

South Loop & Near South Side

SOUTH LOOP | NEAR SOUTH SIDE | CHINATOWN

Neighborhood Top Five

- 1 Field Museum** (p180)
Sizing up Sue the T-rex, the towering totem poles and magnificent mummies at this museum of natural history, one of the world's foremost scientific research institutions.
- 2 Northerly Island** (p181)
Walking or cycling around the wild, grassy island and

checking out the animal life en route.

- 3 Adler Planetarium** (p181)
Viewing the stars and learning about asteroids inside, then taking in brilliant city skyline vistas outside.
- 4 Chinatown** (p185)
Nibbling chestnut cakes and almond cookies in the

bakeries, and shopping for trinkets and unusual food items in the shops.

- 5 Buddy Guy's Legends** (p188)
Hearing the best blues musicians in the biz bend frets.



For more detail of this area see Map p314 →

Explore South Loop & Near South Side

What you'll see when you come to the South Loop – and come you will, as this is where the Field Museum, the Shedd Aquarium and Adler Planetarium sit side by side on the lakeshore – is a whole lot of shiny newness. The neighborhood went development crazy in recent years with high-rise condos and Columbia College's expansion, so it's also home to loads of young urbanites. The Museum Campus itself is lovely, jutting out into the blue-green lake and providing breezy skyline views. Tranquil 12th St Beach and Notherly Island, a prairie-grassed nature park, offer escapes if the crowds get to be too much.

Blues fans will want to make the pilgrimage further south to the old Chess Records site, a humble building where Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf plugged in their amps. History buffs will appreciate mansion-filled Prairie Ave between 16th and 20th Sts. The area around Chess, which abuts the massive McCormick Place convention center, is slated to develop into an entertainment district with restaurants and music venues. Keep an eye on this space.

To top off the wealth of offerings, the neighborhood is also home to Chicago's small but busy Chinatown, where pork buns, steaming bowls of noodles and imported wares reward an afternoon of exploring.

Local Life

- **Global dance party** Learn to salsa, rumba or tango with Chicagoans from all over the city at SummerDance (p188).
- **Chinatown Square** The plaza and mall are at their wonderful noisiest on weekends, when neighborhood families swarm in to eat and shop.
- **Blues heaven** Locals stop by Willie Dixon's Blues Heaven (p184) to see who's plugging in for the free Thursday-night concerts.

Getting There & Away

- **Bus** Numbers 130 (in summer) and 146 (year-round) go to the Museum Campus. Number 1 goes to Prairie Ave's historic homes.
- **EI** Red Line to Harrison and Red, Orange, Green Line to Roosevelt for South Loop. Red Line to Cermak-Chinatown for Chinatown. Green Line to Cermak-McCormick Pl for McCormick Place.
- **Car** The Museum Campus boasts plenty of lot parking (from \$19 per car on nonevent days). Meter parking is scarce in South Loop, but readily available in Near South Side.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

In summer it's a good idea to buy advance tickets for the Shedd Aquarium, the most popular of the Museum Campus attractions. It's less necessary for the Field Museum unless there's an all-the-rage exhibit going on. For the Adler Planetarium and for the Shedd and Field in winter, there's no need for e-tickets. Save yourself the service charges.

Best Places to Eat

- Mercat a la Planxa (p187)
- Flo & Santos (p186)
- Yolk (p186)
- Lou Malnati's (p186)
- Sweet Station (p187)

For reviews, see p186 ➔

Best Places to Drink

- Spoke & Bird (p187)
- Vice District Brewing (p188)
- Kasey's Tavern (p188)

For reviews, see p187 ➔

Best Places to Shop

- Sandmeyer's Bookstore (p189)
- ShopColumbia (p189)
- Giftland (p189)

For reviews, see p189 ➔