



Helping you feel at  
home abroad.

## Relocation Guide to Chicago, IL North Shore Edition

[www.iorworld.com](http://www.iorworld.com)

*IOR makes every effort to ensure that the information contained in this guide is as current as possible. If you notice errors, or information which is no longer accurate, please contact us immediately so that we may correct the issue.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW .....	1
EMERGENCY .....	6
HOUSING .....	8
U.S. EDUCATION SYSTEM .....	15
SCHOOLS IN YOUR AREA .....	23
BANKING .....	25
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION/DRIVING .....	27
LOCAL REGISTRATION .....	33
LIVING AND SHOPPING .....	35
RECREATION.....	37
EXPAT RESOURCES .....	40
U.S. IDIOMS.....	42
PUBLIC HOLIDAYS.....	44

## WELCOME AND OVERVIEW



Photo courtesy of [Wikimedia Commons](#)

With slightly over 2.7 million residents, Chicago is the largest city in Illinois and the third most-populous city in the United States after New York City and Los Angeles. Its metropolitan area is the third-largest in the United States, with an estimated 9.7 million people.

Chicago was founded in 1837, expected to be ideally situated to take advantage of the trading possibilities created by the nation's westward expansion. The name "Chicago" is derived from a French rendering of the Native American word *shikaakwa*, translated as "wild onion" or "wild garlic", from the Miami-Illinois language.

As Chicago grew, its residents began to take precautions to keep their city safe and competitive. In the 1850s, they raised many of the streets and buildings five to eight feet in order to install a sewer system. Unfortunately, these streets and sidewalks were made out of wood, and most were burned down in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. The fire began at a barn owned by Patrick and Catherine O'Leary at 558 W. DeKoven. Today, the Chicago Fire Department training academy stands on this property as a reminder to all. The Chicago Water Tower and Pumping Station at Michigan and Chicago avenues are among the few buildings to have survived the fire.

Chicago is sometimes referred to as the "Windy City", a nickname it acquired in the late 1800s. One theory is based on Chicago being subject to a nearly constant breeze coming from Lake Michigan, which can get particularly harsh during the winter. Another theory is that Chicago acquired its nickname from an old rivalry with its neighbor Cincinnati, Ohio. Cincinnati newspapers nicknamed Chicago the 'Windy City' because of the 'gust' of Chicago sports fans who would flood Cincinnati whenever the two played. The third most common hypothesis is that the nickname refers to Chicago's unique political history. Chicago has always swayed between Democratic and Republican, and has held more Democratic and Republican National Conventions than any other city in the country.

The North Shore of Chicago is prime real estate and highly regarded in terms of safety, education, and recreation. Places like the *Botanical Gardens* in Glencoe, *Ravinia* in Highland Park, and the *Bahai Temple* in Evanston display the rich heritage and style that has come to embody the Northern suburbs, where you will find yourself immersed in a sea of wildlife, beauty, and prosperity. The [Metra](#) serves as the main artery between the north suburbs and downtown Chicago, making the city conveniently accessible at any time of the day.

### City of Chicago Overview

- [Official Website of the City of Chicago](#)
- [Mayor of the City of Chicago](#)
- Population: 2.7 million
- Land Area: 234 square miles (606 km<sup>2</sup>)
- [Chicago Parks and Recreation Department](#)
- [Chicago Public Library](#)
- [Chicago Maps](#)
- [Weather Today in Chicago](#)

### History

- [Timeline of Chicago History](#)
- [Chicago History Museum](#)
- [Index of history museums around Chicago](#)

### Recommended Reading (available in print and on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)):

- *Chicago and the State of Illinois: Cool Stuff Every Kid Should Know* by Kate Boehm Jerome
- *City of Big Shoulders: A History of Chicago* by Robert G. Spinney
- *Day Trips from Chicago: Getaway Ideas for the Local Traveler* by Elisa Drake
- *Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement and the Bombing That Divided Gilded Age America* by James Green
- *Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson
- [Lonely Planet Chicago](#) (Regional Travel Guide) by Karla Zimmerman

### What to See, Sightseeing Tours, Value Packages and Passes, Tourist Information

- [Chicago Visitors Center](#)
- [Chicago attractions](#)
- [Save money on attractions](#)
- [Chicago tours](#)
- **Editor's suggestion:** [An architectural cruise of Chicago](#)

### Where to Find Arts & Entertainment

- [Chicago Tribune](#)
- [Chicago Reader Calendar](#)
- [Chicago Metromix](#)
- [Chicago City Search](#)
- [Broadway in Chicago - Tickets & Shows](#)
- [Chicago Cinema - Listings & Schedules](#)

### Where to Eat in Chicago and the metro area

- [Make online restaurant reservations](#) with OpenTable.
- [Chicago Restaurant Week](#): Chicago Restaurant Week is a member-based program designed to promote the restaurant industry and drive traffic to participating establishments during a typically slow time of year. For ten days, diners can enjoy value pricing for lunch and/or dinner at dining establishments throughout the city.
- [52 Weeks in Chicago](#) (Food Blog)
- Editor's Choice(s):
  - [Portillo's](#) (Get the Italian beef, you will not be disappointed!)
  - [Argo Georgian Bakery](#) (Small bakery, incredible food. Ask for the Khachapuri)
  - [Lou Malnati's Pizzeria](#) (A great place to find Chicago's signature deep-dish pizza)
  - [Girl and the Goat](#) (One of the best high-end restaurants in Chicago)

### Tipping & Sales Tax

When you eat in a restaurant in America, you are expected to leave your server a tip, as it is not included. In a bar, café, or modest restaurant, 15% of the total bill is acceptable. However, in an upscale restaurant (fine dining), a tip calculated on 20% of the total bill is the norm. In Chicago restaurants, if you have a party of six or more, the tip is included in the bill.

[More information](#) on tipping in Chicago.

MAP OF CHICAGO NEIGHBORHOODS



Map courtesy of [Wikimedia Commons](#)

MAP OF CHICAGO'S NORTH SHORE



Map Courtesy of [Odyssey](#)

**EMERGENCY**

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY  
DIAL 911  
FOR FIRE, POLICE & AMBULANCE**

Language line: If the person calling 911 is unable to speak English, they can tell the operator what language they speak. The 911 Operator will have an interpreter on the line within one minute to assist with the translation.

They will ask for the following information so keep this page close to your phone:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

**If you accidentally call 911, please do not hang up.** The police will automatically be dispatched to your home to make sure there are no problems. Explain to the Operator the call was an accident.

[POISON CONTROL](#) (800) 222-1222  
[ANIMAL POISON CONTROL](#) (888) 426-4435

Other Important Numbers:

CLOSEST CONSULATE OFFICE \_\_\_\_\_  
PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN \_\_\_\_\_  
WORK PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

DIAL 311 to reach any City of Chicago agency, or to request a City Service (such as replacing a broken street-lamp or removing an abandoned vehicle).

- [Find your Consulate in Chicago](#)
- [Primary Care Physician](#)

**Hospitals & Clinics**

[General Chicago Hospital Directory](#)  
[General Children’s Hospital Directory](#)

- [NorthShore University Health System](#)
- [Northwestern Memorial Hospital](#)



### **Veterinary Clinics**

- [Best Veterinarians in Chicago](#)
- [Animal Emergency Clinic](#)
- [Chicago Humane Society](#)

### **Pharmacies**

There are several major pharmacy chains in the Chicagoland area, found on nearly every block on commercial streets. These pharmacies are also general stores and carry a large selection of cleaning, house care, pet care, and other supplies. Click on “Store Locator” and enter your zip (postal) code to find the pharmacy near you. Many pharmacies are open 24 hours. Check for hours of operation.

- [Walgreens](#)
- [CVS](#)

A lease is an agreement that outlines the obligations of the owner and the tenants of a house or apartment. It is a legally binding document, so it is important for you to know the exact terms of the lease agreement before you sign it. Please do not sign a lease without reviewing it with your IOR DS Consultant.

### **Types of rental properties**

- **Apartment**

An apartment is rented from a company or individual that owns the property. Apartment buildings are usually multistory with people over, under and beside each other with common hallways or walk ways. Apartments are often rented from a company or individual in the form of an individual lease with no bearing on the other tenants of the building (besides noise complaints, property damage, etc.)

- **Studio Apartments**

A studio apartment is basically a one room apartment with sleeping, dining and kitchen all in one room plus a full bathroom. A “convertible” or “alcove” studio may have a nook or area which can be sectioned off separately for sleeping.

- **Condominium**

A condo is a communally owned estate and the owners share the ownership of the common areas such as grounds and hallways. Condominiums may be apartment style buildings or town house type buildings, but condo owners do not usually own the land. Condo owners are required to pay monthly common maintenance charges, although these might be reflected in your rental rate (it is important to clarify this with your landlord).

- **Townhouse**

A Townhouse is a kind of structure where the individual properties are flush against each other with tiny front and back "yards" and shared walls between them. Almost always they are multistory single family. Usually townhouse owners own the property under their townhouse.

