

## **BLUELIST**<sup>1</sup> (blu,list) v. to recommend a travel experience.

What's your recommendation? [www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/bluelist)

# NEIGHBORHOODS

## top picks

- **Millennium Park** (p53)  
Shiny sculptures, human-gargoyle fountains, music and ice-skating.
- **Art Institute** (p52)  
Home of a quarter million artworks, especially big-time Impressionists.
- **Wrigley Field** (p81)  
Baseball's most historic, cursed and ivy-walled park.
- **John Hancock Center** (p69)  
Sky-high tower with sparkling views enjoyed over cocktails.
- **12th Street Beach** (p108)  
Secret sand-crescent behind the Museum Campus.
- **Chinatown** (p109)  
Shops brim with chestnut cakes, jasmine tea and Hello Kitty trinkets.
- **Willie Dixon's Blues Heaven** (p110)  
Birthplace of Chicago blues and ultimately rock and roll.
- **Navy Pier** (p66)  
Fireworks, a Ferris wheel and flotilla of boats on the waterfront.
- **Field Museum of Natural History** (p104)  
Houses everything but the kitchen sink: dinosaurs, mummies, gemstones and stuffed apes.
- **Lincoln Park** (p75)  
Lakes, leafy paths, paddleboats and a free zoo in their midst.

# NEIGHBORHOODS

Chicago prides itself on being a 'city of neighborhoods,' each one marked by its own look, feel and culinary treats. Ethnicity characterizes many areas, and vibrant Mexican, Polish, Chinese, Puerto Rican, Vietnamese and Indian communities waft their flavors from varied home grounds.

Most draws for visitors are clustered in Chicago's geographic center. The bull's eye is the Loop, the city's historic and business core circled by train tracks (hence the name). Its hubbub spills over into the Near North. Together, these two sight-heavy, shop-and-hotel-laden areas could occupy an entire week. But don't give in to the temptation to spend your whole trip here. Moving beyond downtown there is a wealth of galleries, historical sights and architectural wonders to see and, most importantly, encounters to be had with everyday Chicagoans in the neighborhoods where they live, drink, eat and watch sports.

Take the gilded Gold Coast, for instance, where you can gaze longingly at mansions inhabited by folks living the high life, same as they've been doing for 120 years. Further north is historic Old Town, home of Second City improv, and Lincoln Park, where college students and yuppies enjoy beautiful parklands and hot restaurants.

Keep moving north and you'll find Lake View – a hub for bars and shops, both gay and straight, as well as the Cathedral of Baseball, Wrigley Field. Above Lake View is the jazzy destination of Uptown and European-feeling Andersonville. From there, swing to the southwest to explore trendy Wicker Park and Bucktown, as well as the boutique bloom afoot in abutting Ukrainian Village. Logan Square and Humboldt Park carry on the trendiness, though in a less crowded, more relaxed manner.

A quick ride west of downtown, the Near West Side has galleries, creative eateries, Oprah and holograms. Nearby Pilsen also comprises some odd bedfellows, with Czech homes housing Hispanic residents who go to hip gallery shows. In the museum-rich South Loop and Near South Side, the skyline changes every week as more and more urbanites move into the newly rising condos. And down on the South Side, Hyde Park provides a leafy, bookish retreat.

It's easy to find your way around once you understand the orderly city plan. Chicago's streets are laid out on a grid and numbered; Madison and State Sts in the Loop are the grid's center. As you go north, south, east or west from here, each increase of 800 in street numbers corresponds to one mile. At every increase of 400, there is a major arterial street. For instance, Division St (1200 N) is followed by North Ave (1600 N) and Armitage Ave (2000 N), at which point you're 2.5 miles north of downtown.

Got it? Good. Now let's get moving.

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