

Hotels & Hostels

Want more sleeping recommendations than we could ever pack into this little ol' book? Craving more detail – including extended reviews and photographs? Want to read reviews by other travelers and be able to post your own? Just make your way over to lonelyplanet.com/hotels and check out our thorough list of independent reviews, then reserve your room simply and securely.

SLEEPING

top picks

- James (p232)
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SLEEPING

From dramatic views and rose-petal bubble baths to hostel bunks and homestays, you'll find amenities at every level in Chicago. Finding something at a reasonable rate? That's more difficult. Chicago is the Midwest's biggest city and convention central, so demand is high year-round, and it gets near impossible to find value on summer weekends (June through August), when the festival season and tourism peak. If you're willing to be flexible with your dates, you'll have a better chance of finding a place to stay that won't break the bank. Consolidators and online room bookers are another way to go if cost cutting is your primary objective (for more, see [Saving Strategies opposite](#)).

More than 30,000 hotel rooms blanket the city, most in high-rise buildings. With so many choices, picking a place can be daunting. It helps to decide on a neighborhood first. If you're going to tromp up and down the Mag Mile and binge on shopping, the Gold Coast or slightly more moderately priced Near North are the places to lay your head. If you're interested in snoozing amid the architecture and museums of the Loop and South Loop, there are plenty of options in those central neighborhoods, almost all of which are located near El stations for easy transportation to anywhere in the city. These core areas have the greatest concentration of hotels, and generally speaking, the farther south you go, the lower the prices.

Less central, but more personal, are area bed-and-breakfasts. A few old townhomes – in Wicker Park, Lake View and Andersonville – have been turned into great places to stay. There are even a couple in the Gold Coast. Pluses such as free internet, quieter surrounds and some free parking give B&Bs more bang for the midrange buck. In addition to the properties listed here, check out [Bed & Breakfast Chicago](#) (www.chicago-bed-breakfast.com), which represents 18 local guesthouses. Most do have minimum stay requirements.

Vacation rentals in local apartments are also a good deal in Chicago, especially for traveling families.

Using search engines, you're likely to find the most affordable chain options close to Chicago's airports. Even though these are connected by reliable public transportation, it's worth it to put down a little extra to spare the long commute.

APARTMENT RENTALS: LONG- & SHORT-TERM

If you'll be in town a while, or you just like feeling 'at home,' it may make sense to rent an apartment or condo. Typically the price is comparable to a hotel, but the upside is more room to spread out and amenities such as a kitchen and a deck. Plus these properties often feel less sterile and put you in the midst of cool neighborhoods.

For long-term rentals of a week or more, you can occasionally find a bargain at [Sublet.com](#) (www.sublet.com), where apartment owners sublease their place by the week or the month. Only premium listings are free to contact, otherwise

you have to pay \$25 to join. Rates run from \$450 to \$1500 a week for a one-bedroom rental. You can find a bedroom in a shared apartment (from \$600 per month) or a whole studio or one-bedroom apartment to sublet (from \$750 per month) at [Craigslist](#) (www.chicago.craigslist.org).

Several services offer short-term vacation rentals in addition to longer-term ones. [Vacation Rental By Owner](#) (www.vrbo.com) is an excellent online source for everything from high-rise condominiums to leafy graystone apartments in neighborhoods citywide. You work out all the details with the owner themselves; the website just acts as a clearinghouse. [VacationsFRBO](#) (www.vacationsfrbo.com) is another bountiful source for apartments (and even houseboats!) around the city. [At Home in Chicago](#) (% 312-640-1050, 800-375-7084; www.athomeinnchicago.com) rents out apartments and B&B rooms in Wrigleyville, Lincoln Park, Wicker Park and around; it's easy to search by neighborhood. With all of these services, be sure to check if there's a cleaning fee added,

PRICE GUIDE

\$\$\$	over \$250 a night
\$\$	\$125-250 a night
\$	under \$125 a night

SAVING STRATEGIES

Don't think a \$115 motel room qualifies as a budget buy? Neither do we. But that's Chicago. Unless you're willing to stay in a hostel, your low-end options are limited. A few saving strategies to try:

- Look for the **P** - Parking can add \$45 a day in Chicago. Aim for places – motels, chains like Best Western and some B&Bs – that offer this service free. We mark them in the listings with a **P**.
- Added extras – Look for properties that give away breakfast and internet access. We mark free wi-fi with a **W** and denote where there's free morning munchies.
- Shop around – Some chains have low price guarantees on their websites; at others, you'll get a better rate at a booking website such as www.hotrooms.com, www.travelocity.com or www.expedia.com.
- Be flexible – Hotel rates in Chicago change by the day. Call ahead and ask when it'd be best to come. The website www.hotels.com also has an excellent rate calendar. Once you click 'Select rooms and rates' for a particular date at a specific property, you're given an 'Flexible dates?' option which pulls up a calendar that shows the prices on different days.
- Take a gamble – When maximizing quality for the price is your main concern, consolidator websites such as www.priceline.com and www.hotwire.com are an excellent risk to take. They don't let you see the name of the property before you buy, but you can save up to 50%. The hotel gets to unload its unsold rooms (without sacrificing their rep by advertising it) and you benefit. Pick your neighborhood ('Gold Coast' yields lots of acceptable results), the hotel's star rating and how much you're willing to pay. Once you've bought and paid, you're told where you're staying. Note that making changes once you've reserved is harder than crossing Lake Shore Dr at rush hour. For more, see [Bidding on a Bed \(p232\)](#).
- Couchsurf or swap houses – Stay for free with a local who has offered his or her sofa through [Couchsurfing](#) (www.couchsurfing.com). You must become a member of the group first, but there's no fee to do so. Or trade houses with a local via [Craigslist's 'housing swap' section](#) (www.chicago.craigslist.org).

because it can be substantial (from \$100). Also ask about parking and wi-fi costs.

For lodging that caters to the business traveler, try [Habitat Corporate Suites Network](#) (% 312-902-2092, 800-833-0331; www.habitatcsn.com), which runs several high-rise properties in Near North. Expect weekly maid service, and business and fitness centers on-site.

At press time, Chicago's city council had voted to license and regulate vacation rentals (the first US city to do so), which could change the local landscape. Property owners say the fees and bureaucracy will put them out of business. The city says its regulations will ensure safeguards for consumers. Stay tuned.

ROOM RATES

The rates listed in this chapter are for standard double-occupancy rooms with bathroom (unless otherwise indicated). Deluxe rooms are 10% to 20% more; suites are an additional 30% to 40% or more. The range noted takes into account seasonal fluctuations and the vagaries of weekend versus weekday lodging. The prices are for comparison purposes only, since a large convention in town can make them laughably off base.

Chicago's 15.4% hotel tax is not included in the rates listed, so factor in that extra cost. Other expenses can add up too. You'll pay

dearly for parking in Chicago, an average of \$45 per night extra downtown (ouch!) and \$22 per night in outlying neighborhoods. If you can leave your car at home, do. Most hotels have parking lots in the same building or very nearby. B&B parking is usually on street. We've used a **P** to indicate the rare and treasured establishment that offers a free, dedicated spot for your car.

Internet access is ubiquitous – unless otherwise noted, lodgings listed have wired and/or wireless in-room access. At many high-end hotels it'll cost you (\$10 to \$15 per day is common), though more and more properties are offering it for free. Lobbies sometimes serve as free wi-fi zones. If a place has complimentary in-room access we've marked it with **W**. Otherwise, expect to pay up.

Some lodgings provide a free continental breakfast (rolls, pastries, fruit, juice, coffee). Listings will say so if it's part of the room rate.

Every lodging we list has air-conditioning (unless stated otherwise). Check-in time is usually around 3pm, check out at 11am.

THE LOOP

Fast-walking office workers whisk by you as the clack-clack-clack of an El train reverberates overhead. The business center

of town pulses in the daytime, but the further you get from the lake or the river, the more it empties out at night. Every El and train line in the city converges on the Loop, making the boutique hotels and historic properties here superconvenient to everywhere. Millennium and Grant Park are just a Frisbee throw away, and you're no more than a 15-minute walk to River North dining and South Loop museums.

FAIRMONT Map pp54-5 Hotel \$\$\$

% 312-565-8000, 866-540-4408; www.fairmont.com; 200 N Columbus Dr; r \$279-499; Brown, Orange, Green, Purple, Pink Line to Randolph Millennium Park here you come. All 687 luxury rooms and suites here are as close to the statues and fountains as you can stay. Upgrade above a standard room to get a park or lake view (those near the top of the hotel's 45 stories are the best). Accents like Asian ceramics combine with French empire chairs to create soft – if a bit stodgy – surrounds.

W CHICAGO CITY CENTER

Map pp54-5 Hotel \$\$\$

% 312-332-1200, 877-946-8357; www.whotels.com/chicago; 172 W Adams St; r \$229-499; Brown, Orange, Purple, Pink Line to Quincy; Employees all wear black at this hip hotel where the soaring 'living room' (lobby/bar) feels a little like a dance club, especially when the DJ gets going. Sleek urban rooms, in black and beiges, seem stark to some. Special gay pride packages include W Pride T-shirts and complimentary rainbow-themed cocktails, usually in summertime.