- **Single Family Houses**

Single-family houses are free-standing rental properties that are habited by one person or a family. As you do not share this rental space with any other tenants, single-family homes offer the most amount of privacy. Homes also often come with a parking spot and/or garage space, but may require that you handle certain maintenance items (i.e. your lawn, minor repairs, etc.)

## Rental Agents

In most situations, your IOR consultant will partner with a local realtor to have access to the most current and extensive property listings as well as the realtor's expertise in preparing and negotiating leases. This agent receives a commission for their assistance, in most US locations this commission is paid by the Landlord, not the tenant. Your IOR DS Consultant will discuss this with you.

## Renter's Rights

Tenants who lease or rent property are protected against discrimination by [The Fair Housing Act](#). If you think your rights have been violated, you may write a letter or telephone the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) office nearest you. You have one year after the alleged violation to file a complaint with HUD, but you should file as soon as possible.

While you can generally expect the same service from landlords, it's important to know your state's laws. Each state and most major cities have their own tenant rights, laws and protections. [Here are Chicago's](#).

You can also visit the [HUD website here for a full guide to renters' rights by states](#).

If your rental property ever suffers any defects that make your place uninhabitable, your landlord has a duty to fix it. While some apartments let you make online requests for repairs, as well as provide a phone number for "emergencies," always make sure you document your request in writing. The landlord will then have a certain amount of time to make those repairs.

## Privacy

You have the right to privacy. While the landlord owns the property, they can't access it anytime they want. All states have laws stating renters have a right to privacy while renting. Pretty much the only time the landlord can come into your rental without permission or notice is when they're responding to an emergency that threatens injury or property damage.

Any other time the landlord wants to enter your apartment, they need to have your permission and in most cases give you 24-hours' notice before entering.

## What to expect from the landlord:

In most states, you are legally entitled to:

- Safe structural elements including floors, walls, roofs, and secure doors and windows
- Privacy as described above
- All electrical, plumbing, heating, and air conditioning systems function.
- Working hot and cold water
- Exterminating infestations of rodents and other insects
- Access to trash receptacles
- Landlords cannot discriminate based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities.
- Water, electricity, and gas bills are up to you to pay. **Your IOR consultant will assist you with this process.**
- Apartment buildings sometimes come with laundry and dryer machines in the basement.

## Utilities and Appliances

Your IOR DS Consultant will assist you or provide information on connecting your utilities. It is possible some will be included in your rent, but typically most are not.

If you are moving from Europe to North America, you might be surprised at the relatively large size of the kitchen appliances in your accommodation, especially the refrigerator! It may also surprise some expats that properties are rented **with** appliances. In the US it is standard for properties to include a refrigerator, stove, and oven. Properties may also include a dishwasher, microwave, washer and dryer depending on the location, size, and price point.

**\*\*Note that you will need a social security number in order to register and pay for utilities\*\***

## Recycling

Ask your IOR DSC about the recycling arrangements and requirements. Most Northshore suburbs offer recycling services.



## The Lease Process

### Review your housing budget with your DSC

Your DSC can help you understand what kind of property you can afford. You also need to take into account that you may be responsible for some of the utility costs of your rental.

### Know what you want

What are you looking for in a property? Do you want a studio or a single bedroom? Maybe you want to rent a single family home? Do you need the property to come with appliances, including washer and dryer? Do want it to be close to school or your work? Do you want it to be within walking distance of retail, like groceries or coffee shops? Are you looking for a child friendly area? Keep in mind that outside of the city center in major cities, there is not much public transportation and most locals drive everywhere.

### Identify potential apartments

IOR offers home finding services to aid you with this process. Your consultant may work with a local broker who will help to organize appointments and visit properties. They will also assist in the rental application and the leasing process.

## Common Abbreviations and Acronyms used in rental housing listings

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
<b>24-hr mtn</b>	24-hour emergency maintenance
<b>AC or A/C</b>	Air conditioning
<b>Appls</b>	Appliances

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
<b>LA</b>	Living area
<b>LR</b>	Living room
<b>MBR</b>	Master bedroom

<b>Apt</b>	Apartment
<b>BA</b>	Bathroom
<b>BR</b>	Bedroom
<b>Bsmt</b>	Basement
<b>CAC</b>	Central air conditioning
<b>DA</b>	Dining area
<b>Det</b>	Detached
<b>Dk</b>	Deck
<b>DR</b>	Dining room
<b>Dw (D/w)</b>	Dishwasher
<b>Eff</b>	Efficiency
<b>EiK</b>	Eat-in kitchen
<b>Fin bsmt</b>	Finished basement
<b>FDR</b>	Formal dining room
<b>FHA</b>	Fair Housing Act
<b>FMR</b>	Fair market rent
<b>FP</b>	Floorplan
<b>Gar</b>	Garage
<b>H/A</b>	Handicapped accessible
<b>H/W</b>	Hardwood floors
<b>Hi ceil</b>	High ceilings
<b>HVAC</b>	Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning

<b>MBTH</b>	Master bathroom
<b>Neg</b>	Negotiable
<b>Ofc</b>	Office
<b>OSP</b>	Off-street parking
<b>Pkg</b>	Parking
<b>PM</b>	Property manager (management)
<b>Pvt</b>	Private
<b>Pwdr rm</b>	Powder room (1/2 bath)
<b>RE</b>	Real estate
<b>Renov</b>	Renovated
<b>Rf</b>	Roof
<b>Rm</b>	Room
<b>SF</b>	Single-family
<b>SFA</b>	Single-family attached
<b>SFD</b>	Single-family detached
<b>Sp, PI (S/p)</b>	Swimming pool
<b>Sq. ft</b>	Square feet
<b>Th (T/H)</b>	Townhouse
<b>Vw (vu)</b>	View
<b>W/A</b>	Wheelchair accessible
<b>W/W</b>	Wall-to-wall carpeting

### Visit

Make this process as efficient as possible by visiting as many potential properties as you can in one or two days. Try to go sometime during the week if possible. Your IOR DS consultant will work with you to set an appropriate schedule and to ensure that the properties you visit meet your needs as closely as possible.

### **What to do once you're there**

As you look at the rental unit, be sure to ask a lot of questions. While you should keep small concerns to yourself about the unit while looking at it, feel free to ask the landlord or apartment manager any questions you might have that will help in your decision. Here are some possible questions you may consider asking:

- What's the monthly rent?
- Are any utilities included with the rent?
- How much is the security deposit?
- When is rent due? Do you have auto-pay?
- What's the make-up of the other tenants? Are they mainly younger students? Married couples with families? Older folks?
- What's the parking situation like? Do you pay for a parking spot?
- Do you take care of small maintenance issues or am I responsible for some of the repairs in the property?
- Am I able to re-paint the walls or make other modifications?

Again, be friendly and polite when you ask these questions.

### **The Application**

The next step in the leasing process for an apartment is to submit a rental application for the location you want. The manager or landlord will be able to give you the application as well as anything else that they may need to have filled out. Your IOR DS Consultant will assist with this process. For a single family home there will likely be a rental application.

You will need your passport, Social Security number, Visa, and proof of employment. Some landlords may charge you an application fee which could be between \$20 to \$400 dollars, depending on the landlord. This could be a combination of an application fee and move-in fee.

Once you've done this, it can take up to a few days to hear back from the property manager. Once your application has been approved the lease approval process will begin with IOR and likely your employer.

### **Signing the lease**

DO NOT SIGN THE LEASE until your IOR consultant has reviewed it in full and given their approval.

The lease is a binding contract, so it is very important to pay attention as a leasing agent goes over it with you. It is perfectly normal for you to take your time and read all the fine print for yourself. If you are working with an IOR consultant, make sure to talk with them and receive approval before signing. You will also be given a copy of the lease to take with you and keep for your records, but it is very important to know everything included in your lease from the start.

Some things to look for in a lease:

- Term of the lease and any important dates such as when the rent is due
- Extra fees for parking spaces or storage, garbage collection, and pets

- Information regarding utility providers and whether you or the landlord is responsible for those bills.
- Notification requirements in case of renewal
- Requirements/responsibilities of the tenants to do routine repairs such as lawn maintenance, cleaning or notification of repairs
- Clauses that allow the landlord to change the terms of the lease after it is signed
- Restrictions that would prevent you from living normally or comfortably in the home

Sometimes landlords will ask for a security deposit before you sign the lease. This is normal, but you shouldn't pay in cash. Make sure all payments are made out as a check or money order just in case.

