

# The Loop

## Neighborhood Top Five

### 1 Millennium Park (p46)

Exploring this arty park, 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 Art Institute of Chicago (p49)

Admiring color-

swirled Monets, Renoirs and one very big Seurat, plus unexpected delights such as the miniature rooms and glass paperweight collection.

### 3 Chicago Architecture Foundation (p53)

Gaping at sky-high ingenuity on an architecture tour by boat or on foot.

### 4 Willis Tower (p51)

Stepping onto the glass-floored ledge and peering a longgg way down.

### 5 Chicago Cultural Center (p52)

Popping in to see free art exhibitions, concerts and the world's largest Tiffany glass dome.



For more detail of this area see Map p286 →

## Explore The Loop

The Loop is Chicago's hub – its financial and historic heart – and it pulses with energy. Tumultuous tides of pin-striped 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 also home to big-ticket attractions such as the Art Institute, the neon-lit 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 (p52). 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 hangout** Off-duty office workers and the occasional local TV reporter can be found in Monk's Pub (p61) when the day is done.
- ➔ **Hidden falafel** Middle Eastern restaurant Oasis (p60) is a local secret, tucked away behind diamond sellers in the jewelers' mall.

## Getting There & Away

- ➔ **El** All lines converge in the Loop. Clark/Lake is a useful transfer station between them all. Randolph station is handy for the parks, Quincy station for Willis Tower.
- ➔ **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** Meters cost \$6.50 per hour. Parking lots cost around \$40 per day. **Millennium Park Garage** ([www.millenniumgarages.com](http://www.millenniumgarages.com); 5 S Columbus Dr; per 3/24hr \$28/35) 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 (p61) can set you up with deli goods and wine.

## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Gage (p61)
- ➔ Nando's Peri-Peri (p58)
- ➔ Cafecito (p58)
- ➔ Pastoral (p60)
- ➔ Pizano's (p60)
- ➔ Oasis (p60)

For reviews, see p58 ➔

## Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Berghoff (p61)
- ➔ Toni Patisserie & Cafe (p61)
- ➔ Monk's Pub (p61)
- ➔ Cindy's (p62)

For reviews, see p61 ➔

## Best Entertainment

- ➔ Grant Park Orchestra (p62)
- ➔ Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (p63)
- ➔ Goodman Theatre (p63)
- ➔ Lyric Opera of Chicago (p63)

For reviews, see p62 ➔