HOTEL MONACO Map pp54-5 Boutique Hotel \$\$\$

% 312-960-8500, 866-610-0081; www.monaco-chicago.com; 225 N Wabash Ave; r \$259-379; Brown, Orange, Green, Purple, Pink Line to State; W#
Had to leave your beloved poodle Fifi at home this trip? Pick up a complimentary pet goldfish to keep you company during your stay instead. Hotel Monaco's fun-loving nature comes out in the room decor too. Curvaceous couches offset bold moss green and white striped wallpaper and raspberry window-seat cushions. In the Rock and Roll Suite, a permanently suspended TV appears to have already been 'thrown' through the window. All this posh quirkiness and it also has free wi-fi

and a free wine happy hour (standard, as part of the Kimpton chain).

HARD ROCK HOTEL CHICAGO

Map pp54-5 Boutique Hotel \$\$\$

% 312-345-1000; 866-966-5166; www.hardrockhotelchicago.com; 230 N Michigan Ave; r \$259-359; Red Line to Lake; #
The Hard Rock tries hard to let you know it's hip – DJs work the lobby lounge, staff will loan you an electric guitar to wail in your room, rock star photos pop up everywhere (including the bathroom where you might find, say, David Bowie staring out over your toilet). Despite the price level, standard rooms are just that – standard, mod clean lines and all.

RENAISSANCE CHICAGO

Map pp54-5 Hotel \$\$\$

% 312-372-7200, 800-468-3571; www.renaissancehotels.com; 1 W Wacker Dr; r \$250-359; Brown, Orange, Green, Purple, Pink Line to State; Don't be fooled by the bland exterior. Step into the lobby, where modern art, sink-right-in couches and lively earth tones exude warmth and style. Rooms are pretty typical contemporary stuff, but those with a water view (about \$50 extra) have bay windows overlooking the skyline and the adjacent river.

WIT Map pp54-5

Hotel \$\$\$

% 312-467-0200; www.thewithotel.com; 201 N State St; r from \$229; Brown, Orange, Green, Purple, Pink Line to State;
Holidaying hipsters and business travelers flock to the Wit in equal measure. The green-hued glass box glints between the Theater District and the river, and brings a few eco-amenities like dual-flush toilets and energy-efficient heating and lighting to the table. But it's the cozy, design-savvy vibe that's the big selling point. Rooms have vast windows and awesome views that you can take in from your turquoise couch with pink cushions. Guests can see what's showing in the 40-seat movie theater on-site or what's brewing at the swanky rooftop bar. It's part of the Doubletree chain.

HOTEL BURNHAM

Map pp54-5 Boutique Hotel \$\$\$

% 312-782-1111, 877-294-9712; www.burnhamhotel.com; 1 W Washington St; r \$199-300; Blue Line to Washington; W#

The proprietors brag the Burnham has the highest guest return rates in Chicago; it's easy to see why. Housed in the landmark 1890s Reliance Building (precedent for the modern skyscraper), the superslick Burnham woos architecture buffs. Blue velvet headboards and gold and blue striped silk draperies make you feel like you're sleeping in a tufted jewel box. Mahogany writing desks and chaise longues add to the lavish setup. Like other Kimpton Hotels, this one has complimentary wi-fi, wine happy hours and yoga gear to borrow. For an only-in-Chicago experience, try to nab room 809, where Al Capone's dentist and partner in crime drilled teeth.

HOTEL ALLEGRO Map pp54-5 Hotel \$\$\$

% 312-236-0123, 800-643-1500; www.allegrochicago.com; 171 W Randolph St; r \$189-310; m Brown, Orange, Purple, Pink Line to Washington; n VV#

Boutique bliss. Hotel Allegro is another historic property, part of the fun and flirty Kimpton Hotel chain. After a \$40 million makeover in 2008, the 483 rooms have emerged sporting a retro luxury cruise ship look, with funky patterned wallpaper and carpet in royal blue and snowy white tones. It's dramatic – which makes sense for a hotel right next to the Cadillac Palace Theater and its Broadway crowd. Flat-screen TVs, free wi-fi, free evening wine receptions and free yoga gear round out the stylish package.

A GREEN NIGHT'S SLEEP

Most of the city's properties do the usual by asking visitors to reuse towels and sheets, but a few have gone beyond that standard. Top of the heap are Hotel Felix (p234), Chicago's first downtown hotel to earn LEED certification for environmentally responsible construction, and Hotel Palomar (p232), Chicago's first hotel to have a green roof. The Felix even offers free parking to visitors driving hybrid cars.

Approximately 15 downtown hotels have received Green Seal (www.greenseal.org) certification. This means they've paid to go through an evaluation that checks for energy and water efficiency, recycling procedures and ecofriendly cleaning practices, among others. 'Silver' certified properties (the highest so far in Chicago) include the Fairmont (opposite), Hotel Allegro (above), Hotel Burnham (opposite), Hotel Monaco (opposite), Hotel Intercontinental, the Sheraton (p233), the Talbott and the Westin (p232 and p237).

SWISSÔTEL CHICAGO Map pp54-5 Hotel \$\$

% 312-565-0565, 888-737-9477; www.chicago.swissotel.com; 323 E Wacker Dr; r \$209-259; m Brown, Orange, Green, Purple, Pink Line to Randolph; n S

Water vistas are just part of the attraction at this triangular-shaped, mirrored-glass high-rise at the confluence of river and lake. Families love the oversized layouts, separate shower and tub, and special kids' rooms with colorful furnishings and toys. Summer weekends book up fast. No wonder, since you can munch on homemade pastries in the on-site café or tackle a heck of a hunk of beef at the Palm steakhouse. Note that the pool costs extra.

BUCKINGHAM ATHLETIC CLUB

HOTEL Map pp54-5 Boutique Hotel \$\$

% 312-663-8910; www.bac-chicago.com; 440 S LaSalle St; r incl breakfast \$199-210; m Brown, Green, Orange Line to LaSalle; VV S

Tucked onto the 40th floor of an office building, the 21-room Buckingham Athletic Club Hotel is far from easy to find. The benefit if you do? Quiet (on weekends and evenings especially) and expansive views south of town. Elegant rooms here are so spacious they'd be considered suites elsewhere. Take the elevator down to the namesake gym and dive into the lap pool, or work it out on the racquetball court, before your massage appointment.

HYATT REGENCY CHICAGO

Map pp54-5 Hotel \$\$

% 312-565-1234, 800-233-1234; www.chicago.hyatt.com; 151 E Wacker Dr; r \$179-299; m Brown, Orange, Green, Purple, Pink Line to State With more than 2019 rooms and five restaurants and bars, the contemporary Hyatt Regency is best known for being big. And filled with conventioners. And kind of blah. Drinkers will rejoice at the fact it makes claim to having the longest freestanding bar in North America. Lots of specials keep all those rooms filled in off-peak times.

HOTEL BLAKE Map pp54-5 Boutique Hotel \$\$

% 312-986-1234; www.hotelblake.com; 500 S Dearborn St; r incl breakfast \$149-259; m Blue Line to LaSalle; VV

The old customs house building has found new life as a boutique hotel at the Loop's southern edge. It's a unique location

midway between downtown's core and the Museum Campus, though not much goes on in the evenings. The mod, black and red furnishings are spread out in the well-sized rooms; the bathrooms are flat-out huge. However, if rates swing up to the high end of the spectrum, you'll probably get better bang for your buck elsewhere.

SILVERSMITH

Map pp54-5

Historic Hotel \$\$

% 312-372-7696; www.silversmithchicagohotel.com; 10 S Wabash Ave; r \$159-229; m Brown, Orange, Green, Purple, Pink Line to Madison; n Another Loop architectural gem, this one was built in 1894. Although the exterior was designed by Daniel Burnham's firm, the hotel's interior recalls Frank Lloyd Wright: the chunky wood furniture has a distinct Prairie School charm. Too bad that windows overlook the El tracks, or face right onto another building. Ah well, it's a small price to pay for the core Loop location by the Art Institute and Millennium Park.

PALMER HOUSE HILTON

Map pp54-5

Historic Hotel \$\$

% 312-726-7500, 800-445-8667; www.hilton.com; 17 E Monroe St; r \$129-279; m Brown, Orange, Green, Purple, Pink Line to Adams; s # Chicago legend Potter Palmer set many worldwide hotelier records with his 1875 hotel (first to use electric lighting, first to have in-room telephones, invention of the brownie...). Today the Palmer House lobby still has an 'Oh my God' opulence – Tiffany chandeliers, ceiling frescos – that makes a look-see imperative. The 1600-plus guest rooms give off a more updated vibe: graphic swirl prints on draperies and countertop bowl sinks seem like an updated play on antique design. The location is steps from the Art Institute and Millennium Park.