### **What to expect from the lease**

Most leases in the United States include the following or a variation thereof:

- We request that the lease include a Break Clause in the case that you are transferred for work or personal needs if permitted by landlord.
- Contracts will often be for periods of a year or more.
- Minimum stay. Typically three fourths of your lease contract time. If you choose to move out before this date, you will lose your security deposit. If you move out afterwards, you are still required to give a specified number of days notice.
- Security Deposit. Landlords will expect you to leave them with a deposit (usually about one to two month's rent) that they will hold for the duration of your lease. You will receive your security deposit back at the end of the lease provided you don't break any specific clauses in your lease, such as moving out without proper notice, not paying rent, causing damages to the property, etc.
- Landlords should not be given unchecked access to your apartment. If there isn't anything in your lease about landlord's rights to enter the leased premises, suggest the following clause:

*Entry by the Landlord. Landlord or his agent will not enter Tenant's home except to deal with an emergency; to make necessary or agreed repairs; to supply necessary or agreed services; or to show the unit to potential purchasers, tenants, or repair persons. Unless there is an emergency, Landlord will give Tenant at least 24 hours' written notice of the date, time, and purpose of the intended entry and will schedule entries during normal business hours, Monday–Friday.*

Most landlords will be hard-pressed to say no to such a reasonable clause. If the landlord refuses, it's a sure sign that he won't be reasonable in other respects, too. Continue on in your housing search.

**Moving In**

On your selected move-in date, after the lease has been signed, and deposits have been paid...you should be given your keys and more than likely a move-in form to fill out. Your IOR Consultant will assist you with an initial walk through of your apartment. Look for dings in the walls, cracked windows, or other irregularities and report them on this form. This will indicate that these things were there before you moved in and you will not be held responsible for them at the end of the lease term.

**Get Renter's Insurance**

Renter's insurance covers any loss to your personal property due to robbery or accidents. It also covers any damage you might cause to other tenant's property. For example, let's say your washing machine springs a leak and water seeps through the floor and ruins your neighbor's antique dresser. Renter's insurance would cover that.

Renter's insurance will cost approximately about \$15-125 a month, less if you tack it onto another policy (like auto) you have with an insurance company. A few popular options are [Allstate](#) and [StateFarm](#).



When relocating internationally, your children's education is of great concern. IOR eases this concern by exposing you to the various school options available for your child and helping you to work within the framework of options to find the best solution for your family.

### I. **Overview and Philosophy of the United States Educational System**

In most U.S. locations you will have the choice of sending your children to either a public or private school. A public school must accept your child for enrollment if you live within its designated district. A private school may have a general curriculum similar to that of public schools, but may or may not accept your child depending on availability of space, your child's prior academic history, language ability in English, or the result of entrance exams. Private schools charge a fee, which can be quite high. If you are considering private school, be sure you have a clear understanding of your employer's policy regarding reimbursement. In the U.S. approximately 85% of the children attend public schools for ages 5 to 13, and approximately 93% of the children attend public school at the high school level. Many, though not all, private schools are parochial, or religiously affiliated schools.

A third option called 'charter school' is sometimes available. Charter Schools are similar to public schools in that they are free, non-religious, publicly funded, and are held to state and federal academic standards. Each charter school is governed by its own local school community, which often includes parents and teachers - rather than a district. This freedom allows teachers to be more innovative, and communities to shape their local school. Charter schools can set their own hours and adjust their curriculum to fit their student needs, and give teachers the opportunity to experiment with next-generation teaching models including technology and the virtual classroom. Charter schools typically admit students by random lottery and do not restrict enrollment based on location, academic achievement, or other factors private schools may consider.

Most Americans, regardless of their level of education and income, send their children to public schools. Because each town or community typically has its own school system funded by local municipal taxes and state revenues, residents in an area with a higher tax base can usually be assured of quality public education. IOR is very conscientious about placing assignees and their families in areas with good public school systems.

Private schools do not receive state revenue, although they may be entitled to assistance with transporting students and providing for special needs such as speech therapy and assistance of the learning disabled. Private schools are funded through tuition paid by the student's parents. Typically, there are additional fees for books, uniforms, and school supplies, and the parents are usually solicited for additional charitable donations. There may also be book or activity fees at public schools.

The public education system in the U.S. is administered by local and state government, rather

than by the federal government. Each state has a board of education which sets policy for all school districts and standards which all students must achieve. In addition, each local district has a board of education which sets local policy and curriculum within the parameters set forth by the state.

School districts can provide specialized programs and services for children with special needs. The general philosophy of education in the United States is to educate the entire diverse, ethnically mixed population with equal educational opportunity for all, while serving the educational needs of the individual student.

If you choose public education for your child, the particular school your child attends is determined by the school district boundaries containing your residential address. The school may or may not be within walking distance to your home. Generally, if the distance to the school is greater than one mile, the school district provides bus transportation to and from school. For those children who do not live far enough away from the school for bus service but are too far to walk comfortably, parents may have the option of paying for bus transportation, or they may choose to drive their children to and from school. Very often parents form 'car pools', sharing the responsibility of driving groups of children.

Generally private schools do not have residential boundaries for their students' families. In most cases, parents rely on car pools to ease the burden of transporting their students to and from school. In selecting your home, consider the driving distance and time to and from the private school.

Ultimately, the school your children attend is determined by your residential address, so it is a good idea to include visits to potential schools and properties in your pre-trip visit. Your pre-trip visit will consist of selected sample houses in a variety of communities, along with information, or perhaps visits, to the appropriate schools. However, there may be a limited selection of homes available within each community. It is possible you may find a school you like, but there may not be any available housing options within that school's enrollment radius. We will show you housing in school districts with proven academic standards, but be aware there are cases when certain schools are unavailable due to housing concerns.

If you are considering a private school, you may wish to visit it as well as a public school to compare. It would be advisable, however, to first determine if the private school has space available for your child. Additionally, you will want to know the amount of tuition and fees for the school, as that may be a factor in your decision.

## II. Academic Standards

### A. Curriculum:

The overriding objective of elementary and secondary education, public or private, is to prepare students for higher learning and future employment. Each school district or private school will have a unique curriculum which meets the above overriding goals.

#### Elementary School:

The elementary years (kindergarten through fifth grade) focus on fundamental academic skills, language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics in addition to introduction to technology, art, music, physical education, and sometimes foreign languages. Students' personal development is energized through emphasizing strong work habits which provide a positive feeling toward learning.

#### Middle School:

Middle School helps children in early adolescence (sixth through eighth grade) transition from elementary to high school and from childhood into young adulthood. The structure of the school day includes contact with several teachers who specialize in their subject matter; students usually move from one classroom to another. Curricular content focuses on expansion of skills in math, science, reading, writing and social studies. Further exploration of foreign languages, practical and fine arts, music, health, physical education and computer literacy are also provided. Middle school students are able to enhance their formal education by participation in school sponsored adult supervised competitive athletics and a variety of clubs and special interest groups.

#### High School:

The premise of elementary and middle schools is to prepare students for the academic, social, and physical challenges of high school. All high schools maintain defined academic requirements for graduation, however great flexibility of classes is usually available within this framework. Most schools provide more challenging academic courses entitled honors or advanced placement which award college credit to successful students. High school extracurricular and athletic activities are more competitive than those found at lower levels and often provide talented students with opportunities continue this activity in college or university.

### B. Grading Systems/Assessment of Child Progress

Schools typically report students' progress to parents with written report cards, which may be either mailed or carried home by the student. Many schools also set one or two days aside each semester for parent/teacher conferences. These conferences are an opportunity for parents to meet with their children's teachers and hear the teacher's evaluations of their student's performance in school. At the elementary school level, where children usually have one primary teacher, a teacher conference may last from fifteen minutes to an hour in length. At the middle school and high school levels, you may meet with your child's teachers for a period of five or ten minutes. If you need additional time with the teacher, you may schedule a follow-up visit

allowing time for a more complete discussion. It is a good idea to participate fully in teacher conferences. Your children's teachers may be able to provide valuable insight regarding your children's academic and social adjustments. Should there be concerns, they may be able to assist you with helpful suggestions of additional resources to contact.

### **C. Standardized Testing**

Challenged to prepare students for higher learning and future employment, all school districts and private schools utilize standardized testing to measure student progress over time and compare themselves to national standards. Such tests are prepared by national groups of parents and educators as well as business and academic leaders. Tests vary from state to state, but typically students in prescribed grade levels (for example, grades 3, 6, 8 and 10) are tested in the areas of reading, mathematics, writing science and social science. Colleges and universities use the ACT and SAT tests to measure incoming student abilities; the results of these tests are nearly as important as high school grades when students apply for entrance into US colleges and universities.

## **III. Definition of School Groupings**

### **A. Pre-School or Nursery School**

In the U.S., 3, 4 and some 5 year olds have the opportunity to attend a pre-school under a private system. These schools can be located in a local school, a church, or an independent free standing building. Pre-school is not publicly funded and is fee-based. Typically children are grouped by age. Most of the schools are play-based, although different philosophies of formal education can be found. Typically, 3 year olds attend 2 half days a week and 4 year olds may attend 3 half days a week. Some preschools also serve as day care centers for families in which both parents work. Typically reading is not taught in pre-school, although a few programs can be found which include reading fundamentals. Concentration of learning is on small and gross motor skills, and basic academic readiness skills. Some pre-schools offer a full-day Kindergarten option for those parents who work. The public school kindergarten programs are typically only half day programs with no before or after school care. If a Kindergarten program is offered it follows the state curriculum guidelines, and teaches pre-reading and math skills.

