

The Loop

Neighborhood Top Five

- 1 Exploring arty **Millennium Park** (p46), where freebies beckon all day long, from morning yoga classes to afternoon splashes in Crown Fountain and evening concerts at Frank Gehry's swooping silver band shell.
- 2 Admiring color-swirled Monets, Renoirs and one very big Seurat at the **Art Institute of Chicago** (p49).
- 3 Gaping at sky-high ingenuity on a **Chicago Architecture Foundation** (p54) tour.
- 4 Stepping onto the glass-floored ledge and peering 1454ft straight down from **Willis Tower** (p51).
- 5 Chowing huge omelets and chatting with 80-year-old waitresses at Route 66 remnant **Lou Mitchell's** (p58).



For more detail of this area see Map p290 ➔

Explore The Loop

The Loop is Chicago's center of action – its financial and historic heart – and it pulses with energy. Tumultuous tides of pinstriped businessfolk rush the sidewalks, while clattering El trains roar overhead. Above the melee, a towering forest of steel and stone soaks in the sun (or snow, as the case may be).

But it's not all work, work, work here. The Loop is also Chicago's favorite playground. Grant Park unfurls as a sprawling green buffer between the skyscrapers and Lake Michigan. Millennium Park is Grant's crown jewel, sparkling in the northwest corner. Both host bashes galore, especially in summer when everything from Blues Fest and Lollapalooza to the Grant Park Orchestra makes sweet music for the masses.

The Loop is home to big-ticket attractions such as the Art Institute, the Theater District and the city's world-famous architecture and public art. So count on spending significant time in the neighborhood. Take in the parks, art and cloud-scraping towers by day, then see a theater show or free Millennium Park concert at night. Despite the evening entertainment, the Loop clears out by 9pm or so.

Local Life

- ➔ **Amish Donuts** Downtown workers throng the Thursday farmers market at Daley Plaza (p57). Keep an eye out for the Amish ladies who tempt passersby to their baked-goods stand with offers of free donuts.
- ➔ **German Fests** It's tradition to visit the Berghoff (p61) in December when it's festooned with old-world Christmas decorations. It's also a ritual to *prost* beers during Berghoff's Oktoberfest, which takes over the plaza at Adams and Dearborn Sts in mid-September.
- ➔ **Happy Hour** College students and off-duty office workers head to Miller's Pub (p61) when the day is done.

Getting There & Away

- ➔ **El** All lines converge in the Loop. Clark/Lake and State/Lake are useful transfer stations.
- ➔ **Bus** Number 56 runs along Milwaukee Ave from Wicker Park into the Loop; bus 151 comes down Michigan Ave from the lakefront in the north.
- ➔ **Metra** Trains going south to Hyde Park and on into Indiana depart from Millennium Station; most other regional trains depart from Ogilvie or Union stations.
- ➔ **Car** It'll cost you more to park in the Loop than anywhere else in the city. Meters cost \$6.50 per hour (maybe more by the time you're reading this). Parking lots cost about \$38 per day. **Millennium Park Garage** (www.millenniumgarages.com; 5 S Columbus Dr; per 3/24hr \$23/30) is one of the cheapest.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Pack a picnic and meander over to Millennium Park to hear a free concert. Indie rock, jazz or classical performers take the stage nightly, including many big-name musicians. **Pastoral** (p60) and **Toni Patisserie** (p62) can set you up with deli goods and wine.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Lou Mitchell's (p58)
- ➔ Gage (p61)
- ➔ Cafecito (p58)
- ➔ Pizano's (p61)
- ➔ French Market (p60)

For reviews, see p58 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Berghoff (p61)
- ➔ Cyrano's Cafe & Wine Bar (p61)
- ➔ Miller's Pub (p61)
- ➔ Toni Patisserie & Cafe (p62)
- ➔ Intelligentsia Coffee (p62)

For reviews, see p61 ➔

Best Free Entertainment

- ➔ Grant Park Orchestra (p62)
- ➔ Civic Orchestra of Chicago (p63)
- ➔ International Screenings Program (p64)
- ➔ Chicago Chamber Musicians (p64)

For reviews, see p62 ➔