CENTRAL LOOP HOTEL

Map pp54-5

Hotel \$\$

% 312-601-3525, 866-744-2333; www.centralloophotel.com; 111 W Adams St; r \$119-171; m Blue Line to Monroe; v V The Central Loop has a good location (the name doesn't lie) and good prices if you're stuck paying rack rates. It's accessorized for business folk, though not so useful for families given the rooms'

top picks

OVER-THE-TOP AMENITIES

- A \$60,000 proposal package – with ring – at the [James](#) (p232).
- A goldfish (and bowl) you can borrow during your stay at the [Hotel Monaco](#) (p228).
- A sound pillow with harmonic sleep CD at [Affinia Chicago](#) (p234).
- A butler to walk your dog at the [Peninsula](#) (opposite).
- An electric guitar and lessons, if you need them, at the [Hard Rock Hotel](#) (p228).

smallish size. A fine pub pours drinks downstairs. The owners have another, similar property called Club Quarters at 75 E Wacker Dr.

HOSTELLING INTERNATIONAL-CHICAGO

Map pp54-5

Hostel \$

% 312-360-0300; www.hichicago.org; 24 E Congress Pkwy; dm incl breakfast \$26-38; m Brown, Orange, Purple, Pink Line to Library By far the best hostelling option in town. Kick back in the giant common room with free wi-fi (the computer room has 10 terminals for rent, too), ping-pong, tons of sofas and chairs – and a concierge. Sign up for daily field trips to interesting neighborhoods, bar hopping or sightseeing. In the morning, toast, cereal and pastries await in the enormous dining room and kitchen. Throughout, a clean, dormlike feel pervades. That's probably because half of the 500 beds go to Columbia College students during the school year. Some of the single-sex, six-bed rooms have bathrooms en suite. Linens included.

NEAR NORTH & NAVY PIER

A little bit nicer than the Loop and slightly less pricy overall than the Gold Coast (but walking distance to both), Near North is a good compromise – which is helpful, since it holds the lion's share of hotels in town. This is often where you'll end up if you bid on a room. Art galleries are to the west, Navy Pier to the east. Bars and restaurants are everywhere.

PENINSULA Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$\$

% 312-337-2888, 866-288-8889; www.peninsula.com; 108 E Superior St; r \$450-650; m Red Line to Chicago; s #

The over-the-top Peninsula is the premier lodging in town. Nestled in the neoclassical rooms, among the equestrian statues and the marquetry furnishings, are five phones. Lighting and electronics tie into impressively complicated high-tech systems. Two-story walls of glass enclose the pool, where you can swim after your essence-of-rubies spa facial. How's the service? Buttoned down. Staff members are even required to take personal grooming classes. This is where Hollywood stars check in when they come to town.

PARK HYATT Map pp72-3 Hotel \$\$\$

% 312-335-1234, 800-633-7313; www.parkchicago.hyatt.com; 800 N Michigan Ave; r \$415-505; m Red Line to Chicago; s

Want every inch of your suite covered in rose petals, with candles lit and your bath water run? They've done it before at this ask-and-it-shall-be-granted luxury flagship of the locally based Hyatt chain. From the miniature TVs in the bathroom to the butler and the courtesy car service, no expense has been spared. Bow-shaped tubs hide behind rolling window shades in some rooms so you can soak and still admire the view. Terrace kings have small balconies looking out across the street to the Water Tower and the lake beyond. C'mon – if it's good enough for U2 when they rock through town, you know it's got street cred.

TRUMP HOTEL & TOWER

Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$\$

% 312-588-8000, 877-458-7867; www.trumphotel.com; 401 N Wabash Ave; r from \$400; m Brown, Orange, Green, Purple, Pink to State; n Ws

The Donald opened his glassy Chicago handiwork, which rose to be the city's second-tallest building, in 2008. The manly, earth-toned rooms are high in the sky with floor-to-ceiling windows, kitchens full of stainless-steel appliances (except for the 'spa' rooms) and bottled water you can buy for \$5 to \$25. The views are sweet, and service is as polished as you'd expect.

SAX CHICAGO Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$\$

% 312-245-0333, 877-569-3742; www.thompsonhotels.com; 333 N Dearborn St; r \$259-409; m Red Line to Grand; n

Fluff up your best feather boa and head for the bar – the crystal-drenched chandeliers and deep-tufted red velvet sofas would make any high-class madam feel right at home. An odd lighting-related theme continues throughout. The reception desk looks like a crystal shop, faux chandelier shadows are painted on guest room walls and flickering lights illuminate (sort of) the dark corridors. This former House of Blues hotel (redesigned in 2007) is still highly theatrical. Rooms are comparatively staid, small and gray toned; renovations are reportedly upcoming.

W CHICAGO-LAKESHORE

Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$\$

% 312-943-9200, 877-946-8357; www.whotels.com/chicago; 644 N Lake Shore Dr; r \$239-379; g 66; s #

Lobby chairs appear to be carved out of tree trunks and river rocks fill a public bathroom troughlike sink... The earthy aesthetic feels entirely appropriate here on the lakefront. You can see the water from telescopes by the windows in the elevator bays, from 'spectacular' rooms and 'fantastic' suites. Navy Pier and oceanlike expanses stretch before you while you run on the treadmill or lie on the pool deck. The small Whisky Sky bar glows from the 33rd floor.

CONRAD CHICAGO Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$\$

% 312-645-1500; 800-445-8667; <http://conradhotels1.hilton.com>; 520 N Michigan Ave (main entrance on N Rush St); r \$230-365; m Red Line to Grand; n W#

Euro sleek, urban chic. Slide into 500-thread-count Italian linens and put your favorite CD on the Bose surround-sound stereo. That is, if you're not too busy watching the 42in plasma TV or docking your iPod – these rooms are wired. Adding to the discreet sense of luxury, the lobby is hiding on the 6th floor of Michigan Ave's North Bridge Shops. Lounging alfresco on the padded rattan sofas at the terrace bar is surpassed only by splurging on the grand suite, with 1000 sq ft of terrace all to yourself.

BIDDING ON A BED

In the following nonscientific study, we asked friends and colleagues to share their recent experiences with the two main hotel booking sites. The result: it's possible to get a three-star hotel by the Magnificent Mile for less than \$110 in high summer season.

- Case 1 – Agreed to a \$90 rate for a three-star, 'Water Tower – Gold Coast area' hotel at [www.hotwire.com](#). Turned out to be the **Tremont** (p238). No frills, but good location next to the Hancock Center and free wi-fi. Regular cost: \$129.
- Case 2 – Agreed to a \$109 rate for a three-star, 'Magnificent Mile – Streeterville area' hotel at [www.hotwire.com](#). It showed having breakfast, internet access, pool, laundry, business center. Turned out to be the **Embassy Suites Chicago-Lakefront** (p233). A huge two-room suite overlooking the lake, superclose to Navy Pier. The hot breakfast was colossal. A night at the hotel rate? \$331.
- Case 3 – Bid \$96 for a three-star River North hotel at [www.priceline.com](#). Rejected. Instead booked a \$106 room at a 3½-star Mag Mile hotel on [www.hotwire.com](#). The **Wyndham Chicago** (p234) room was plush and palatial. No view, limited TV channels, but only two blocks from Mag Mile. Regular rate? \$279.

JAMES Map pp66-7 Boutique Hotel \$\$\$

☎ 312-337-1000, 877-526-3755; [www.jameshotels.com](#); 616 N Rush St; r \$259-499; m Red Line to Grand; v v #

Low and loungey chairs sidle up to oversized tripod lamps. Strings of silver beads act as a dividing curtain between the platform bed and the living room. Porthole windows allow you to peep through sliding bathroom doors. Fans of mid-century modern design must stay here. But everyone can appreciate the little luxuries: Kiehl's bath products, Turkish cotton towels, a bar that has half bottles instead of minis... You can tell from the gym and spa that the co-owner created Equinox fitness centers. An overwhelmingly gracious staff helps work out any service kinks, like rooms not being ready on time.

OMNI CHICAGO HOTEL

Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$\$

☎ 312-944-6664, 800-444-6664; [www.omnihotels.com](#); 676 N Michigan Ave (entrance on E Huron St); r \$179-479; m Red Line to Chicago; s

Each room is really two. French doors connect the bedroom with the sitting area; both are decked out in rich colors and cherrywood. Girls' night packages come with chick-flick DVDs, wine and chocolate; guys' nights include sports DVDs, beer and chips. Ask ahead and kids receive suitcases full of games to keep them entertained – if they aren't swimming in the pool or watching the plasma TV.

HOTEL PALOMAR Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$

☎ 312-755-9703, 877-731-0505; [www.hotelpalomar-chicago.com](#); 505 N State St; r \$175-305; m Red Line to Grand; n w s #

Here we go again: another excellent, green-tinted property in the Kimpton chain (like the Burnham, the Monaco and the Allegro, all in the Loop). Note of distinction: the 17-story, 261-room Palomar has a green roof, Chicago's first for a hotel. Arty decor – little sculptures, original paintings on the wall – add to the fashionable but businesslike decor. There's an indoor rooftop pool, and a free wine hour each evening.