### **B. Elementary School**

Elementary school provides education for children ages 5 to 11, Kindergarten and Grades 1,2,3,4 &5. While kindergarten at age 5 is not required, most families send their children to kindergarten. Elementary school is the beginning of publicly funded school. In the U.S. children are grouped by age and advanced in school by age. There are usually opportunities within the grade for different levels of learning, with opportunities for advanced learners and remedial learners. The public elementary school is usually neighborhood based and the source of playmates for your child. In the U.S., pre-reading skills are introduced in kindergarten (age 5) along with early math skills. Formal reading begins in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade (age 6). Studies have shown that while children learn to read at different ages, the difference between early and late readers is not a predictor of reading skills by about the age of 8 or 9 years old. In addition to reading

and math, elementary school also has a broad base of writing, science, social studies, art, music, computer, personal development and physical education. Only in a few schools will a 2<sup>nd</sup> language be introduced at the elementary level. English as a Second Language (ESL) is offered starting at the elementary level in the public school. Parents are allowed to visit the schools, and there are many opportunities for parents to volunteer their skills, particularly at the elementary school. Parents may approach teachers and administrators with suggestions and concerns with their child. Usually the personnel are willing to consider changes if they feel it would be in the best interests of the child. With a child coming to a new country and sometimes starting a new language, feel free to talk to the school if you think something could be done to ease your child's adjustment. The school day is from approximately 8:30a.m. to 3:00p.m. with recess (playtime break) and a lunch break at the school.

### **C. Middle School**

Middle school provides education for children ages 11 to 14, grades 6, 7 & 8. The children attend school in a different location and in the public school system several elementary schools will combine into the same middle school. A middle school is usually 2-4 times the size of the elementary school. Middle school is considered the transition between elementary school and high school and from childhood to young adulthood. Because of this philosophy, U.S. students at this age level are all introduced to the same academic curriculum. The school day is structured differently with the children changing class rooms and teacher with each subject. There are 6-8 different class periods daily. Within the grades children may be separated by academic ability in classes, particularly math and English. Often an introduction to foreign languages is offered. For those who choose, the student may have the option to complete one year of high school foreign language during middle school. If your home country requires more advanced language development at this age, you may want to consider outside supplemental language instruction. Middle school is a time when extracurricular activities such as theatre, music, sports and clubs become important activities in adolescent life.

### **D. High School**

High school provides education for children ages 14 to 18, grades 9, 10, 11 & 12. It is the final level of education before the university, community college, or trade school. The terms Freshman (9<sup>th</sup>), Sophomore (10<sup>th</sup>), Junior (11<sup>th</sup>) and Senior (12<sup>th</sup>) are also used to identify grade level. At the high school level the student has more specific choices of course work. Each district has a set of minimum graduation requirements, which will include courses in English, math, science, social studies, physical education and a combination of foreign language, fine arts and practical arts. Within this framework the student has various choices from more remedial levels, average levels, and more advanced levels. If a student is prepared for the material, by the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade a student may have the opportunity to take a college level course for advanced credit in the U.S. university system. In high school competitive sports are offered along with theatre, orchestra, instrumental and vocal music and clubs. Your child will have an opportunity to meet more U.S. children by participating in a school extracurricular activity. Each school district has 1-2 high schools with 800-2500 students. A student's high school

performance may determine the type of university or higher education program they pursue upon graduation. During high school national tests are given to determine the student's potential to advance to various higher education levels.

If your child anticipates returning to your home country to continue higher education within your university system, you might want to consider the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. This program is recognized internationally for entrance to universities. In contrast to the typical high school college preparatory curriculum, the IB semester consists of fewer subjects, studied in greater depth and with a bilingual proficiency. Developed in Switzerland, the curriculum was intended as a secondary education program which could be utilized and accepted worldwide. Not all US schools will offer an IB curriculum.

#### **E. Post-Secondary Education**

While most families on international assignment do not bring their older children (19 years+) for education in the U.S. we include a brief description of the US university system. Some form of post-secondary education is available to those U.S. students who seek it. Each state offers a public university system which the tuition is partly subsidized by the state for state residents. Residency of at least 1 year is necessary. Some are medium to large institutions (with undergraduate and graduate level programs). Some can be quite competitive for admission while others may not be competitive at all. Student's admission to the university is in part determined by their high school academic performance and course selection and as well as the results of a national standardized test (SAT or ACT). Post-Secondary is the educational level that students in the U.S. study subjects in great depth and select their majors and career choices. Graduate level programs on the master level, professional level, and PhD level are pursued after completing the 4 years of undergraduate studies.

### **IV. Life in Schools**

#### **A. Atmosphere**

It is valuable to visit your child's school to understand the academic and non-academic atmosphere that prevails. Administrators or counselors are happy to serve as tour guides and should always be contacted in advance. Do not be alarmed if your visit takes place during the lunch hour if the children seem a bit rambunctious. Students in American public schools generally enjoy a great deal of personal freedom in the cafeteria, on the playground, and in the halls before and after class. They are supervised by teachers or members of the school staff, but they generally are more relaxed in the lunch room and in the halls. If you are visiting on a rainy day, you may observe "indoor recess" in the gymnasium which could be noisy. Rest assured that when they are in the classroom, students do settle down and work quietly and diligently. Some classrooms are more informally arranged than others. For instance, some teachers prefer to have the children's desks in a circle rather than in rows. Teachers will sometimes assign group projects, where several students work together and are thus not seated at their desks during a part of the classroom period. Teachers are expected, however, to have good control of their classrooms. Private school policy regarding these issues of personal freedom varies. Some

private schools function as the public schools do, while others may have a more closely supervised approach. Again, it is always a good idea to visit the school so that you are comfortable with that particular school's management style.

### **B. Parental Involvement**

In addition to participating in parent/teacher conferences, most American schools encourage parents to become involved in the volunteer activities of the school. Most schools have a "PTA" (Parent Teacher Association) or "PTO" (Parent Teacher Organization). These organizations usually work with the school administration, dealing with issues such as student safety, communication to parents, academic concerns, etc., as well as fundraising and planning special programs to enhance the school experience for the student population.

Getting involved with the PTA or PTO is a great way to become well informed about your child's school. It also provides you with an opportunity to meet and really get to know other parents. There will probably be a choice of committees on which you could work; you do not have to commit to a leadership role. Some volunteer opportunities may involve actually working in the school, volunteering in the school library on day a week or one day a month for example. Be sure to alert the school administration that you would like to get involved, and ask for the name and phone number of the head of the parent volunteer organization at the school. Parent volunteers are usually welcomed and encouraged at all levels at all schools, both public and private.

### **C. Extracurricular Activities**

A well-rounded education requires that students learn their academic subjects as well as develop socialization skills and learn nonacademic skills. Belonging to a group can be a rewarding connection with peers and a good way to develop self-confidence. These are the reasons that schools, public and private, provide numerous extracurricular activities from which their students can choose to participate. At each level of education the opportunities and choices increase. For example at the elementary school level, all students are introduced to art, music, drama and a variety of athletic experiences. At the middle school level students have required courses in some of the above areas but are provided opportunity to participate in after school activities of their choice. For example, competitive football, soccer, swimming, track, lacrosse, basketball etc. In addition many clubs allow students to pursue other interests, for example, computers, drama, fine arts, forensics, jazz band, photography, yearbook and student council. Almost universally, each activity or club is sponsored by adults, using specialized instruction, who demonstrate a working knowledge of the activity and a desire to teach children. An even greater variety of extracurricular experiences are available at the high school level, many of which help students identify strengths, talents and interests which may direct them to future colleges, vocations or avocations.

#### **D. Facilities**

All schools maintain facilities other than classrooms which enhance or support their educational mission.

##### **Libraries and Media Centers**

Libraries are universally available and are accessible to students throughout the day and often after hours. Libraries often contain a “media center” which maintains and makes available other types of educational materials including computers and software, audio and video tapes, slides, sound sequences, projectors and recorders of various types for use individually or in groups. The wide availability of computers and access to the internet has provided almost unlimited opportunities for students and teachers to obtain information that can enhance and facilitate learning.

##### **Fitness Facilities/Gymnasium**

Fitness facilities, or ‘gyms’ as they are typically referred to, are supplied by almost all schools in the United States. Gyms often consist of a large indoor court with various sports equipment. They are open during lunch hours and for specific hours before and after school for athletes or students who wish to exercise. Many gyms will be accompanied by a weight room and a locker room with a shower. Students are sometimes expected to use these communal showers following Physical Education classes or general use of the gym’s facilities.



## SCHOOLS IN YOUR AREA

Generally, to register your child for school you will need to have a passport and/or birth certificate, proof of immunizations, any applicable past school records and proof of residency. Most public schools have boundary areas, and you must show proof (i.e. copy of lease or home purchase agreement) to be allowed to register in that particular school. Please always confirm requirements with the school you are interested in before assuming that your child will be able to attend that school.

