



SPEECHLESS IN



CHICAGO

Visiting for business or pleasure, solo or with friends,
you'll want to take in these 15 breathtaking sites

By Matt Alderton

THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF stuff to talk about in Chicago. Among locals' favorite subjects, for instance, are: Whose deep-dish pizza is best? Will this be the year the Cubbies finally break their curse? Which condiments are blasphemous on hot dogs? And which is windier: the city's weather or its politics?

Visitors should know, however, that Chicago's best sites aren't the places that make Chicagoans speak up. Rather, they're the ones that make them clam up. Whether you're traveling alone or in a group, seeking romance or adventure, your itinerary should definitely include the following local favorites. Their beauty, charm or "whoa" factor will leave you speechless.



Chicago Cultural Center

PATRICK L. PYSZKA/CITY OF CHICAGO

★★★★

TRAVELERS

Whatever brings you to town – a conference, a job interview or just some “you” time – Chicago’s got your back if you’re by yourself. Check out:

Chicago Lakefront Trail

With so much to see in Chicago, it’s easy to overlook what’s next to it: Lake Michigan and the 18.5-mile park beside it. “Whenever I go to Chicago, the first thing I like to do is walk north down Michigan Avenue, through the underpass and onto the Lakefront Trail,” says Dr. Barbara Bergin, an orthopedic surgeon from Austin, Texas. “It’s just a view ... but it’s a magnificent one.”

★ *East of Lake Shore Drive; trailandlink.com/trail/chicago-lakefront-trail.aspx*

Graceland Cemetery

This cemetery near Wrigley Field isn’t morbid; it’s magnificent. And it’s a certified arboretum, to boot. “Visiting Graceland is like stepping through a portal into a pocket universe,” says Chicago-based travel writer Benjamin van Loon, who praises the shaded paths through tombs of famous Chicagoans like Marshall Field and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. “If you’re lucky, you might even spot one of its elusive resident Chicago coyotes.”

★ *4001 N. Clark St.; 773-525-1105; gracelandcemetery.org*

Chicago Cultural Center

This Chicago landmark opened in 1897 and now hosts free public art exhibits, films and lectures, making it ideal for solo travelers seeking social connection. Its main draw, however, is its interior architecture – the centerpiece are two stained-glass domes, including the world’s largest Tiffany stained-glass dome, comprising some 30,000 pieces of glass.

★ *78 E. Washington St., chicagoculturalcenter.org*

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FAMILIES

A city as big and diverse as Chicago captivates parents and kids alike. Visit:

Indian Boundary Park

This 13-acre park in Chicago’s West Ridge neighborhood opened in 1922 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. “Indian Boundary is the best park in Chicago nobody knows about,” shares Chicago-based travel writer Benjamin van Loon, who says the major standouts are a massive wooden playground and lagoon, home to an island, willows, turtles and birds. “Your Instagram will thank you.”

★ *2500 W. Lunt Ave.; chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks/indian-boundary-park*

Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum

This museum’s trump card is the peaceful Judy Istock Butterfly Haven. “Over 40 species of butterflies call this place home,” says Kathy Pulkrabek, a Chicago-based writer and co-host of the *XX, Will Travel* podcast. “It’s great for kids to run around or for adults to take a break on one of the many benches. More than once I’ve had one land on my shoulder to say hello.”

★ *2430 N. Cannon Dr.; 773-755-5100; naturemuseum.org*

InterContinental Chicago Magnificent Mile

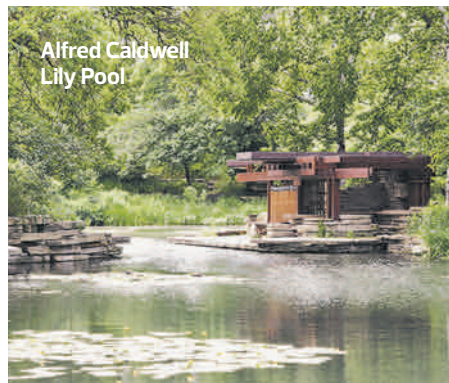
Dating back to 1929, this hotel originally was a luxury men’s athletic club. Its famous indoor junior Olympic swimming pool is the only surviving element from those bygone days. “It’s such a hidden gem. Most people have no idea that such a beautiful space is hiding up there,” says Chicagoan Victoria Kent. “You’re immediately transported by the Old World design, which can be seen from the ornate high ceilings, Spanish tiles and the impressive marble columns.” Non-guests can use the pool for \$25.