WESTIN RIVER NORTH Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$

☎ 312-744-1900, 877-866-9216; [www.westinrivernorth.com](#); 320 N Dearborn St; r \$189-369; m Brown, Green, Orange, Purple, Pink Line to State; n #

Yet another riverfront chain hotel. At least this one has a decent sushi bar and vaguely Asian decor – a rock garden, lots of orchids – to set it apart. Frequent travelers choose the Westin chain for the 'heavenly beds,' with superthick mattresses and high-thread-count sheets. Sorry, no pool here, but the showers have dual spa heads – hopefully that helps.

HOTEL CASS Map pp66-7 Boutique Hotel \$\$\$

☎ 312-787-4030, 800-799-4030; [www.casshotel.com](#); 640 N Wabash Ave; r incl breakfast \$199-350; m Red Line to Grand; v v

It's hard to imagine that this property was a bare-bones budget option not too long ago. In late 2007 expensive hardwoods, Kohler fixtures and other upscale treatments transformed what was an aging 1920s hotel into a Holiday Inn Express-affiliated boutique. Small room spaces are maximized with modern flair: hanging flat-screen TVs, mod C-shaped tables and

armless couches. The breakfast bar includes bacon, eggs and a few other hot items.

EMBASSY SUITES CHICAGO-LAKEFRONT Map pp66-7 Extended Stay \$\$

% 312-836-5900, 866-866-8095; www.chicagoembassy.com; 511 N Columbus Dr; ste incl breakfast \$209-245; **g** 66; **s**

Peer out through the shutters of your living-room window onto the forest of beech trees growing in the atrium, an outside-in arrangement that's quite interesting. The rooms are pretty darn big. The bedroom of each suite (with microwave and refrigerator) fronts the street, away from the noisy hubbub of the monumental hot breakfast buffet that takes over the courtyard each morning. Lines form early. Located just a few blocks from Navy Pier.

AMALFI HOTEL CHICAGO

Map pp66-7 Boutique Hotel \$\$
% 312-395-9000; 877-262-5341; www.amalfihotelchicago.com; 20 W Kinzie St; r \$149-299; **m** Red Line to Grand; **n** **W**#

The Amalfi lobby blooms like a bird of paradise: vivid oranges contrast with deep turquoise hues on thoroughly mod furnishings. Upstairs, the rooms are a bit more subdued, in jewel tones, but the whole hotel is clearly high end and modern-design driven. Each floor has a sumptuous spread of pastries and bagels laid out every morning, and you can borrow CDs and DVDs for free.

HILTON GARDEN INN Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$

% 312-595-0000, 800-774-1500; www.hiltongardeninn.com; 10 E Grand Ave; r \$117-329; **m** Red Line to Grand; **W****s**

Lather up with Neutrogena products in the shower before you head down to the Weber Grill restaurant for an evening cookout... hang on, make that a cook in. If your honey thinks you smell too good to leave the room, that's OK; area restaurants deliver to this up-to-date 23-story hotel. And you can keep the leftovers in the fridge and nuke them in your room the next day. Rates vary wildly, so you may get a steal.

EMBASSY SUITES CHICAGO-DOWNTOWN Map pp66-7 Extended Stay \$\$

% 312-943-3800, 800-362-2779; www.embassysuiteschicago.com; 600 N State St; ste incl breakfast \$162-279; **m** Red Line to Grand; **s**

Cooked-to-order eggs, and pancakes, and waffles, and, and... An enormous breakfast buffet comes standard with the two-room suites. Families know it, too; boy, do they mob the place. The pool's hardly big enough to hold all the little ones. Good thing that they usually head out to nearby River North shopping for the day. Eighteen suites have special equipment such as knock detectors and vibrating bed alarms for the disabled. Note there's another Embassy Suites a half-mile east that's closer to the lake.

HOTEL INTER-CONTINENTAL CHICAGO Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$

% 312-944-4100, 800-327-0200; www.icchicago.com; 505 N Michigan Ave; r \$179-279; **m** Red Line to Grand; **n** **s** #

Once the Medina Athletic Club, the ornate original tower (c 1929) retains many of the eclectic details meant for rich men's eyes only. Thank goodness now everyone can float by the Neptune fountain in the mosaic-tiled indoor swimming pool area. Historic rooms have a similarly elegant, heavily draped look, with thick brocades and sumptuous silks. A more conservative, masculine feel – angular lines, neutral earth tones – characterizes the main building rooms. Moorish-inspired lamps add a touch of whimsy.

CHICAGO MARRIOTT HOTEL Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$

% 312-836-0100, 800-228-9290; www.marriott.com; 540 N Michigan Ave; r \$179-269; **m** Red Line to Grand; **n** **s**

A Magnificent Mile address is the primary draw card of this 46-story behemoth. You have to upgrade to a 'studio' room to get the size (320 sq ft) most people expect at these rates. The downy duvets and flat-screen TVs will do, though. Packages include everything from museum tickets to American Girl shopping discounts.

SHERATON CHICAGO HOTEL & TOWERS Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$

% 312-464-1000, 877-242-2558; www.sheratonchicago.com; 301 E North Water St; r \$199-219; **g** 56; **n** **s**

From this riverfront location you can stroll along the esplanade to catch a water taxi or an architectural tour. River-view upgrades are worth the \$50 or so, but dark accent walls and contemporary corporate

decor make all the rooms acceptable. Be warned, you may be the only person staying at this 1204-room hotel who's not part of a group.

CROWNE PLAZA AVENUE HOTEL

Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$

% 877-283-5110, 877-227-6963; www.avenuehotelchicago.com; 160 E Huron St; r \$190-270; m Red Line to Chicago; n Ws #
Guests cite the Avenue's classy yet unfussed vibe, its large rooms and the try-hard staff as the reasons to key in here. The small heated rooftop pool and sundeck offer cool views. The hotel's rainbow-hued 'family' rooms are impressive, with beanbag chairs, drawing easels and other toys for kids.

ALLERTON HOTEL Map pp66-7 Historic Hotel \$\$

% 312-440-1500; www.theallertonhotel.com; 701 N Michigan Ave; r \$171-279; m Red Line to Chicago; n

High atop the Italianate red-brick facade shines the red neon Allerton Tip Top sign, a reminder of the hotel's past. From the 1920s to the '50s, the penthouse Tip Top Club was a happening place. All the big bands and early radio stars played here. Thankfully, a recent renovation launched the Allerton's rooms out of that era and into modern times with marble bathrooms, flat-screen TVs and comfy bedding. Standard rooms are by no means large (and the 'classic' rooms are downright tiny), but they can be a bargain off-peak.

AFFINIA CHICAGO Map pp66-7 Boutique Hotel \$\$

% 312-787-6000; 866-246-2203; www.affinia.com; 166 E Superior St; r \$159-269; m Red Line to Chicago; n #

The rooms are clean lined and white bedded, and the lobby new and shiny after a recent renovation. The staff have the enthusiastic 'What can I do for you?' down. A pillow menu (buckwheat, memory foam...), a personal shopper and free 'experience kits' (ie walking-tour kits with music-loaded iPods, walking-tour books and pedometers) are a few things they've thought of to make your stay top-notch. The swank rooftop bar is a local hot spot.

WYNDHAM CHICAGO Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$

% 312-573-0300, 877-999-3223; www.wyndham.com; 633 N St Clair St; r \$159-269; m Red Line to Grand; n s

You and 15 of your closest friends could sack out on the floor for a slumber party, the space in a base level room is so great. Cushy beds and soft neutrals, like beige and cream, are far too refined for that. Several energetic concierges field travel requests deftly, all day and evening long, for the 17-story hotel.

COMFORT INN & SUITES

DOWNTOWN Map pp66-7 Hotel \$\$

% 312-894-0900, 888-775-4111; www.chicago.comfortinn.com; 15 E Ohio St; r \$159-249; m Red Line to Grand

Can a hotel have multiple personality disorder? It would explain the convergence of an art-deco-style 1920s building, a Tudoresque dark wood lobby and the contemporary dusty blue and beige guest rooms. Though it's classier than the typical Comfort Inn, prices are overinflated. There's free wired internet access in the rooms, but no wi-fi (though it is available in the lobby).

HOTEL FELIX Map pp66-7 Boutique Hotel \$\$

% 312-447-3440, 877-848-404; www.hotelfelixchicago.com; 111 W Huron St; r \$149-189; Red Line to Chicago; n W

Opened in 2009 in the Near North, the 225-room, 12-story Felix is downtown's first hotel to earn ecofriendly LEED certification (Silver status, to be exact). The earth-toned, mod-furnished rooms are small but efficiently and comfortably designed. It's more of a place for urban hipsters than families, but who doesn't appreciate a rainfall showerhead, a flat-screen TV and soft cotton sheets? Parking is free if you drive a hybrid.