Grade level in the public school system is determined by the age of the child. Typically, the child must be 5 years old by September 1st to enter kindergarten. School districts may be very strict about the age requirement, but inquire with the school district you are interested in to determine if there are any exemptions for foreign students who are ahead in grade level. You may also want to ask about any gifted or advanced programs as well as their English as a Second Language (ESL) Programs. Some elementary schools also offer a pre-Kindergarten program for children who miss the September 1st requirement. You may inquire at the school districts for availability.

Contact your IOR Destination Services Consultant for more assistance with schooling questions. Chicago Public Schools, commonly abbreviated as CPS by local residents, and officially classified as City of Chicago School District #299 for funding and districting reasons, is a large school district that manages over 600 public elementary and high schools in Chicago, Illinois. Chicago Public Schools is currently the third largest school district in the United States, with more than 400,000 students enrolled in the school district

### Public Schools in Chicago

To evaluate the standard of educational facilities in a district, parents can use the Chicago Tribune school reports (for [elementary, middle, and high schools](#)) – where they can compare schools by test performance, class-sizes, college-readiness, and other important factors. **Note that many top schools require an application, testing, and interview in order to enter.**

The City of Chicago has put together this [official guide to entering Chicago High Schools](#). A guide to [elementary schools can be found here](#).

### Public Schools on the North Shore

The North Shore communities have some of the best schools in the state of Illinois. Rankings [here](#)

## Private Schools in Chicago Metro Area

Many private schools require students complete an entrance exam, which must also be financed by parents. In late September, there is usually an annual “Private School Preview”, a free event where parents can learn more about specific schools, their admission requirements, and their philosophies of education. Otherwise, the best method for finding out about private schools in an area is word of mouth, and by visiting the school in person.

You can find a ranking of [top Chicago private elementary schools here](#).

You can find a [complete report on Chicago Private High Schools here](#).

## [Chicago Magnet School Overview](#)

### Additional resources to compare Public and Private schools, view ratings, reviews and test scores

- [www.greatschools.org](http://www.greatschools.org)
- [www.eschoolprofile.com](http://www.eschoolprofile.com)
- [www.schooltree.org](http://www.schooltree.org)

### Colleges and Universities

- [City Colleges of Chicago](#)
- [DePaul University](#)
- [Illinois Institute of Art](#)
- [Illinois Institute of Technology](#)
- [Loyola University Chicago](#)
- [Moody Bible Institute](#)
- [North Park University Chicago](#)
- [Roosevelt University](#)
- [Saint Xavier University](#)
- [University of Chicago](#)
- [University of Illinois at Chicago](#)



Banks and other financial institutions, such as credit unions, offer a variety of services. These services include:

- checking and saving accounts
- credit and debit cards
- online bill pay
- loans
- insurance
- financial planning

Banks in the United States are insured by the Federal Government for deposits up to \$250,000 per depositor per bank. The bank or credit union will display the letters FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) as proof.

### Checking and Savings Accounts

To open a checking or savings account you will need the following information:

- Two forms of picture identification including but not limited to your passport, driver's license, or work ID.
- Social security number. If you have not yet received your social security number, the bank can open an account with a W8 Temporary Tax ID form (available at the bank). You will need to call the bank with your social security number once it arrives in the mail.
- Local mailing address. You may use your office address as your mailing address, but be prepared to call your bank branch as soon as you have your permanent address.
- Letter of Employment
- Cash for the initial deposit can range from ~\$25-\$150 dollars

### Checks

More businesses and banks are offering online or automatic bill paying options. However, you may still need to pay some bills by mail. **NEVER SEND CASH!** You will want to order at least the minimum quantity of checks. This will cost a set fee that the bank will charge you. The checks will be pre-printed with your name, address, telephone number and account number and will be mailed to your home.

### ATM or Debit Card

The most popular way of obtaining cash is by using an ATM (Automated Teller Machine) card, also referred to as a debit card. ATM's are located in most banks, malls, airports, grocery stores, and in many other public places. You will be given a PIN (Personal Identification Number) for using your card. It is important that you memorize this number and not keep written record of it with your card in order to protect your account. Most ATM's will take all cards, but many banks will charge a service fee for using another bank's ATM. Through the ATM you may deposit, transfer, and withdraw funds. There will usually be a limit to the amount of money you can withdraw in any 24-hour period.

## **Credit Cards**

For many international transferees, the lack of a US credit history can be a challenge. In most cases, you will not be approved for a US credit card initially. One suggestion to assist in building your US credit history is to open a **secured credit card**. With approval from the bank, you can put a certain amount of money in a savings account that will remain in the account. The secured credit card would have a credit limit equal to the amount deposited in the savings account. You will need to use your secured credit card and make the minimum monthly payments, you may also pay in full the amount due. After 9 months or so, if the bank sees that you have a good payment record, they may approve you for a regular credit card.

## **Security**

Always pay attention to the other people around you at an ATM. Do not use the machine if you are suspicious of someone's behavior. It is safer to find another ATM or to come back later. Do not put your PIN number in with anyone close enough to see it.

Credit card theft is another increasing problem. In order to protect your card from being abused, never give your credit card or credit card number to a service provider you have not called. Another precaution is to destroy or shred copies of receipts and bills. Criminals will not hesitate to dig through the trash to find a copy of your credit card number.

## **Major US Banks**

Below is a list of links to some of the larger US banks. Not every bank is represented in all US locations, in some cases you may find that the local bank is a better option for you than some of the larger banks. Your IOR DS Consultant can help you in selecting a bank by sharing the various options available locally as well as the products they offer to support expatriates.

- [Bank of America](#)
- [TD Bank](#)
- [Citibank](#)
- [CHASE](#)
- [Wells Fargo](#)
- [HSBC](#)
- [List of Chicago area banks](#)

Navigating Chicago is easy. Block numbers are consistent across the whole city. Standard blocks, of 100 addresses each, are roughly 1/8th of a mile long. (Hence, a mile is equivalent to a street number difference of 800.) Each street is assigned a number based on its distance from the point zero of the address system, the intersection of State Street and Madison Street. A street with a W (west) or E (east) number runs east-west, while a street with a N (north) or S (south) number runs north-south. A street's number is usually written on street signs at intersections, below the street name.

In general, "avenues" run north-south and "streets" run east-west, but there are numerous exceptions. (e.g., 48th Street may then be followed by 48th Place). In conversation, however, Chicagoans rarely distinguish between streets, avenues, boulevards, etc.

### **Public Transit**

The best way to see Chicago is by public transit. It is cheap, efficient, and safe (with exceptions). The Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) oversees the various public transit agencies in the Chicagoland area.

You can plan trips online with the [RTA trip planner](#) or get assistance by calling 836-7000 in any local area code between 5AM-1AM. The RTA also has an official partnership with Google Maps, which can provide routes with public transit.

### **Chicago Transit Authority (CTA)**

The Chicago Transit Authority operates trains and buses in the city of Chicago and some of the suburbs. Fares are paid with transit cards, which can be purchased and re-filled at kiosks in the lobby of every CTA station. All accept cash, and some accept credit cards.

You can purchase a Ventra card at CTA rail stations, participating retail locations, by phone, or [online](#). These cards are like transit cards, but are more durable and allow you to spend less time paying your fares. The Ventra Card can be linked to a bank account to automatically refill, so you never get stuck somewhere due to a lack of cash.

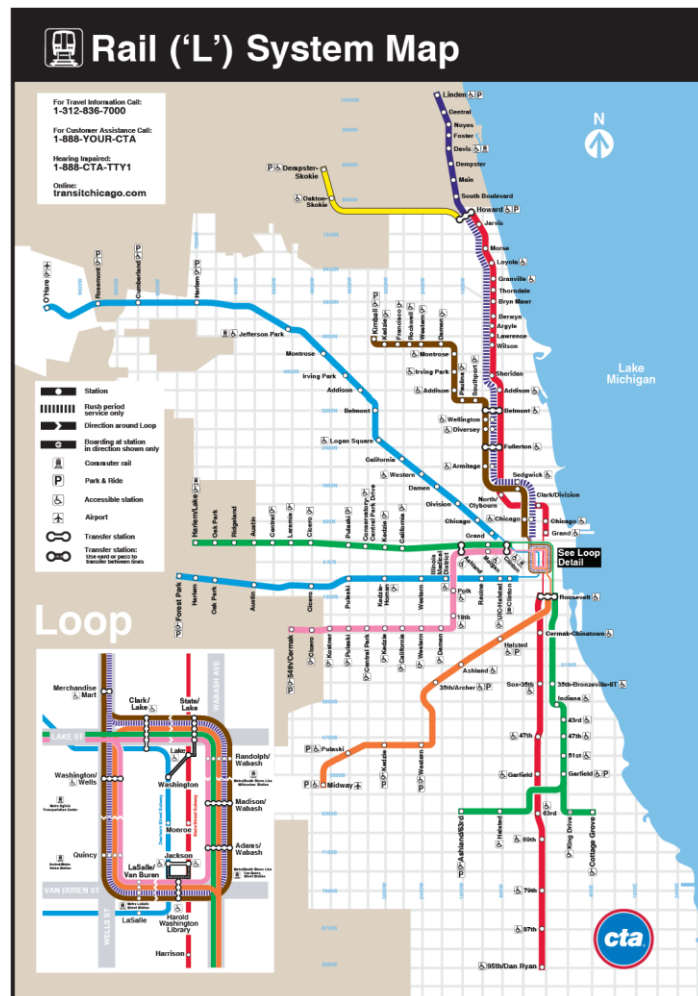
### [How-To Guide: Buying Fares](#)

### **The "L" system**

Locals refer to Chicago's public train system as the "L". The abbreviation is derived from the fact that the lines run on "Elevated" tracks. All train lines begin, end, or cross through the center of the city, known as the 'Loop'. The "Loop" name originally referred to a surface-level streetcar loop, which pre-dated the elevated tracks.

