

SHOPPING

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SHOPPING

From the glossy department stores of the Magnificent Mile to the gay, goth and comics shops of Lake View to the indie designers of Wicker Park, Chicago is a shopper's destination. The entire family can abuse the credit card here, and an afternoon spent browsing might result in a Crate & Barrel cappuccino maker for mom, a Cubs ball cap for dad, a nipple ring and Darth Vader guitar for the teenage son in a band, a corn-polyester blend jacket for vegetarian sis, and a lucky bingo candle for grandma.

Shopping is in Chicago's blood. The city birthed national retail giants such as Sears, Montgomery Ward, Marshall Field's and Woolworth's. True, three of the four companies no longer exist, victims of big-box retailers and overseas trade. But Chicago is still at its happiest filling shopping bags, and you'll feel the love across town.

Though chains like Old Navy and Target sit on practically every street corner, Chicago has managed to maintain a thriving culture of independent and family-run stores. A friendly Midwestern atmosphere prevails, even among the high-end stores on the Magnificent Mile.

Music, new and retro fashions, art- and architecture-related items and ethnic goods are the city's shopping strengths. For a list of easy-to-obtain local souvenirs, see [p130](#).

Note to serious shoppers: sign up for *Chicago Magazine's* 'Sales Check' e-newsletter (www.chicagomag.com/salescheck_subscribe) or check the online version at www.chicagomag.com (click the 'Shopping' tab). It's published weekly and lists sales during the upcoming days, as well as new store openings and events. It's a good tool for guidance about where to unsheathe your credit card and how to save a few bucks. [Daily Candy](http://www.dailycandy.com/chicago) (www.dailycandy.com/chicago) is another good resource about fashion going-on.

SHOPPING AREAS

The shoppers' siren song emanates from Michigan Ave in the Near North, along what's called the Magnificent Mile. It's stuffed with vertical malls and high-end chains and is the busiest shopping area in town. It's particularly festive around the winter holidays. Next door in the Gold Coast, ritzy designers from Paris, Milan and Manhattan mix it up on Oak and Rush Sts.

Moving north and west of downtown, you'll find boutiques filling Wicker Park and Bucktown (mod), Lincoln Park (tony), Lake View (counter-cultural) and Andersonville (all three).

OPENING HOURS

Typical retail shopping hours are 11am to 7pm Monday to Saturday and noon to 6pm Sunday, though they vary depending on the season, the neighborhood and the amount of foot traffic. Prime shopping areas and malls may stay open until 9pm.

The following listings note stores' hours that stray from these rough standards, as well as any closed days.

CONSUMER TAXES

Chicago's sales tax on goods (excluding food) is 9.75% – the highest in the nation (tied with Los Angeles).

THE LOOP

Shopping in the Loop, filled with iconic department stores in grand old buildings, used to be a legendary experience. Marshall Field's had its flagship store here for over 100 years, where it invented traditions such as the money-back guarantee, the bridal registry and the bargain basement. Around the corner, Carson Pirie Scott was once so prominent it got rock-star architect Louis Sullivan to design its space in the 1890s (see [p57](#) for details). Alas, around 2007, both stores went kaput (Marshall Field's became Macy's; Carson's became office space). While the Loop still has plenty of mondo retailers, they're mostly national chains that have moved in to serve the enormous population of office workers trying to squeeze shopping into their lunch hours.

The stretch of State St between W Randolph and W Washington Sts is known as Block 37, a retail corridor that has been in development for years. Several stores finally opened in late 2009, including some national chains, but also many hip local shops. It's worth a browse, and more retailers supposedly are coming.

GALLERY 37 STORE [Map pp54-5](#) Arts & Crafts
% 312-744-7274; 66 E Randolph St; h closed
Sun; m Brown, Orange, Green, Purple, Pink Line
to Randolph