FOUR POINTS CHICAGO

DOWNTOWN Map pp66-7 Extended Stay \$\$

% 312-981-6600, 800-368-7764; www.fourpointschicago.com; 630 N Rush St; ste \$149-239; m Red Line to Grand; n s W

Constructed in 2005, this Sheraton-affiliated hotel has more soundproofing and less wear than many of the other big name chains in town. Setting it apart style-wise are six of renowned artist Dale Chihuly's abstract paintings and the small glass *Amethyst* sculpture in the lobby. Every room has microwaves, minifridges, coffee makers and free wi-fi that come standard. (Balconies and whirlpool tubs extra.)

DOUBLETREE MAGNIFICENT MILE

Map pp66-7

Hotel \$\$

☎ 312-787-6100; www.doubletreemagmile.com; 300 E Ohio St; r \$144-209; g 66; s Relax on your window seat and look out at the sliver of a lake view many rooms have here in Streeterville, near Navy Pier. If you're not looking for anything fancy (ie average space, generic faux-wood decor), you've found it. But there is a 50,000-sq-ft athletic club, two pools (outdoor free, indoor charge is \$15), a café and a restaurant, and free wi-fi in the lobby. This three-star property pops up at lower rates on discount booking websites quite often.

HAMPTON INN & SUITES-CHICAGO DOWNTOWN

Map pp66-7

Hotel \$\$

☎ 312-832-0330, 800-426-7866; www.hampton-suiteschicago.com; 33 W Illinois St; r incl breakfast \$119-239; m Red Line to Grand; n Ws Thick oak desks and angular leaded-glass lamps give the two-story lobby a Prairie School feel, and historic Chicago photos line the hallways. But the Frank Lloyd Wright influence is less apparent once you get to the contemporary rooms. Nearly half are studio and one-bedroom suites, some with full kitchens. The roominess, and a big hot breakfast, attract families and business travelers.

BEST WESTERN RIVER NORTH

Map pp66-7

Hotel \$\$

☎ 312-467-0800, 800-780-7234; www.bestwestern.com/rivernorthhotel; 125 W Ohio St; r \$109-199; m Red Line to Grand; p n Ws Think seven-story motel. Surprisingly cheery, well-maintained rooms with maple veneer beds and desks make this a River North value. Free parking and wi-fi seal the deal. Oh, and did we mention the giant indoor pool and the attached Italian restaurant?

INN OF CHICAGO

Map pp66-7 Boutique Hotel \$

☎ 312-787-3100, 800-557-2378; www.innofchicago.com; 162 E Ohio St; r \$109-199; m Red Line to Grand; n

The Inn has shed its Best Western skin and emerged more boutique-like than ever. Zebra-striped ottomans prowl the lobby; lime green and chocolate color schemes look delicious. And prices are right – it's just too bad the rooms are so darn 1920s-era

top picks

PET FRIENDLY

- Palmer House Hilton (p230)
- Hotel Allegro (p229)
- W Chicago-Lakeshore (p231)
- Peninsula (p231)
- Hotel Monaco (p228)

small. Don't try to take two steps in the stylish bathroom: one is all there's room for.

HOWARD JOHNSON INN

Map pp66-7 Motel \$

☎ 312-664-8100, 800-446-4656; www.hojo.com; 720 N LaSalle St; r \$99-169; m Brown Line to Chicago; p W#

Ah, the outdated charm of a cheap motel. At least this one's in the city, is on the edge of respectable, in far west River North. Sure the rooms could use a serious re-do. If you care about furniture more than free parking, look elsewhere.

RED ROOF INN

Map pp66-7

Hotel \$

☎ 312-787-3580, 800-466-8356; www.redroof-chicago-downtown.com; 162 E Ontario St; r \$90-140; m Red Line to Grand; W#

If you snag one of the lower rates, it might be worth your while to stay here, steps from the Michigan Ave shopping bonanza. But just how much money are you willing to pay for stained couches, faded wallpaper and barely enough space to walk around two beds?

OHIO HOUSE MOTEL

Map pp66-7

Motel \$

☎ 312-943-6000, 866-601-6446; www.ohio-housemotel.com; 800 N LaSalle Dr; r \$85-120; m Red Line to Grand; p W

The retro stylings of Ohio House (ie a diamond-shaped marquee, a diner in the parking lot and more) are by no means put on. This place really is from the 1960s. Given the dingy cement-block detailing on the outside, it's a pleasant surprise to find the rooms within are modern (if a bit basic) and quite clean. The neighborhood to the west near the highway feels a bit ragged, but you're still in River North so you're close to transport and loads of restaurants to the east. And believe it, people: there's free parking.

GOLD COAST

Many of the truly top-end digs in town are in the chi-chi Gold Coast. Michigan Ave and Magnificent Mile shopping and dining are outside your door, and the lake is rarely more than five blocks away. Don't expect to be alone here, though – even the sidewalks have traffic jams.

ELYSIAN Map pp72-3

Hotel \$\$\$

☎ 312-646-1300; www.elysianhotels.com; 11 E Walton St; from \$400 per night; m Red Line to Chicago; n Ws #

The Elysian is one of Chicago's newest uberluxury hotels and models itself on 1920s Parisian glamour. We gotta say: it delivers. Rooms are large – they have to be, to hold the fireplaces, the bars, the marble soaking tubs, the beds with 460-thread-count sheets and the fully wired work spaces and other techno gadgets. There's a fancy gym with a lap pool, a high-rollin' bar and a couple spiffy restaurants.

FOUR SEASONS HOTEL

Map pp72-3

Hotel \$\$\$

☎ 312-280-8800, 800-332-3442; www.fourseasons.com/chicagofs; 120 E Delaware Pl; r \$385-560; m Red Line to Chicago; Ws

Service is taken seriously here. Call for food day or night and they'll attempt to fulfill any request, on the menu or not. Even the little ones are pampered – with munchkin-sized bathrobes, a 'bedtime story butler' and a special teen-interest concierge in summer. Slip into the spa for a Sedona red-clay wrap.

Then relax further, dipping into the pool beneath the Romanesque domes. Crisp, cool bedding and a marble soaking tub are standard in the elegantly tailored, blue and taupe rooms. And an oddity in high-end lodging: the Four Seasons has free wi-fi.

RITZ-CARLTON Map pp72-3

Hotel \$\$\$

☎ 312-266-1000, 800-621-6906; www.fourseasons.com/chicagorc; 160 E Pearson St; r \$385-560; m Red Line to Chicago; Ws

Just think of all the shopping you can do without leaving the building if you stay in one of the 32 stories above Water Tower Place. High-backed tapestry chairs, Renaissance paintings and porcelain vases containing stunning floral displays characterize the Franco-Asian elegance of the lobby. Guest rooms follow suit with antique armoires and expensive fabrics in fine prints. (Nonfeather duvets and anti-irritant cleaners are used in 'allergy sensitive' rooms.) The 12th floor's Art Deco brasserie plates decadence like a 10-layer chocolate cake, which you may need after an exhausting day burning up the credit cards.

DRAKE HOTEL Map pp72-3

Historic Hotel \$\$\$

☎ 312-787-2200, 800-553-7253; www.thedrakehotel.com; 140 E Walton St; r \$229-329; m Red Line to Chicago

Queen Elizabeth, Winston Churchill, Charles Lindbergh, Dean Martin, Princess Di...the Reagans, the Bushes, the Clintons... Who hasn't stayed at the elegant Drake Hotel since it opened in 1920? The grande dame commands a striking location at the north

LOCAL VOICES: MARK TUNNEY

For more than 20 years Mark Tunney has worked at the marketing end of the hospitality industry. Since 2007 he has been the Managing Director of Convention Sales for the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau.

Hotel rates in Chicago seem hugely tied to conventions. Everyone says watch out when the radiologists are in town. Why? Quite frankly, there are shows that sell out every hotel room in the city, every year. The Radiological Society of North America convention, usually the Friday and Saturday after Thanksgiving, is one of them.

So, what months should leisure travelers avoid, convention-wise? Spring and fall are the busiest, but it changes by the week. The restaurant show is usually around the third weekend in May, but Mother's Day, the week before, is pretty quiet. The best thing to do is call the hotel and ask what dates are the least expensive.

When are there the fewest groups in town? Holidays are always a good time to come. December and January are slow. People think they should avoid Chicago in the winter, but it's not actually a bad time. We get snow, but not the arctic temperatures. And there's the ice rink at Millennium Park and lots of Broadway-quality shows to see.

by Lisa Dunford

end of Michigan Ave, near Oak St Beach. Embroidered gold silk coverlets and Grecian urn lamps are almost as impressive as the water views from the junior suites. Whether enjoying lobster in the Cape Cod Room (as Marilyn Monroe did) or having a drink accompanied by a local jazz artist in the Palm Court, you'll feel like somebody special too.

SOFITEL CHICAGO WATER TOWER

Map pp72-3 Hotel \$\$

☎ 312-324-4000, 800-763-4835; www.sofitel.com; 20 E Chestnut St; r \$199-310; 𠄎 Red Line to Chicago

The Sofitel looks a little like some state-of-the-art Mac computing device from the outside, its triangular glass tower leaning gracefully forward into space. Inside, stylish staff members tend to stylish 30- and 40-something guests, who come here for the minimalist vibe (think blond wood and rectangular lines). The on-site restaurant, Café des Architectes, with its sculptural food served in a striking red and black dining room, fits right in.

