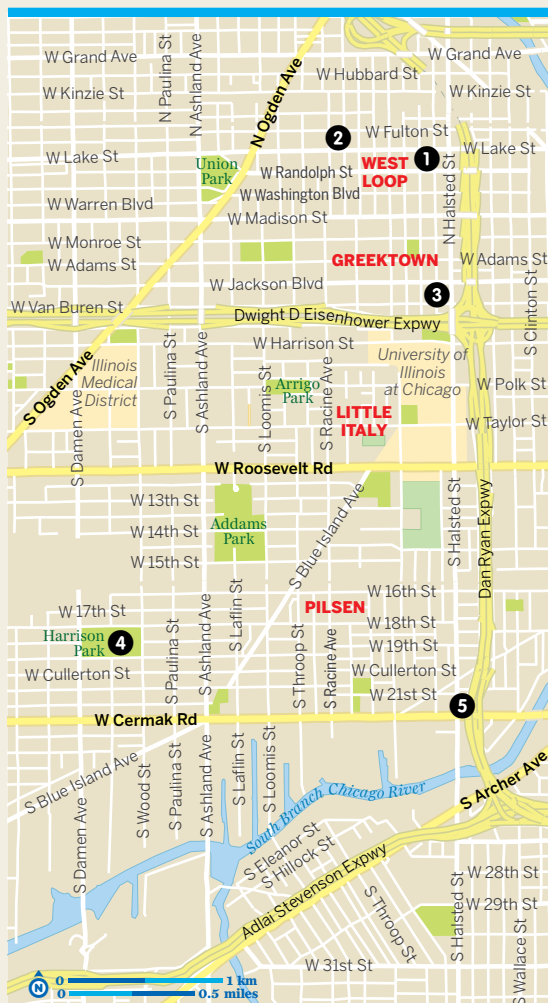


Near West Side & Pilsen

NEAR WEST SIDE | PILSEN | WEST LOOP | GREEKTOWN | LITTLE ITALY



For more detail of this area see Map p312 →

Neighborhood Top Five

- 1 Forking into a decadent meal by a celebrity chef at one of the mega-hot restaurants in the **West Loop** (p171).
- 2 Wandering around forklifts and warehouses to find art hubs such as **Mars Gallery** (p170).
- 3 Yelling 'opa' as the waiter sets your cheese aflame at a taverna in **Greektown** (p172).
- 4 Admiring psychedelic paintings and colorful folk art at the **National Museum of Mexican Art** (p167).
- 5 Slouching into a booth alongside Pilsen's bohemian crowd at **Skylark** (p175).

Explore: Near West Side & Pilsen

Just west of the Loop is, well, the West Loop. It's akin to New York City's Meatpacking District, with chic restaurants, clubs and galleries poking out between meat-processing plants. The area is booming, and it seems like a new hot chef opens a restaurant (or two) here weekly. By day it's still a serious food-supply zone filled with forklifts and delivery trucks. At night it turns up the glamor. Stroll along the main veins of W Randolph St and W Fulton Market and you'll get the drift.

The Near West Side also includes the ethnic neighborhoods of Greektown (along Halsted St) and Little Italy (along Taylor St). Neither has much in the way of sights, but gustatory tourists will revel in the delicious offerings.

To the southwest lies Pilsen, the center of Chicago's Mexican community. A trip to this colorful, mural-splashed neighborhood is like stepping into a foreign country. Spend an afternoon poking around the bakeries, taquerias and impressive art museum. Chicago's hipster underground also has been moving in, so you'll find some great bohemian bars and restaurants if you linger into the evening.

Local Life

- ➔ **Vintage Jackpot** Local fashionistas scour the shops along 18th St between Halsted St and Ashland Ave. See www.facebook.com/vintageon18th for locations.
- ➔ **Rowdy Skaters** The Windy City Rollers (p177) attract a raucous home crowd to their games at UIC Pavilion.
- ➔ **Tube Socks & Tacos** Maxwell Street Market (p176) draws a local crowd of junk hounds and Mexican street-food fans.

Getting There & Away

- ➔ **El** Pink Line to 18th St for Pilsen; Green, Pink Lines to Morgan or Clinton for the West Loop; Blue Line to UIC-Halsted for Greektown; Pink Line to Polk or Blue Line to Racine for Little Italy.
- ➔ **Bus** For United Center, buses 19 (game-day express) and 20 run along Madison St; they return to the Loop via Washington St. Number 8 travels along Halsted St through Greektown and Pilsen.
- ➔ **Taxi** If you don't want to bother with public transport, the West Loop and Greektown are only 1.25 miles west of the Loop, making them a fairly cheap ride. And cabs are easy to hail in the neighborhoods.
- ➔ **Car** It can be tough to find parking in the West Loop and Greektown, but valets abound. Street parking is pretty easy in Little Italy and Pilsen.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

You'll need to make reservations months in advance (at least) for hot restaurants such as **Next** (p172) and **Girl and the Goat** (p172). But if you can't get in, you can still sample the wares of chefs Grant Achatz and Stephanie Izard. Try **Aviary** (p175), Achatz's cocktail bar, and **Little Goat** (p171), Izard's diner.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Little Goat (p171)
- ➔ Publican Quality Meats (p171)
- ➔ Sweet Maple Cafe (p173)
- ➔ Meli Cafe (p173)
- ➔ Don Pedro Carnitas (p174)

For reviews, see p171 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Aviary (p175)
- ➔ Haymarket Pub & Brewery (p175)
- ➔ Skylark (p175)
- ➔ Simone's (p175)
- ➔ Beer Bistro (p175)

For reviews, see p175 ➔

Best Places to Shop

- ➔ Randolph Street Market (p176)
- ➔ Blommer Chocolate Store (p176)
- ➔ Groove Distribution (p176)
- ➔ Athenian Candle Co (p176)
- ➔ Working Bikes Cooperative (p177)

For reviews, see p176 ➔