CTA train lines are divided by colors: Red, Green, Brown, Blue, Purple, Yellow, Orange and Pink. All lines lead to the Loop except the Yellow Line, which is a nonstop shuttle between the suburb of Skokie and the northern border of Chicago. The Red and Blue lines run 24/7, making Chicago and New York City the two American cities that offer 24-hour rail service running throughout their city limits. Hours for the other lines vary somewhat by the day, but as a general rule run from about 4:30AM -1:00AM.

Before you travel, find out the name of the train station closest to your destination, and the color of the train line on which it is located. Once you're on-board, you'll find route maps in each train car, above the door. [The same map is also available online](#). The name signs on platforms often have the station's location in the street grid, e.g. "5900 N, 1200 W" for Thorndale.



## The Bus System

Buses run on nearly every major street throughout the entire city, and in many cases, every four blocks apart. Look for the blue and white bus stop sign, which should show the route that the bus will take. Once inside, watch the front of the bus, a red LED display will list the names of the streets as they pass by, making it easy to know that your stop is approaching if you're unfamiliar with the city.

Chicago has a large and comprehensive bus system, and buses typically run frequently. This allows Chicagoans to go to bus stops and wait for the bus without even looking at bus schedules, as buses usually run every few minutes apart. The major bus routes run every 7-15 minutes apart during the morning and afternoon hours. In the evening, these same routes run about every 15-20 minutes apart. The less traveled bus routes may run about 15-20 minutes apart during the day. There are many bus routes that run 24 hours a day; these are called OWL routes and the bus stop sign usually has a picture of an owl to belabor that point. Overnight OWL service is approximately every 30 minutes. (See individual district articles for major bus routes through different parts of the city.)

If you have a web-enabled mobile device, the CTA runs a little godsend called the CTA Bus Tracker, which uses GPS to provide reliable, real-time tracking information for almost all bus routes. CTA buses accept transit cards but do not sell them. They also accept cash but do not provide change. Like any bus system, you pay exact fare or forfeit your change.

In compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act, all CTA buses and some train stations are accessible to wheelchairs. Wheelchair-accessible 'L' stations are indicated by the international wheelchair symbol and have elevators or are at ground level. If you are trying to get to a place with a non-accessible station, there will be alternate routes by bus so contact the CTA for more information.

Crime on the CTA is low, but as with any major urban area, travelers should be aware of their surroundings, especially when traveling in the wee hours of the night. Some L cars have a button and speaker for emergency communication with the driver, located in the center aisle of the car on the wall next to the door. This is for emergencies only: do not press this just to ask questions, as the driver is required to halt the train until the situation has been confirmed as resolved.

## The Metra

The [Metra](#) runs commuter trains for the suburbs, providing service within Illinois, to Kenosha, Wisconsin, out west, and to the South Shore railroad, which provides service to South Bend, Indiana. Metra trains are fast, clean, and punctual, but unpleasantly crowded during rush hour. Generally, every car or every other car on the train has a bathroom.



Metra's Electric Line provides service to the convention center (McCormick Place), Hyde Park (Museum of Science and Industry, University of Chicago), and the Far Southeast Side's Pullman Historic District and Rainbow Beach. The Electric Line is fast, taking at most 15 minutes to reach Hyde Park from the Loop. Unfortunately, service outside of rush hours is infrequent (about once/hour), so be sure to check the schedules while planning your trip.

Ten-ride, weekly, and monthly passes are available. If you have a group of four or more people, it may be cheaper to purchase a ten-ride card and have all of your fares punched from that one card. If using Metra on Saturday and/or Sunday, you can purchase an unlimited ride weekend pass. Keep in mind that Metra only accepts cash at this time.

### **Pace Buses**

Pace runs buses in the suburbs, although some routes do cross into the city, particularly in Rogers Park at the Howard (Red/Purple/Yellow Line) CTA station and the Far Northwest Side at the Jefferson Park (Blue Line) CTA station. Pace is particularly useful if you need to go somewhere inconvenient via CTA.

### **By Car**

Traffic in downtown Chicago is heavy and garages in the Loop can cost as much as \$35 per day. Free websites like ParkWhiz.com let you book off-street parking in advance after searching by location and price, which is often discounted. Other sites like ChiParking.com provide tips about where to park in different parts of the city. Although downtown streets are laid out on the grid, some streets have multiple levels which can confuse even the most hardened city driver. Even outside of the city center, street parking may not be readily available. If you do find a spot, check street signs to make sure that a) no residential permit is required to park, and b) parking is not disallowed during certain hours for street cleaning, rush hour or something along those lines. Parking restrictions are swiftly enforced in the form of tickets and towing — be especially wary during snowy weather.

Drivers on the city expressways can be very aggressive. For those used to driving on expressways in the Northeast US or Southern California, this may simply be a reminder of home. For everyone else, though, it may be intimidating.

### **By Taxi**

Chicago has some of the least expensive taxi fares in the U.S. for a major city. Taxis can be hailed from the street throughout the entire city, and are most plentiful in the tourist areas. Rates are regulated by the city.

If you're outside of the downtown, North Side, Near West, and Near South neighborhoods, you can still hail cabs from the street, or call one to come and pick you up. Taxis typically take 10-15 minutes from the time you call to arrive. The principal companies are:



### Transportation “App” Options

Several web based phone applications to secure a driver are available throughout the area. The driver knows your approximate location based on your phone GPS. Payment is automatic through the app and fares may be cheaper than a taxi.

- [Uber](#)
- [Lyft](#)

### Car Rentals

- [Zipcar](#)
- [Hertz](#)
- [Enterprise](#)

### By Bicycle

Chicago has a bike path along the shores of Lake Michigan, making north-south travel very convenient as long as the weather is favorable by the lake. Most major city streets have bike lanes, and the biking culture is established enough that cars tend to accommodate and (grudgingly) yield to bicycles. Bike trips can also be combined with rides on the CTA.



### By Water Taxi

In the summer, water taxis are sometimes more convenient than the CTA, if you are traveling around the fringes of downtown. They are also a relatively cheap way to take in some offshore views. Two private companies operate water taxi services around the Loop.

[Chicago Water Taxi](#) uses yellow boats and has three stops (Michigan Ave, LaSalle/Clark, Madison St), plus Chinatown on weekends. Taxis run roughly M-F 6:30AM-6:30PM, Sa-Su 10:30AM-6:30PM.

[Shoreline Sightseeing](#) has blue and white boats. It is more expensive, but it serves seven destinations including some on Lake Michigan (Union Station/Sears Tower, Wells & Wacker, Michigan Ave Bridge, Navy Pier-Ogden Slip, Navy Pier-Dock St, Buckingham Fountain, and Museum Campus). Shoreline taxis run 10AM-6PM every twenty minutes and 6PM-9PM every half hour Memorial Day–Labor Day, with occasional and less frequent service in the spring and fall.

### Chicago Area Airports

- [O’Hare International Airport](#) - Chicago O'Hare International Airport is the fifth busiest airport in the world. It is connected to Chicago by train using the Blue Line of Chicago 'L', which runs 24 hours a day. The transit time from Central Loop Business District to O'Hare is about 40 minutes.

- [Midway Airport](#) - The Orange Line train service operates from approximately 4-4:30 a.m. to approximately 1:00 a.m. every day with more frequent service during weekday morning and evening rush hours. The normal travel time from Midway to downtown is 20-25 minutes.
- [Mitchell \(Milwaukee\) Airport](#) - MKE has non-stop flights to more than 35 cities and easy one-stop connections to 160+ cities worldwide, serving Wisconsin, northern Illinois & Chicago. MKE is an hour and a half drive from Chicago. In addition, MKE connects to a nearby Amtrak station with stops at Chicago's Union Station (downtown) and Glenview, Illinois.

#### **Map Websites**

- [Google Maps](#)
- [Expedia](#)
- [MapQuest](#)
- [Bing Maps](#)

#### **AAA Travel Protection**

[AAA](#) is a membership organization that offers benefits such as roadside service and towing, discounts on car products and services, maps, reference materials, etc.