WESTIN MICHIGAN AVENUE

Map pp72-3 Hotel \$\$

☎ 312-943-7200, 888-625-5144; www.westin.com/michiganave; 909 N Michigan Ave (entrance on E Delaware Pl); r \$197-319; 𠄎 Red Line to Chicago; 𠄎

Bloomingdale's, the 900 Shops, Oak St boutiques: they're all within easy pouncing distance, about a block from this Michigan Ave address. After a hectic day of walking and spending, stepping into the soft contemporary lobby is a calming relief – low-profile brown leather sofas and retro armchairs wait to embrace you. Crisp bed linens offset moss green loungers in the smoke-free rooms. Lake views available.

RAFFAELLO HOTEL

Map pp72-3 Boutique Hotel \$\$

☎ 312-943-5000; 800-898-7198; www.chicago.raffaello.com; 201 E Delaware Pl; r \$189-279; 𠄎 Red Line to Chicago; 𠄎

If only you could live in the silk-draped modernity of these guest rooms. Oh, wait, you can – they're condominiums, too. Smart suites have microwaves and minifridges in marble cooking centers in addition to roomy seating areas or separate living rooms. Double rooms are smaller, but

top picks

SWEET VIEWS

- W Chicago-Lakeshore (p231)
- Park Hyatt (p231)
- Wit (p228)
- Trump Hotel & Tower (p231)
- Swissôtel Chicago (p229)

they have similar upscale amenities, such as rainforest shower heads and high-thread-count linens. A swanky Italian seafood restaurant tempts on-site.

SUTTON PLACE HOTEL

Map pp72-3 Boutique Hotel \$\$

☎ 312-266-2100, 866-378-8866; www.chicago.suttonplace.com; 21 E Bellevue Pl; r \$187-275; 𠄎 Red Line to Clark/Division

Walking into one of the all-business guest rooms might just remind you of a man's suit: oversized gray stripes on the wall, a tailored grayish bedspread, and marine blue on singular accent pillows, which could easily be the color of a tie or an ascot. The contemporary decor is accented by Robert Mapplethorpe's floral photos (the controversial stuff is over at the Museum of Contemporary Art). Plush robes and Gilchrist & Soames bath products do at least seem to have been chosen with a woman in mind. The on-site Whiskey Bar has a local following.

RESIDENCE INN BY MARRIOTT

Map pp72-3 Extended Stay \$\$

☎ 312-943-9800; 866-596-7890; www.marriott.com; 201 E Walton St; r incl breakfast \$179-279; 𠄎 Red Line to Chicago; 𠄎 W

What to say about a totally generic extended-stay hotel... Well, it's got all the extras families crave: weekday happy hour, kitchens, laundry facilities, free wi-fi, pantry shop. They'll even run out and buy groceries for you. Studios, one and two bedrooms available. No pool though – sorry, kids.

HOTEL INDIGO Map pp72-3 Boutique Hotel \$\$

☎ 312-787-4980, 800-972-2494; www.hotelindigo.com; 1244 N Dearborn St; r \$179-259; 𠄎 Red Line to Clark/Division; W #

A pile of blueberries, a hyacinth bush, sea glass or a cable knit sweater: any of these may be the subject of your room's macro photo wall mural – as long as they're indigo in color. Hardwood floors and neon green, orange and sunny yellow accent fabrics perk up the rooms further. It feels more like your hip friend's apartment than a hotel. The location is quieter than other Gold Coast places, yet still within easy walking distance to shopping, nightlife and the lakefront – though you'll be hard-pressed to leave the just-right bed.

SENECA HOTEL & SUITES

Map pp72-3 **Boutique Hotel, Extended Stay \$\$**

% 312-787-8900, 800-800-6261; www.senecahotel.com; 200 E Chestnut St; r incl breakfast \$179-239; m Red Line to Chicago; n W

It's the rare street in downtown Chicago that's quiet and tree lined, but you'll find the Seneca on one. A middle-aged and older clientele seems to favor this serene spot. Ornate brass drawer pulls on the dressers and carved finial headboards are decidedly colonial. Two-room suites have full kitchens and discounted rates for extended stay. Long-term guests love the laundry facilities and free wi-fi.

FLEMISH HOUSE Map pp72-3 **B&B \$\$**

% 312-664-9981; www.innchicago.com; 68 E Cedar St; r incl breakfast \$175-250; m Red Line to Clark/Division; n W

A wall full of framed line drawings, coffered panels and rosette woodwork, an exquisite porcelain collection atop the armoire: indeed, you can tell that one of the co-owners of this 1892 row house is an architect. Travelers check into these self-service apartments (with full kitchens) for the quiet remove. Don't expect the typical B&B socializing; breakfast supplies are stocked in the fridge before you arrive. The closest parking is a lot a couple blocks away. No children under six.

MILLENNIUM KNICKERBOCKER HOTEL Map pp72-3 **Historic Hotel \$\$**

% 312-751-8100; www.millenniumhotels.com; 163 E Walton Pl; r \$160-260; m Red Line to Chicago; n

Built in 1927, the Knickerbocker Hotel has a notorious history. The 14th floor once contained a casino (now it's banquet space). Al

Capone slipped out more than once through the secret passageway from there down to the street. Then in the 1970s, this became the Playboy hotel. You'd never suspect anything from the elegance of the public spaces (peek into the lobby-level ballroom) and the neotraditional guest rooms.

WHITEHALL HOTEL

Map pp72-3 **Historic Hotel \$\$**

% 312-944-6300, 866-753-4081; www.thewhitehallhotel.com; 105 E Delaware Pl; r \$160-240; m Red Line to Chicago; #

Tallyho, my good chap, we're off to the fox hunt. Cozy rooms, hunting-dog paintings and clubby furniture: this old Chicago hotel speaks with a decidedly British accent. It's extremely popular with wedding parties; you'll often see gown-clad beauties flowing by. Families who belong to the Disney Vacation Club, of which the hotel is a part, stay here too. Michigan Ave is supremely close.

GOLD COAST GUEST HOUSE

Map pp72-3 **B&B \$\$**

% 312-337-0361; www.bbchicago.com; 113 W Elm St; r incl breakfast \$129-229; m Red Line to Clark/Division; n W

Innkeeper Sally Baker has been making stays memorable for more than 20 years. She'll lead you to a happy-hour bargain on lobster, make a discounted tour reservation or supply you with the most recent *Time Out* magazine. Her 1873 classic three-story townhouse has a delightful secret garden, and rooms made light and airy by muted taupes, blues and creams. Self-serve coffee, juices, breads and cheeses are among the breakfast choices. Help yourself to sodas and snacks around the clock. Wi-fi and computer use are free, parking (on street with permit) is \$25. She also rents apartments nearby. No children under 10.

TREMONT HOTEL Map pp72-3 **Hotel \$\$**

% 312-751-1900, 866-716-8139; www.tremontchicago.com; 100 E Chestnut St; r \$129-219; m Red Line to Chicago; n W

Here are the Tremont's pros: you're steps from the Magnificent Mile in a ritzy 'hood, and the property often turns up dirt cheap on Hotwire. Do the rooms tend toward faded upholstery and peeling wallpaper? Yes, but you can help the situation by asking for a room with good natural light

at check-in. Old-school touches, like the parlor that's studded with leather chairs and has a fireplace, evoke nostalgia, as does the on-site meaty restaurant of former Bears coach Mike Ditka. Look elsewhere if room prices slide toward the high end of the range. Starwood Hotels-affiliated.

LINCOLN PARK & OLD TOWN

Staying here, you're close to some great neighborhood nightlife. Townhouses are more common than high-rises and dog walkers outnumber business suits on the street two to one. You may be able to walk to the zoo and the beach from area lodgings, and museums in the Loop are a 15-minute El or bus ride south.

BELDEN-STRATFORD HOTEL

Map pp78-9

Extended Stay \$\$

% 773-281-2900, 800-800-8301; www.beldenstratfordhotel.com; 2300 N Lincoln Park W; r incl breakfast \$129-209; g 22, 151; n W

You can get a darn good deal in this 1924 building, though don't be fooled by all the 'luxury' lingo the B-S throws around (yes, we're aware of initials). The common areas are elegant, but the rooms themselves are fairly dated. No problem, because there's a big upside: the rooms resemble apartments, which means they're larger than typical hotel quarters and are equipped with kitchens. Some even have lake views. The location is particularly good for families since it's steps from the zoo and the beach. Free wi-fi and continental breakfast are included.

DAYS INN LINCOLN PARK NORTH

Map pp78-9

Hotel \$\$

% 773-525-7010, 888-576-3297; www.lpdaysinn.com; 644 W Diversey Pkwy; r incl breakfast \$120-180; m Brown, Purple Line to Diversey; V V

This is a busy hotel on a busy intersection. The Days Inn caters to the budget-minded with value-added punches like free wi-fi, health club access and hot waffle breakfasts. Avoid the standard doubles if you're claustrophobic; kings are much roomier. And if you see a big shiny bus outside, that's because touring indie bands stay here, since it's one of the few hotels near the north side's music venues.