★ *505 N. Michigan Ave.; 312-944-4100; icchicagohotel.com*



InterContinental Chicago Magnificent Mile

INTERCONTINENTAL CHICAGO MAGNIFICENT MILE

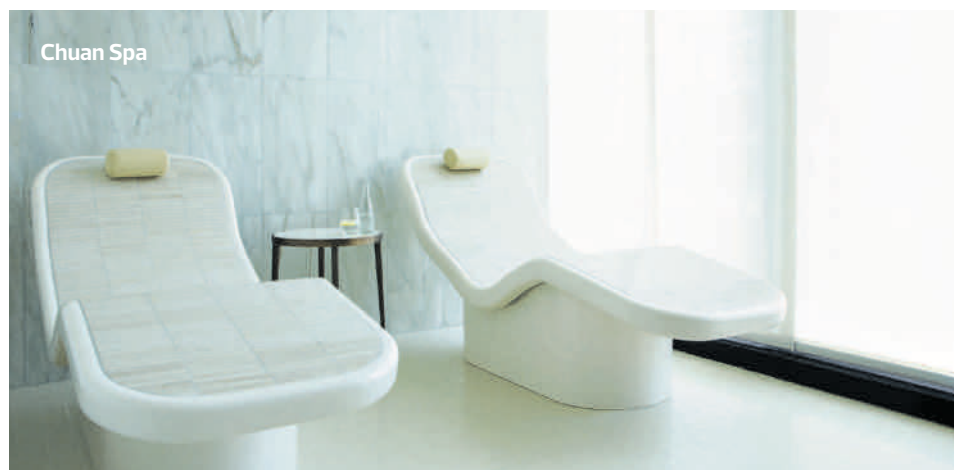


Alfred Caldwell
Lily Pool



The Signature Lounge
at the 96th

CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT; SCOTT THOMPSON



Chuan Spa



Streeterville Social

THE LANGHAM, CHICAGO; LOEWS CHICAGO HOTEL

★★★★

COUPLES

Chicago is a nest perfectly suited to lovebirds. Snuggle up at:

Alfred Caldwell Lily Pool

Hiding behind the Lincoln Park Zoo is one of Chicago's best-kept secrets. "This spot is so beautiful because it captures a stillness that is hard to find anywhere else in the neighborhood," says Rachel Cooper, a Chicago-based public relations professional who enjoys the area's lush greenery and active wildlife. "Locals and tourists alike often walk right by and never know it's there."

★ West Fullerton Avenue and North Cannon Drive; 773-883-7275; lincolnparkconservancy.org

Geja's Café

If you want to date like the locals do, make reservations for a three-course fondue dinner at this dining institution, which was Chicago's first wine bar when it opened in the city's Old Town neighborhood in 1965. Now in Lincoln Park, where it's been since 1971, its dim lighting, live classical guitar and crackling oil give it a seductive ambiance that's uniquely Chicago.

★ 340 W. Armitage Ave.; 773-281-9101; gejascafe.com

The Signature Lounge at the 96th

When he interned in Chicago last summer, University of Texas at Austin undergraduate Luke Orlando discovered locals' go-to spot for picture-perfect views — the 96th floor of the John Hancock Building. "While many purchase pricey tickets for Willis Tower's Skydeck or Hancock's 'Tilt' attraction (two floors below in the same building), the Signature Lounge offers an even better view at no cost," he says.

★ 875 N. Michigan Ave.; 312-787-9596; signaturelounge.com/lounge

★★★★

'BROCATIONERS'

It's hard to imagine a better guys' getaway than the home of The Blues Brothers, Al Capone and "Da Bears." Take the gang to:

Chicago Athletic Association Hotel

A former private men's club, this hotel's second floor is the perfect gentleman's hangout. Choose from the Drawing Room, a lounge with wood accents, leather chairs and cavernous fireplaces; the Milk Room, a former speakeasy serving Prohibition-era cocktails to just eight lucky patrons at a time; or the Game Room, a wood-paneled gaming hall featuring billiards, shuffleboard, foosball, cards, checkers, chess and bocce.

★ 12 S. Michigan Ave.; chicagoathletic.com

Chicago Cut Steakhouse

Chicago is for carnivores. For a meal that leaves the boys mum, eat at this steakhouse on the banks of the Chicago River. If the water views don't slay, the meat will. The double-cut Porterhouse, for instance — 48 ounces for \$124 — will knock the wind out of even your group's biggest eater.

★ 300 N. LaSalle St.; chicagocutsteakhouse.com

Harborside International Golf Center's Port Course

Golfers who don't know better head straight for the 'burbs with their clubs. This links-style course on Chicago's South Side, however, is urban golfing at its best. The combination of challenging game play and stunning skyline views makes even a high handicap feel heavenly on a sunny summer morning.

★ 11001 S. Doty Ave. E.; harborsideinternational.com

★★★★

GIRLFRIENDS

For women in need of girlfriend therapy, Chicago is exactly what the doctor ordered. Spend time at:

Chuan Spa

The Langham, Chicago is one of the city's most beautiful hotels thanks to its expansive Chuan Spa. It is Chicago's only spa to receive five stars from *Forbes Travel Guide*, and highlights include an aromatic herbal sauna, high-heat Himalayan salt stone sauna, chamomile-infused steam room, aromatherapy showers, 67-foot swimming pool with twinkling overhead lights and "Dream Room" furnished with multisensory recliners.

★ 330 N. Wabash Ave.; chicago.langhamhotels.com

RM Champagne Salon

Located off Restaurant Row in a discreet cobblestone alley, this champagne-themed bistro is Paris in Chicago. Inside, candlelight, chandeliers, antique mirrors and a giant marble fireplace effuse romance; outside on the patio, Moroccan lanterns and fairy lights do the same. The Monday special — \$5 glasses of champagne — makes for an incomparable girl's night, to say nothing of the *mignardises* (that's French for "tiny desserts").

★ 116 N. Green St.; www.rmchampagnesalon.com

Streeterville Social

Located on the third-floor roof of the Loews Chicago Hotel, Streeterville Social is Chicago's largest outdoor rooftop terrace. Along with handsome views of the Chicago River — and handsome local patrons — it boasts two bars, a giant Jenga game, hanging "birdcage" chairs and an expansive lawn with real grass for games of *pétanque* (French bocce) or cornhole. Enjoy drinks that are perfect for the long, summer nights, like the custom SMT—Streeterville Mai Tai.

★ 455 N. Park Dr.; loewshotels.com/chicago-downtown