Call 1-800-352-5382 for additional information and cost.

## LOCAL REGISTRATION

### Social Security Procedures

[United States Social Security Administration](#)

1-800-772-1213

Upon arrival in the United States, employees holding work visas will be required to apply, in person, for a Social Security number. The Application for a Social Security Card (SS-5) can be used by anyone who has never been issued a card, needs a replacement card or has changed his or her name. Your IOR Destination Services Consultant will assist you with this process and can answer any questions you might have.

### **THIS SERVICE IS FREE.**

To get an original number and card, you'll need to complete an Application for a Social Security Card ([Form SS-5](#)), and show the following documents IN PERSON at the local social security office.

- Passport
- [I-94](#)
- Work Visa
- Any other documents received by US Immigration

If all of your information is confirmed, your Social Security card will arrive in the mail in approximately 2-4 weeks. Several days after you have successfully completed the application process, you may be able to take your identification with your receipt, back to the Social Security office to inquire about your Social Security number before you receive your card. Your IOR Destination Services Consultant will assist you with this process.

### **L-2 Visa Employment Opportunity Law Changes**

The L-2 visa allows the dependent spouse and minor, unmarried children of qualified L-1 visa holders to enter into the U.S.

Changes took place on July 27, 2006 that apply to spouses of L-1 Visa holders in the US on an L2 Visa. Prior to that date, spouses on L-2 Visas were not permitted to obtain a social security card and were denied the right to be employed in the US. The law change now permits L-2 Visa holders (spouses only, not dependent children) to work on a full-time basis in the U.S. with proper employment authorization from the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

The L-2 Visa holder must apply for a social security card in addition to applying for an employment Authorization Document before they can begin employment.

## **Social Security Numbers**

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has issued guidelines, which permit E-1, E-2, and L-2 spouses to obtain Social Security Numbers without having to first obtain employment.

Authorization Documents (EADs) from the CIS. They must show proof that their spouse is in E-1, E-2 or L-1 status, and present an original marriage certificate, in the native language. However, before they are authorized to work, they must obtain an EAD. [The new SSA guidelines are online here.](#)

Employment Authorization Document (EAD): L-2 Visa holders can apply for this document utilizing USCIS Form 1-765, Application for Employment Authorization. They must provide the following forms of identification: valid passport, 1-94 Arrival-Departure Document, Marriage Certificate from home country, two identical, and color photographs taken within 30 days of application. Currently, the process from application to EAD issue takes 3 to 4 months. The L2 Visa holder may also engage in full-time study in the US. A dependent child still may not apply for an EAD card except in cases of severe hardship. Local offices are open Monday thru Friday 9am to 4pm.

**\*\*Notice\*\*** Social Security offices are closed on all US Federal holidays.

## **Obtaining a Driver's License/State ID Card**

In the US, a driver's license or ID card is issued by each individual state and not by the federal government. Since there is no national identity card in the USA, and many Americans don't have a passport or carry around a birth certificate, a driver's license issued by your state is often the only official piece of identification for many citizens. Since 9/11, you will need to show a valid driver's license or State ID card to enter many big office buildings.

To drive legally in Illinois, you must have a valid Illinois driver's license, temporary visitor driver's license, probationary license, instruction permit, Restricted Driving Permit or Monitoring Device Driving Permit. If you have an out-of-state or out-of-country license, you may use it for as long as you maintain your residency in the state where it was issued. International licenses are not recognized in Illinois. If you are moving permanently to Illinois, you may use your out-of-state or country license for only your first three months here. To obtain an Illinois Driver's License you must:

- Visit a [Driver Services Facility](#), show required identification documents and have your photo taken.
- Surrender all valid out-of-state licenses, state ID cards, instruction permits and commercial driver's licenses.
- Pay the appropriate fee.
- Pass the appropriate exams (vision screening, written and/or driving).

For general information and instructions on how to obtain an official state ID card or driver's license, [visit the website of Cyber Drive Illinois.](#)

**Your Destination Services Consultant will also assist you with the proper procedure.**

### TV, Cable, Telephone, and Internet

The main service providers in Chicago for TV cable, landline telephone, and internet all offer combination packages. They are in stiff competition with each other, so special offers change monthly, sometimes even weekly.

- [AT&T](#)
- [Comcast](#)
- [DirecTV](#)
- [Dish](#)

### Mobile Phones

There are four major wireless carriers in the US.

- [AT&T Wireless](#)
- [Verizon Wireless](#)
- [Sprint](#)
- [T-Mobile](#)

### Computers, Electronics, Cameras

- [Best Buy](#) is a national chain. Apart from sales, their [Geek Squad](#) repairs PC computers.
  - [Map of Best Buy stores in Chicago](#)
- [Chicago Computer Supply](#) is an Illinois computer & electronics retailer.
- [Apple Stores](#)

### Housewares and Furniture

- [Bed Bath & Beyond](#)
- [Ikea](#)
- [Home Depot](#)
- [Crate and Barrel](#)
- [Furniture Envy](#)
- [Pottery Barn](#)
- [Williams-Sonoma](#)
- [Rooms to Go](#)
- [The Container Store](#)

## **Food Shopping**

Chicagoans go to market at a wide range of open air farmers markets, large gourmet markets, small specialty shops, and conventional supermarkets. The main supermarkets are [Jewel-Osco](#), [Treasure Island](#), [Mariano's](#), [Whole Foods](#), and [Trader Joes'](#). They are located all over town and the surrounding areas.

## Sightseeing

Chicago is an ethnically diverse, architecturally important, and culturally rich city. It can be appreciated from the observation floor of the Sears Tower, at 110 stories the third-tallest manmade structure in the world. In fact, three of the world's 10 tallest buildings are located in Chicago, along with the tallest apartment building, the largest hotel, the largest commercial structure, and the largest post office.

- [Guided sightseeing tours](#) are available for viewing the city's architecture, finance and business districts, ethnic neighborhoods, cultural institutions, and even gangland sites from the Prohibition Era.
- Chicago offers fantastic [boat architecture tours](#). The distinctive Chicago School of Architecture, with its aesthetic credo, "form follows function," was shaped by such masters as Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and a later functionalist architect, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe—all of whom designed buildings in the city and produced in Chicago a veritable living architectural museum. Also important are the city's outdoor sculpture and art works. Pablo Picasso's gift to Chicago, a 50-foot-tall sculpture of rusted steel at the Civic Center Plaza, has become a symbol of the city's modernity.
- [The Shedd Aquarium](#), the world's largest indoor aquarium, cares for more than 21,000 aquatic mammals, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, and fishes.
  - A major attraction is the [Oceanarium](#), the world's largest indoor marine mammal pavilion, featuring beluga whales, dolphins, Alaskan sea otters, seals, and penguins. In 2003 the aquarium unveiled its Wild Reef shark exhibit.
  - Next to the Shedd Aquarium, the [Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum](#) sits on a peninsula that juts a half-mile into Lake Michigan.
- [The Museum of Science and Industry](#), founded in 1933, houses thousands of exhibits, including the Idea Factory and Omnimax Theatre; a full-scale, working coal mine, a WWII captured German submarine, a Boeing 727 airplane that visitors can walk through, and a walk-through model of a human heart.
- The Chicago area's two zoos are the [Brookfield Zoo](#) and the [Lincoln Park Zoo](#), which is free and open year-round.
- Just north of the city, the [Chicago Botanic Garden](#) features an international collection of flora on 385 acres.
- [The Chicago History Museum](#) showcases and interprets millions of authentic pieces of Chicago and U.S. history.



## Arts and Culture

- [The Chicago Symphony Orchestra](#) plays a season of more than 100 concerts at Orchestra Hall from September to June and performs [summer concerts at Ravinia Park](#) in Highland Park.
- Equally prestigious is the [Lyric Opera of Chicago](#), which stages classical and innovative operas at the recently renovated Civic Opera House.
- You can find information on [Chicago Blues concerts in Chicago here](#). All-night jazz and blues clubs are a Chicago tradition.
- [The Art Institute of Chicago](#) is another local institution with an international reputation. Its collection is recognized for French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings and for comprehensive holdings of American arts and photographs.
- [The Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum](#) is the first Mexican museum in the United States and the only Latino museum accredited by the American Association of Museums.
- The [National Veterans Art Museum](#) houses a permanent collection of more than 500 pieces focusing on war from the soldiers' perspective.
- [The Field Museum of Natural History](#) is rated among the top museums in the world; it examines life and culture from pre-history to the present time.
- [The Chicago Academy of Sciences](#), founded in 1857, was Chicago's first museum and features natural science exhibits as well as timely scientific displays. Among the special attractions are life-size dioramas on natural areas of the Great Lakes and the children's gallery with its lifelike animated dinosaurs and prehistoric creatures.
- [The Academy's Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum](#) features 73,000 square feet of interactive, environmental education.
- [The DuSable Museum](#) is the nation's first museum dedicated to preserving, displaying, and interpreting the culture, history, and achievements of African Americans.
- [The Museum of Contemporary Art](#), one of the largest of its kind in the country at 151,000 square feet, focuses on contemporary works that are often risk-taking and controversial. Its permanent collection includes works by Christo, Rene Magritte, and Andy Warhol.
- The [Museum of Broadcast Communications](#) hosts free daily concerts, films, lectures, and dance performances.
- [The Chicago Public Library Cultural Center](#) presents hundreds of free programs, concerts, and exhibitions annually.