CHICAGO GETAWAY HOSTEL

Map pp78-9

Hostel \$

% 773-929-5380; www.getawayhostel.com; 616 W Arlington Pl; incl breakfast dm \$31-33, r \$62-112; g 22 or m Brown, Purple, Red Line to Fullerton; n W

The Getaway Hostel gets points for trying, thanks to new management that's doing its best to spruce up the once-dingy budget stalwart. Most rooms have a fresh coat of paint, and the owners have started to install air-conditioning (at press time it still wasn't in all rooms). Dorms are single sex, sleeping six to 12 people. The private rooms are small and either have a full bathroom, a half bathroom or share one down the hall. The hostel attracts a mostly a college-aged crowd who strum the house guitars, use the free wi-fi and head out to nightlife-rich Clark and Halsted Sts (the hostel is equidistant between the two). There's no curfew or lockout times.

LAKE VIEW & WRIGLEYVILLE

The beer-pounding, bar-hopping parade that is Wrigleyville makes up just part of this prime neighborhood. Bunches of shops and eateries provide services for all the locals that live in area condos. Boystown gay nightlife is nearby. And frequent buses and trains provide easy access to the Loop, 20 minutes south. Streets still bustle, but here you've escaped the high-rise jungle.

WILLOWS HOTEL

Map pp86-7

Hotel \$\$

% 773-528-8400, 800-787-3108; www.willowshotelchicago.com; 555 W Surf St; r incl breakfast \$159-229; g 22; n W

Small and stylish, the Italianate Willows wins an architectural gold star. The chic little lobby provides a swell refuge of overstuffed chairs by the fireplace (a fine spot to curl up and munch free cookies in the afternoon). The 55 rooms, done up in shades of peach, cream and soft green, impart a 19th-century French countryside vibe. There's free wi-fi throughout; parking costs \$22. The hotel's owners also run the City Suites and Majestic hotels. The Willows is the farthest south, at Lake View's edge, so you're near the zoo and lakefront parklands.

top picks

GAY STAYS

- Villa Toscana (right)
- House 5683 (opposite)
- Flemish House (p238)
- Best Western Hawthorne Terrace (below)
- W Chicago City Center (p228)

MAJESTIC HOTEL Map pp86-7 Hotel \$\$

% 773-404-3499, 800-727-5108; www.majestic-chicago.com; 528 W Brompton Ave; r incl breakfast \$159-229; g 151; n W

Nestled into a row of residential housing, the Majestic is walking distance to Wrigley Field, Boystown and the lakefront.

From the lobby fireplace and dark-wood furnishings to the Laura Ashley-style floral decor, the interior has the cozy feel of an English manor. Rooms are slightly larger than those at sibling hotels the City Suites and Willows, and the location is more remote and therefore quieter. Wi-fi is free; parking costs \$22.

CITY SUITES HOTEL Map pp86-7 Hotel \$\$

% 773-404-3400, 800-248-9108; www.chicagocitysuits.com; 933 W Belmont Ave; r incl breakfast \$159-229; m Brown, Purple, Red Line to Belmont; n W

The City Suites may remind European visitors pleasantly of home. The mod, art-deco-tinged rooms and lobby buzzing just off Belmont Ave are vaguely reminiscent of Amsterdam. The El races right by the hotel, so light sleepers should ask for a room away from the tracks. Compared to the Majestic and Willows, the owners' other two properties, the City Suites skews a bit younger and livelier. As with the others, there's free wi-fi throughout and a pass to nearby Bally's fitness club. Parking costs \$22.

BEST WESTERN HAWTHORNE TERRACE Map pp86-7 Hotel \$\$

% 773-244-3434, 888-860-3400; www.hawthorneterrace.com; 3434 N Broadway St; r incl breakfast \$159-209; g 36; w W

The earthy Hawthorne Terrace attracts the most mixed crowd of the neighborhood's hotels. Sporty Cubs fans check in next to

gay groups, with everyone primed to go out and have some fun. Standard-issue furnishings fill the rooms, but the free wi-fi, microwaves and minifridges are nice perks, along with the continental breakfast and a small fitness room. The 1920s Federal-style apartment building may not be the newest place around, but it retains a classic appeal inside and out. Parking (in a garage next door) costs \$22.

VILLA TOSCANA Map pp86-7 B&B \$\$

% 773-404-2643, 800-404-2643; www.thevillatoscana.com; 3447 N Halsted St; r incl breakfast \$109-159; g 8; n W

A 1890s Victorian home seems out of place, set next to Gay Mart on the busiest of Boystown streets. Wander through the leafy front garden and you're transported. Purple silks evoke Morocco in one room, toile recalls France in another. All eight diminutive lodgings (five with private bathrooms) are often booked, so plan ahead. Enjoy breakfast pastries on the rear sundeck in nice weather. Free wi-fi and broadband.

OLD CHICAGO INN Map pp86-7 B&B \$\$

% 773-472-2278; www.oldchicagoinn.com; 3222 N Sheffield Ave; r incl breakfast \$100-215; m Brown, Purple, Red Line to Belmont; n W

Sure the street din may seep into this century-old, 10-room graystone three-flat, but that's the price you pay for being smack in a high-energy shopping and nightlife hub. For quiet, ask for the cozy room in the rear (hardly big enough to stretch your arms out). Much bigger is the Wrigleyville basement suite, where you could organize a decent game of catch. Ballpark pics and a neon sign get you in the mood. In addition to continental breakfast, you get a \$10 gift certificate for food at the owner's pub, Trader Todd's, two doors down. There's free wi-fi and on-street parking (though you may have to search a bit).

ANDERSONVILLE & UPTOWN

Homey Andersonville makes a unique getaway. What you trade in access (the Loop is 30 minutes south by El or bus), you gain in tranquility in this residential, gay-friendly 'hood.

HOUSE 5683 Map p90 **B&B \$\$**

% 773-944-5555; www.house5683.com; 5683 N Glenwood Ave; r incl breakfast \$99-179; m Red Line to Thorndale; n W
Hip and urban, sleek and sophisticated: House 5683 is a thoroughly modern B&B. You'll find no frilly ruffles here, just clean-lined furnishings and abstract art in an old apartment house. Lounge on the black leather sofa in the common living room and watch the plasma TV, or use the free wi-fi throughout. Adirondack chairs invite lolling about in the backyard. Neither N Broadway nor N Clark St are far, but a party place this neighborhood ain't. Garage parking available (\$20).

WICKER PARK, BUCKTOWN & UKRAINIAN VILLAGE

If you prefer a crash pad away from the tourist masses, surrounded by eclectic shopping and trendy lounges, then Wicker Park, Bucktown and Ukrainian Village are your answer. B&Bs are the only option in these mostly residential neighborhoods, though at press time the gastro-pub [Longman & Eagle](http://www.longmanand eagle.com) (www.longmanand eagle.com) in nearby Logan Square was scheduled to open an English-style inn on its top floor.

RUBY ROOM Map pp96-7 **B&B \$\$**

% 773-235-2323; www.rubyroom.com; 1743-5 W Division St; r \$155-185; m Blue Line to Division; n W
Take an Anusara yoga class, go on a guided intuitive journey or get your chakra massaged. Ruby Room is primarily a spa and 'healing sanctuary.' Eight simplified rooms are boiled down to the essence of comfort. No TVs, no telephones, no elevator, no breakfast. Instead, expect 500-thread-count sheets, pristine white interiors, pillow-top mattresses, free wi-fi and Aveda products. No children under 12.

WICKER PARK INN BED & BREAKFAST

Map pp96-7 **B&B \$\$**
% 773-645-9827; www.wickerparkinn.com; 1329 N Wicker Park Ave; r incl breakfast \$149-199; m Blue Line to Damen; n W

This classic brick row house is steps away from Chicago's most rockin' restaurant and nightlife scene. The sunny rooms aren't huge, but all have hardwood floors, soothing pastel colors schemes, terry-cloth robes and small desk spaces where you can use the free wi-fi. Across the street, two apartments with kitchens provide a self-contained experience (sans the baked-good-rich breakfast). Rooms have varying minimum-stay requirements. Children are welcome.

HOUSE OF TWO URNS BED & BREAKFAST Map pp96-7 **B&B \$\$**

% 773-235-1408, 877-896-8767; www.twourns.com; 1239 N Greenview Ave; r incl breakfast \$129-199; m Blue Line to Division; n W
Artists own these two houses at Wicker Park's edge, so it's no surprise both are fancifully furnished with old cameras, cobalt glass and other odd antiques, as well as original art. Rooms are more homey than luxurious. Those at the lower end of the spectrum share a bathroom, while those at the upper end have a Jacuzzi tub and include free off-street parking. Guests all gather in the main dining room for a cooked breakfast (banana French toast, for example), though you can request a self-serve continental breakfast if you prefer. Your helpful hosts also lend out umbrellas, provide free snacks and share their 200-plus DVDs. Children are welcome in certain rooms.

