

Local's guide

Chicago

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The city's vibrant streets and Lake Michigan beaches come alive in summer, and with two budget airlines starting new flights from the UK, now is the time to go

1 Humboldt Park

Many of Chicago's largest parks are connected through a system of historic leafy boulevards often overlooked by visitors, who tend to ignore the interior in favour of the lakefront. On the West Side, Humboldt Park is a massive green space to lie out on a blanket on the grass, stroll among peaceful lagoons, or dine at the waterfront Boathouse Café. A good way to explore the park is to take a short walk to it from the 606 urban hiking trail (pictured), a 2.7-mile elevated pathway on an abandoned railway line that connects several neighbourhoods. There are also many good bars and restaurants within a short walk of the trail, including Parson's Chicken & Fish (which unfurls a bustling outdoor patio in summer) and cool neighbourhood bars like Best Intentions and Scofflaw.

● chicagoparkdistrict.com

2 Maria's Packaged Goods

One of the more unusual things about Chicago is its "slashies" (liquor store/bar combos), where you can drink at the bar and walk home with a six-pack of beer or bottle of whiskey under your arm. While most slashies are of the dive bar variety, Maria's Packaged Goods in the Bridgeport neighbourhood is a slightly more clean-cut version that is a mecca for the community's artists, musicians, and beer nerds. As well as offering 500 to 700 varieties of brew and a Korean/Polish street food project called Kimski, it hosts some of the best DJ nights in the city. The bar's co-owner is a leading force behind popular, up-and-coming local brewery Marz Community Brewing, experimental art gallery/cultural centre Co-Prosperity Sphere, and low power broadcaster Lumpen Radio.

● [960 W 31st St, community-bar.com](http://960W31stSt.com)

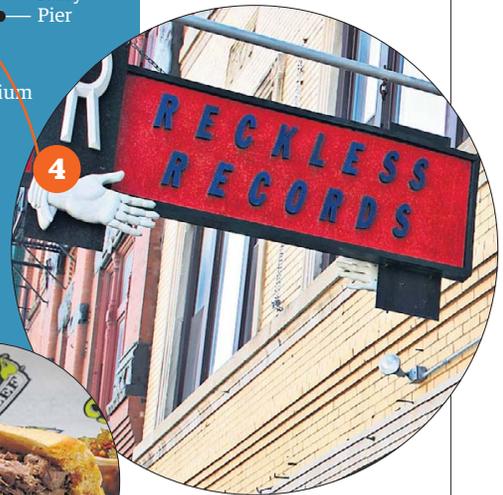
3 Al's Italian Beef

The Italian beef sandwich is perhaps the quintessential Chicago food creation. Consisting of thin slices of seasoned roast beef served on a long Italian or French roll topped with peppers and drenched in jus, the sandwich started as a cheap way of feeding a large Italian wedding party in the early 1900s and was brought here by immigrants in the 1930s. Operating since 1938, Al's stand in the Little Italy/University Village neighbourhood helped popularise the classic Chicago sandwich. While Al's is now a chain with several branches around the city, the original on Taylor Street remains a must-visit. It's cash only and there are no seats, so grab one to go and pack extra napkins.

● [1079 W Taylor St, alsbeef.com](http://1079WTaylorSt.com)

4 Reckless Records

Established in London's Soho in 1984, Reckless Records also has three locations in Chicago, the most famous of which is



At a glance Chicago



Getting there

Norwegian Air flies direct from Gatwick to Chicago from around £265 return. Wow flies via Reykjavik from Edinburgh, Gatwick and Stansted from around £260 return. United, American and British Airways also fly direct to Chicago.

Best time to to

Summer is festival season, including the Chicago Blues Festival in June and Taste of Chicago in July. Autumn sees the Chicago Marathon (October) and some of the city's best weather (daytime highs of 17C). The average daytime high temperature in July - the hottest month - is 28C; in January it's 0C.

Exchange rate

£1 = \$1.42

Beer in a neighbourhood bar: average \$5

in the Wicker Park neighbourhood, home of several music venues and other record stores. Here a wide variety of cool tunes will soundtrack hours of crate digging in a recently expanded space a few blocks from its original home. It is also something of a gathering place for the city's music community, hosting everything from in-store performances by local bands to drop-in visits from larger acts like Franz Ferdinand and Jack White.

● [1379 N Milwaukee Ave, reckless.com](http://1379NMilwaukeeAve.com)

5 Longman & Eagle

Most of the city's more popular (and expensive) hotels are downtown, so good deals and more interesting places to stay can be found in the neighbourhoods. Longman & Eagle has six boutique rooms above the restaurant of the same name in the Logan Square neighbourhood. They are artfully designed and have both modern and retro touches, such as vintage cassette tape consoles with accompanying mix tapes. The hip space also makes an excellent base for exploring the many bars

and restaurants that have helped turn Logan Square into Chicago's premier party district in recent years. The downstairs restaurant stocks 400 types of whiskey.

● [Doubles from \\$95 room-only, 2657 N Kedzie, longmanandeagle.com](http://Doublesfrom.com)

6 Montrose Beach

Chicago's lakefront beaches come alive in summer. The city's buildings almost touch the sand at places like Oak Street Beach, but venture further north and discover Montrose Beach, the city's largest, in the Uptown neighbourhood. After a game of beach volleyball at the expansive public space - it also includes sand dunes and birding trails - head to the always happening bar, The Dock at Montrose Beach, where live bands perform most nights in summer. Grab a vodka lemonade and a plate of fish tacos and watch the sunset for a true taste of Chicago summer.

● [4400 N Lake Shore Drive, chicagoparkdistrict.com](http://4400NLakeShoreDrive.com)