## Festivals and Holidays

Special summer programming is designed to tap into Chicago's heritage and to attract tourists.

- [The Chicago Blues Festival](#) takes place the second weekend in June at the [Petrillo Music Shell](#) and brings the best blues musicians to one of the world's blues capitals for concerts, food, and exchange of memorabilia.
- [The Printers Row Lit Fest](#), in June, is the largest free literary event in the Midwest.
- [Taste of Chicago](#), held over two weeks in late June and early July, features food sampling from Chicago restaurants as well as entertainment in Grant Park.
- [Viva Chicago](#), held in August-September, is a festival celebrating Latino music, food, and arts and crafts in Millennium Park.
- [Chicago Gospel Festival](#) (June),
- [Lollapalooza](#) (August)
- [Movies in the Parks](#) (Summer)
- [Chicago Jazz Festival](#) (August-September)
- [Gaelic Park Irish Festival Chicago](#) (September)
- [World Music Fest Chicago](#) (September-October)
- [Mayor Daley's Holiday Sports Festival](#) (December)
- [The Chicago International Film Festival](#) is one of the largest in the country (October).
- [Grant Park Symphony Orchestra's](#) regular concerts

## Sports

- [The Chicago Cubs](#) compete in the central division of the National League and play their home games at Wrigley Field, a turn-of-the-century steel and concrete structure where seats are close to the field.
- [The Chicago White Sox](#) of the American League's central division play their home games at U.S. Cellular Field on the city's South Side. The teams—and their fans—enjoy a fierce rivalry.
- [The Chicago Bears](#) of the National Football League's National Conference compete in central division home games at the recently renovated Soldier Field.
- [The Chicago Fire](#), Chicago's Major League Soccer franchise, also plays at Soldier Field.
- [The Chicago Blackhawks](#) of the National Hockey League and the [Chicago Bulls](#) of the National Basketball Association play their home schedules at the United Center.
- Auto racing fans can view competition at [Chicago Motor Speedway](#) in Cicero, while horse racing action takes place from July to November at [Hawthorne Race Course](#) in Stickney/Cicero.



### Expat Resource Guide

- [www.expatsexchange.com](http://www.expatsexchange.com)

### Google Translator

- [Translate](#) 90 languages to and from language of choice using iTunes.

### Volunteer Opportunities

- [Volunteer Match](#)
- [United Way](#)
- [PAWS Chicago](#) is a national model in animal sheltering, committed to bringing an end to the killing of homeless cats and dogs.
- [Chicago Anti-Cruelty Society](#) - Organization helping with the adoption of lost and unwanted animals.

### Parent & Children Resources

- [Mom's Clubs](#) - social groups offering events and outings with mothers and their young children.

### Smart Phone Apps for Travel

- [Uber](#) : Similar to a taxi service but all web based. Payment also handled online, do not pay or tip driver directly. Uber driver knows your approximate location based on your phone GPS.
- [Lyft](#) : Wherever you're headed, count on Lyft for rides in minutes. The Lyft app matches you with local drivers at the tap of a button. Just request and go.
- [Google Maps](#) : Map by direction
- [Apple Maps](#) : Map by direction
- [Map Quest](#) : Map by direction
- [Waze](#) : Community based traffic & navigation with alternate route suggestions
- [CityMaps2Go](#) : The #1 travel app lets you discover exciting new places. Beautiful photos and insider tips at the touch of a button. You will receive stories about places you like and can instantly save and find them on your maps and in your lists.

### Smart Phone Apps for Communication:

- [WhatsApp](#) : Free local & international Real Time messaging
- [Line](#) : Exchange free instant messages with friends whenever and wherever with one-on-one and group chats. LINE is available on all smartphone devices (iPhone, Android, Windows Phone, Blackberry, Nokia) and even on your PC.
- [Viber](#) : Free text, calling, photo messages and location-sharing with Viber users. No registration, alias or invitations required. Instantly integrates with your own contact list. Best-quality mobile calls using 3G or Wi-Fi.

- [Skype](#) : Stay in touch with your family and friends for free on Skype. Download Skype today to chat and call on desktop and mobile.

#### **Smart Phone Apps for Local Information/Reviews:**

- [Angie's List](#) : Referrals for doctor, dentist, child care, maid, mechanic, painter, plumber, etc.
- [Yelp!](#) : Find local businesses, restaurants, bars, clubs, events, etc. with map, lists, and reviews
- [Next Door](#) : Neighbors share community events, items for sale, recommendations for babysitters, doctors and handymen, crime reports, ideas about how to improve their neighborhood and more.
- [Meet Ups](#) : Meetups are neighbors getting together to learn something, do something or share something. Cultural groups advertise gatherings here as well.

#### **Smart Phone Apps for Weather:**

- [WTHR13](#) : Local weather and closings; includes radar and forecast
- [Weather Channel](#) : National and international time, temperature & weather
- [Tornado](#) : Set up tornado alerts & siren

## U.S. IDIOMS

Idioms are words, phrases, or expressions that are not taken literally- they have meaning beyond a literal translation of the words. Idioms are generally used in casual, familiar conversation but can also come up in certain business settings. Here are some examples of commonly used American English idioms:

**better off** - in a more fortunate position

**Big deal!** - So what? That doesn't really matter.

**(to) blow things out of proportion** - to exaggerate; to make more of something than one should

**(to) call it a night** - to stop an activity for the rest of the night

**dime a dozen** - so plentiful as to be nothing special; common

**(to) do the trick** - to achieve the desired results

**(to) give someone the cold shoulder** - to ignore someone on purpose; to snub someone

**(to) get the ball rolling** - to get started

**(to) go back to the drawing board** - to start a task over because the last try failed; to start again from the beginning

**happy camper [slang]** - a happy person; a satisfied participant

**(to) have a heart of gold** - to be very kind and giving

**(to be) head over heels in love** - very much in love

**(to) hit the nail on the head** - to be right

**(to) learn the ropes** - to learn the basics

**(to) lose one's touch** - to no longer be able to do something well

**made of money** - very rich

**needless to say** - obviously

**piece of cake** - very easy

**(to) pitch in** - to help

**(to) pull an all-nighter** - to stay up all night to do work

**rule of thumb** - a useful principle

**(as) sharp as a tack** - very intelligent

**(to) sit tight** - to wait patiently

**(to) stab someone in the back** - to betray someone

**(to) tell someone off** - to scold; to tell someone in strong words what one really thinks

**When pigs fly! [slang]** - never

**(to) twist someone's arm** - to persuade someone; to convince someone

**(to be) up in the air** - not yet determined; uncertain

Many common American idioms come from sports, here are some examples:

**strike out-** to fail or to do poorly at something (*baseball*)

**(to) call the shots-** to make the decisions; to be in charge (*basketball*)

**ballpark-** a guess or an estimate (*baseball*)

**down and out-** lacking money or prospects; penniless or destitute (*boxing*)

**down to the wire-** to the very end or last minute (*horse racing*)

**drop the ball-** to make an error, to miss an opportunity (*football, baseball, rugby*)

**hands down-** with great ease; unconditionally; often (and originally) in the phrase “to win hands down” (*horse racing*)

**(to) have someone in your corner-** to have the support or help of someone (*boxing*)

**(to) hit it out of the park; home run-** to be wildly successful, to do a great job (*baseball*)



To learn even more idioms, visit the following links:

- [Everyday American English Idioms](#) - with example sentences.
- [Useful Idioms for Lower-Intermediate to Advanced Students \(Teacher's Resource\)](#)
- [Idiom Site A-Z](#)
- [Sports Idioms](#)
- [English Language Learning: American English Idioms](#)

## PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Holidays can be confusing as there are national (federal) holidays, bank holidays, state holidays. Verify those in your area with Human Resources at your place of business, especially before planning vacations or weekend get-aways! Illinois also pays special tribute to Abraham Lincoln by observing his birthday each February.

[Federal Holidays listed through 2020](#)

[State Holidays Observed in Illinois](#)

The following are federal holidays in the United States and need to be treated as such by employers:

- New Year's Day January 1\*
- Martin Luther King Day Third Monday in January
- Memorial Day Last Monday in May
- Independence Day July 4\*
- Labor Day First Monday in September
- Columbus Day Second Monday in October
- Veterans' Day November 11\*
- Thanksgiving Day Fourth Thursday in November
- Christmas Day December 25\*

\*If a holiday falls on a Sunday, the day following is observed as the legal holiday.



[Chicago Skyline](#)