NEAR WEST SIDE & PILSEN

Greektown isn't bad for a stay, since it's restaurant laden and convenient to public transportation (you can also walk to the Loop in about 15 minutes). Beyond that there's no compelling reason to stay on the West Side, unless you're visiting the University of Illinois at Chicago or the medical district.

CHICAGO MARRIOTT AT MEDICAL DISTRICT/UIC Map pp104-5 **Hotel \$\$**

% 312-491-1234, 800-356-3641; www.marriott.com; 625 S Ashland Ave; r \$179-269; m Blue Line to Medical District; n
The Marriott is gussied up after a 2009 renovation that upgraded the beds, brightened the decor and added HDTVs,

work-friendly desks and a minifridge in each room. Most guests are visiting friends and family at the huge medical center complex nearby. A complimentary bus shuttles you to the hospital door, to the University or to Little Italy – anywhere within a mile radius. Parking costs \$28.

CHICAGO PARTHENON HOSTEL

Map pp104-5 Hostel \$

% 312-258-1399, 304-268-8981; www.parthenonhostel.com; 310 S Halsted St; dm/r incl breakfast from \$30/61; m Blue Line to UIC-Halsted; n W Guests young and old, international and American, check in to this well-run hostel that sits next to the Parthenon Restaurant. It feels more like a hotel with bunk beds rather than a traditional hostel. Tidy dorms and private rooms come in myriad configurations; the typical single-sex dorm has eight beds. There's a small common area with a TV, games and books. The free continental breakfast in the restaurant's banquet area is a nice start to the day. Dorm dwellers must pay \$3 extra for linens.

SOUTH LOOP & NEAR SOUTH SIDE

Proximity to the Museum Campus, and potential lake views along S Michigan Ave, attract sightseers to the South Loop hotels. That and also a desire for a bargain. In general, prices here are less than in the Near North, but that's because you're a 15-minute train or bus ride from its action. Restaurants are fewer and farther between, too.

BLACKSTONE HOTEL

Map pp112-13 Historic Hotel \$\$

% 312-447-0955, 800-468-3571; www.blackstonerenaissance.com; 636 S Michigan Ave; r \$199-309; m Red Line to Harrison; n #

This 1910, neoclassical, beaux-arts landmark was shuttered for several years, until Marriott paid \$128 million and restored it to its former glamour in 2008. Known as the 'hotel of presidents' (more than a dozen have slumbered here), the 23-story beauty now caters to a high-falutin' business crowd. Rooms are urban stylish (downy bedding, white-marbled bathrooms, abstract artworks); several have lake views (for which you'll pay about \$50 extra). Check out the painting-filled Art Hall.

HILTON CHICAGO

Map pp112-13 Historic Hotel \$\$

% 312-922-4400, 800-445-8667; www.hilton.com; 720 S Michigan Ave; r \$164-309; m Red Line to Harrison; s #

When built in 1927 (for \$30 mil), this was the world's largest hotel, having close to 3000 rooms (and a hospital, and a theater...). Renovations brought that total down to a mere 1544, but the gilt grandeur and crystal-dripping class have remained. Anecdotes abound at the Hilton: in the 1940s it served as an army barracks. At the height of the 1968 Democratic National Convention riots, police tossed protesters through the front plate-glass windows. The rooms? They're reasonable, standard-issue Hilton types, with heavy drapes, cherrywood decor and comfy beds. A lake view upgrade (about \$30) makes a nice enhancement.

HYATT REGENCY MCCORMICK PLACE

Map pp112-13 Hotel \$\$

% 312-567-1234, 800-633-7313; www.mccormickplace.hyatt.com; 2233 S Martin Luther King Jr Dr; r \$149-359; m Metra to McCormick Place; s

If you're manning a show booth at McCormick Place, you can't beat the short walk to your bed in this attached hotel. Lobby monitors help you keep track of meeting schedules, and the business center computers are free to use. However, if you're not a conventioneer, even the

top picks

HOTELS FOR ARCHITECTURE BUFFS

Several of Chicago's lodgings are in historically significant, landmarked buildings.

- **Hotel Burnham (p228)** In the terra-cotta-clad Reliance Building, whose design helped pave the way for the skyscraper.
- **Blackstone (left)** A neoclassical, beaux-arts beauty.
- **Palmer House Hilton (p230)** An old-time Chicago property with a lobby like no other.
- **Hard Rock Hotel (p228)** In the art-deco, champagne-bottle-esque Carbide & Carbon building.

skyline views may not be reason enough to stay in one of these 800 modern rooms, 2 miles south of the Loop.

BEST WESTERN GRANT PARK

Map pp112-13

Hotel \$\$

% 312-922-2900, 800-780-7234; www.bestwestern.com; 1100 S Michigan Ave; r incl breakfast \$110-199; m Green, Orange Line to Roosevelt; Ws

This very basic Best Western attracts for its location near the Museum Campus, free wi-fi and lower-than-usual downtown parking rate (\$24 per day). Though the lobby's gone modern, rooms are standard faux-oak and floral-bedsread decor. Outside convention time, it can be a bargain. But if the rates ratchet up, remember you're getting a no-frills room for that dough.

ESSEX INN

Map pp112-13

Hotel \$

% 312-939-2800, 800-621-6909; www.essexinn.com; 800 S Michigan Ave; r \$109-189; m Red Line to Harrison; s

Walk out to the 4th-floor rooftop garden and soak in the sun, or swim protected in the giant glass-enclosed pool, which looks like a bit like an Olympic pavilion. Both are a pleasant surprise at this low-end price. Plus, a free shuttle takes you north to the Mag Mile. Brightly colored pendant lights

and low-slung lobby leather say mod, as do the rooms, which were revamped in 2008 and now include flat-screen TVs, minirefrigerators and work-friendly desks. Wi-fi costs \$6 per day.

TRAVELODGE CHICAGO

DOWNTOWN Map pp112-13

Hotel \$

% 312-427-8000, 800-211-6706; www.travelodgehoteldowntown.com; 65 E Harrison St; r \$109-139; m Red Line to Harrison; n W

The nearby Essex and Best Western typically offer better quality with more amenities, but the Travelodge's prices are more consistently low. What do you say about lackluster motel-like rooms? Um, they're there. Parking costs \$28.

HYDE PARK & SOUTH SIDE

BENEDICTINE B&B Map pp50-1

B&B \$\$

% 773-927-7424, 888-539-4261 ext 202; www.chicagomonk.org; 3111 S Aberdeen St; r incl breakfast \$165-255; g 8; n

This is unusual for the city: a B&B run by monks. The B&B is two simple apartments, to be exact, which means you get loads of space and kitchen facilities. One is a two-bedroom garden apartment with a deck and self-serve breakfast; the other is a three-

AIRPORT ACCOMMODATIONS

Got an early flight to catch? Given the crazy Chicago traffic, or long El commute (45 minutes from the Loop), resting your head at one of the dozens of airport hotels may be your best bet. Most (including those listed here) run free 24-hour airport shuttles.

O'Hare

Aloft Chicago O'Hare (Map pp50-1; % 847-671-4444; www.aloftchicagoohare.com; 9700 Balmoral Ave, Rosemont; r \$89-169; m Blue Line to Rosemont; W) It offers the chain's typical compact, efficiently designed, industrial-toned rooms and clubby, game-filled lobby. About 3.5 miles from the airport.

O'Hare Hilton (Map pp50-1; % 773-686-8000, 800-445-8667; www.hilton.com; O'Hare International Airport; r \$139-279; m Blue Line to O'Hare; s) Attached to the airport via an underground tunnel. Relax in the sauna, take a refreshing dip in the indoor pool and then retire to your soundproofed contemporary room.

Midway

Hilton Garden Inn (Map pp50-1; % 708-496-2700, 800-445-8667; www.hiltongardeninn.com; 6530 S Cicero Ave, Bedford Park; r \$149-219; m Orange Line to Midway; s W) One of the newest in the Midway Hotel Center complex of nine hotels.

Sleep Inn (Map pp50-1; % 708-594-0001, 877-424-6423; www.choicehotels.com; 6650 S Cicero Ave, Bedford Park; r incl breakfast \$79-149; m Orange Line to Midway; n W) Slightly cheaper, but in the same complex. The modern modular rooms are perfectly acceptable. Free hot breakfast is a nice touch.

bedroom loft with breakfast prepared by the monks. It's in the Bridgeport neighborhood, about a mile and a half from US Cellular Field. You'll fare best if you have a car.

RAMADA LAKE SHORE Map p120 Motel \$
 % 773-288-5800; www.ramada-chicago.com; 4900
 S Lake Shore Dr; r \$79-129; g 6; p WS

Rooms at this two-story motel may not be the freshest, and the door jambs may be scuffed. But who cares when you're across from the lake, parking is free and you're paying under \$100? A free shuttle takes you up to Michigan Ave, or you can hop on the bus for the 15-minute ride. The outdoor pool is open summers only.

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