo-hoo!

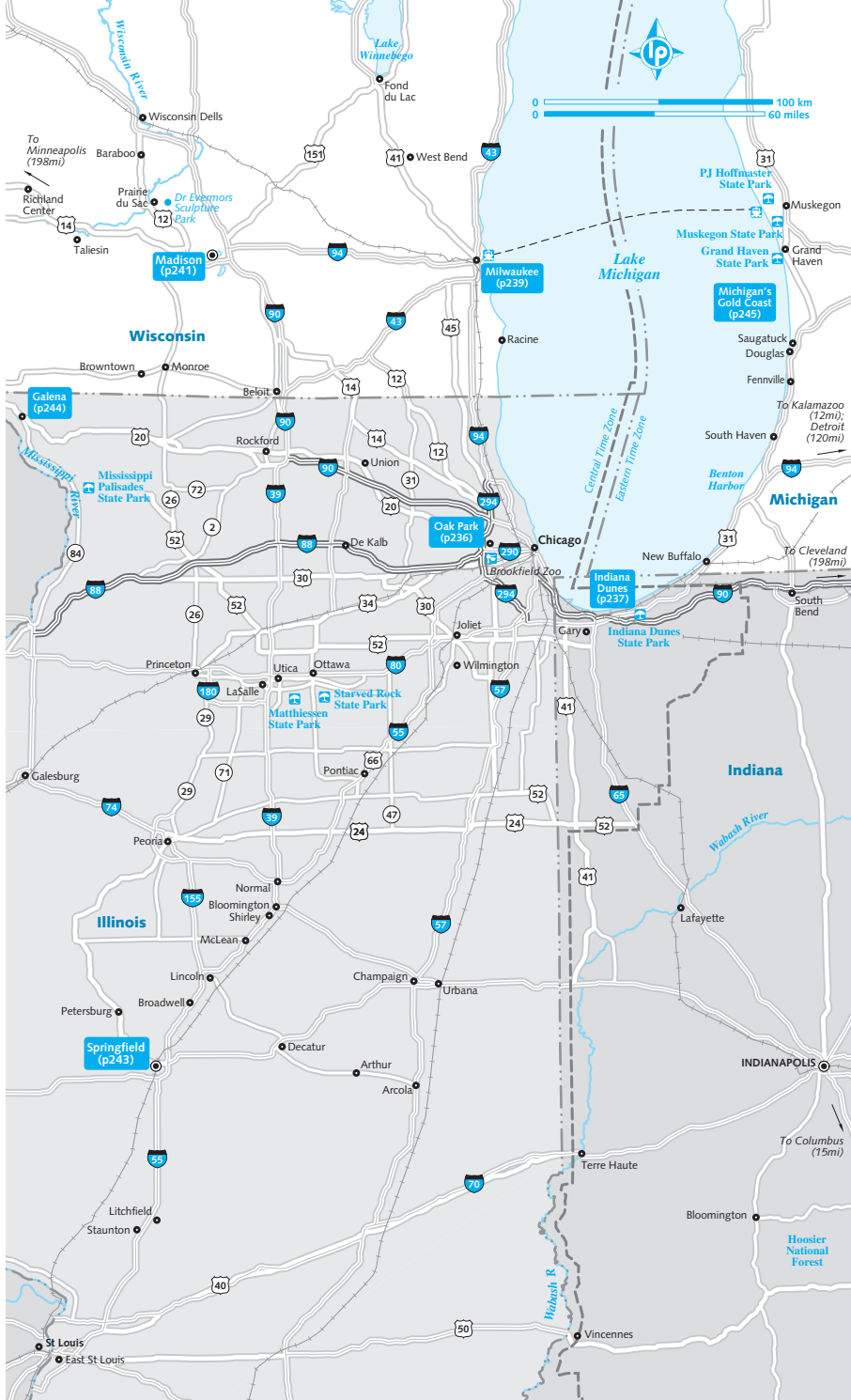
FOODIE FORAGES

Make sure to wear expandable trousers when you embark. Crane's Pie Pantry (p248) near Saugatuck is famed for its fruit pies; the blueberries, raspberries and other fillings come straight from the surrounding orchard. Beer, cheese and bratwursts are Wisconsin specialties; the state even produces a guide that'll take you straight to the local sources. Madison's

Dane County Farmers' Market (p241) is one place to indulge with its beer-cooked brats and artisanal cheeses. Or travel south to Monroe (p242), where more cheesemakers reside than anywhere else in the country. Don't dare leave the state without knocking back a frozen custard at Kopp's (p240) in Milwaukee. Favorite restaurants include Café Soleil & L'Etoile (p242) in Madison, where the chefs have been doing the slow food thing for 30-plus years; and Miller Bakery Café (p239) near Indiana Dunes, fusing French, Asian and contemporary American flavors.

ART & HISTORY

Impress your friends by returning from your Midwest excursion more knowledgeable about art, architecture and history. Architecture buffs can be unleashed in Oak Park to view Frank Lloyd Wright's studio (p236) and a couple of streets' worth of homes he designed; Taliesin (p242), outside Madison,



0 100 km
0 60 miles

Madison (p241)

Milwaukee (p239)

Michigan's Gold Coast (p245)

Galena (p244)

Oak Park (p236)

Indiana Dunes (p237)

Springfield (p243)

Wisconsin

Illinois

Michigan

Indiana

Hoosier National Forest

Central Time Zone
Eastern Time Zone

To Minneapolis (198mi)

To Kalamazoo (12mi), Detroit (120mi)

To Cleveland (198mi)

To Columbus (15mi)

St Louis
East St Louis

Bloomington

Lafayette

INDIANAPOLIS

Terre Haute

Vincennes

Urbana

Champaign

Lincoln

McLean

Bloomington

Normal

Shirley

Peoria

Galesburg

LaSalle

Utica

Ottawa

Wilmington

Joliet

Brookfield Zoo

Gary

New Buffalo

South Bend

South Haven

Benton Harbor

To Kalamazoo (12mi), Detroit (120mi)

Fennville

Douglas

Saugatuck

Grand Haven

Grand Haven State Park

Muskegon State Park

PJ Hoffmaster State Park

Muskegon

West Bend

Fond du Lac

Wisconsin Dells

Baraboo

Taliesin

Prairie du Sac

Richland Center

To Minneapolis (198mi)

Starved Rock State Park

Matthiessen State Park

Mississippi Palisades State Park

Dr Eversmors Sculpture Park

Mississippi River

Wisconsin River

Wabash River

Lake Winnebago

Lake Michigan