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## Basic Stuff

Chicago can claim some hip boutique hotels, but the truth is that this is a big convention town—a really big convention town—and even the trendiest lodgings tend to be filled with business travelers during the week. There are certain times of the year when it is almost impossible to book a room if you haven't done so way in advance. Blocks of hundreds of rooms in many of the bigger hotels are reserved annually for conventioners. If you visit the city when one of the big conventions is in town, you may be sharing your temporary home with hordes of midlevel vice-presidents traipsing the halls in starchy white shirts, dark suits, and plastic name tags.

On the upside, there are many, many hotels catering to people and corporations with various budgets, from deluxe to demure to depressing (though none of the latter are listed here). The sheer number of hotels also has meant that there is a wide breadth of styles available, from small and intimate European-style inns to you-know-what-you're-gonna-get chain hotels to showy chintz-furnished palaces. The downside, of course, is that some hotels—especially the you-know-what-you're-gonna-getniks—can be about as personal as a Wal-Mart. They're used to dealing in volume, so don't expect a French-accented concierge who'll remember your name, or rooms with much dash.

Overall, the selection of hotels in Chicago outshines that of most other cities. In the past decade or so, there has been a hotel building boom, and thousands of new rooms (mostly upscale) are available.

### Winning the Reservations Game

There's only one real rule when making a hotel reservation in Chicago: Don't be a chump. In other words, don't agree to pay what are referred to in the hotel business as "rack rates," meaning the highest nightly fee at which rooms are rented—which is the one you'll be quoted. It's not that you can exactly haggle with the reservations clerk—though you've got nothing to lose by trying—but there are many ways to get a better price. Most hotels have special corporate rates, which may be 10% lower than the rack rate. In most cases, you'll have to prove you're really there on business, but some hotels will simply take you at your word. Often there are also deals for frequent fliers, seniors, auto-club members, people in the military and others who work

for the government, or teachers and others who work in education. It pays, literally, to ask about any of these.

Because most conventions occur during the week, Chicago hotels are relatively uninhabited on weekends, even during peak season. Most offer weekend hotel packages year-round, so if you're in town for an entire week, you could stay the weekdays at a bland-but-not-too-expensive chain hotel and then move to a fancier place for about the same price or less for the weekend. Some hotels in Chicago also offer special tie-ins with various events and exhibitions. A number of downtown hotels, for example, work with the Art Institute to create weekends geared toward art lovers who may be visiting Chicago just to see the museum's latest blockbuster show (check the "Visit" section of the museum's website: [www.artic.edu](http://www.artic.edu)). Theater tie-ins are another popular way hotels lure guests.

Hotels well known for the views offered from one side of their building may discount the rooms on the other side, so it's always smart to ask if you can get a cheaper room if you face the city instead of the lake. (After all, there are other ways to see the lake.) Making reservations early is imperative as well, especially if you are traveling during peak season—April, May, and June, when the weather is the most pleasant and/or when the biggest conventions take over the town. During nonpeak months, however, rooms may be discounted up to 50% off the rack prices. You can also get a 50% or more discount if you go through **Hot Rooms** (Tel 800/468-3500; [www.hotrooms.com](http://www.hotrooms.com)), a Chicago-based service that works with about 30 downtown and Gold Coast hotels. You can call Hot Rooms 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and there's no fee (though if you make a confirmed reservation and then cancel, there is a \$25 fee). It's also worth checking prices on some of the big travel websites, including Travelocity, Expedia, and Hotels.com.

## Is There a Right Address?

Most of the city's best (and most expensive) hotels are along, or at least nearby, the **Magnificent Mile**, from **The Drake** at Michigan Avenue's northern tip to the **Hilton Chicago** farther south. Recent additions to the city's hotel scene, including the **Peninsula Chicago** and the **Hard Rock Hotel**, are in the North Michigan Avenue area, the retailing center of the city, which has many of the best restaurants within walking distance as well. If you want to be near the action but not in the center of the storm, you might try staying in the **Gold Coast** neighborhood

just north of Michigan Avenue. Its quiet, tree-lined streets are some of the city's poshest. It's peaceful and understated, yet near enough to the beach and shopping that you won't need a cab every time you walk out the door of your hotel. If you'd rather be in a residential neighborhood—or your plans include a 3-day stint attending Cubs games—you're better off staying in **Lake View**, which has a few small, inexpensive places within walking distance of Wrigley Field. For business trips or museum-hopping, **the Loop** is a good bet, given its proximity to the financial district, convention center, and the Art Institute, et al., but keep in mind that there aren't too many restaurants in the area, and nightlife will most likely require a cab ride. Except for the blocks around a few downtown theaters, the Loop is so dead after-hours and on weekends, it can seem eerie. Some of the city's poshest high-rise hotels—including **The Fairmont Chicago** and **Swissôtel**—are stuck in a few isolated blocks of high-rises way east of Michigan Avenue. They have great views all around, but it's a trek (usually involving a cab) to get anywhere; there's nothing to do in the immediate area, so a visit can assume a surreal, where-is-everybody feel. The hotels near **O'Hare Airport** are, well, near the airport.

## The Lowdown

**Big bucks deluxe...** Guests schlep Marshall Field's and Lord & Taylor bags right upstairs from Water Tower Place to the 12th floor, where they enter the enormous greenhouse lobby of **The Ritz-Carlton**. The tone is set by plush furnishings, an oddly loud but fanciful fountain, English tea carts piled high with pastries and dainty sandwiches, and other guests surrounded by mountains of Louis Vuitton luggage and hovering uniformed bellhops. The hotel spends more than a quarter-million dollars a year just on flowers, and it shows. The **Four Seasons Hotel**, which sits atop Bloomingdale's, seems like a huge English country manor in the sky in many ways. Its low-key lobby, full of nooks and crannies, exudes understated elegance, making this a popular spot for publicity-shy celebrities. If you'd rather make a grand entrance, head for the **Peninsula Chicago**, where the swanky high-ceilinged lobby evokes images of 1930s Shanghai or Hong Kong. Whereas the Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons, and Peninsula all ooze

traditional elegance, the **Park Hyatt** on Michigan Avenue instead embraces a stern modernism, with hard surfaces, high ceilings, and contemporary furnishings.

**Chicago classics...** The huge pink neon sign on the roof of **The Drake** has become as much a part of the city skyline as the nearby Hancock Center, which is about five times as tall. Built in 1920 by Ben Marshall, architect to Chicago's rich and famous, and modeled after Renaissance palaces, the still-elegant Drake has an old-timey, aristocratic feel that some find dowdy. But if you like the kind of environment where old ladies in white gloves and Republicans wearing wingtips feel at home, then this is the place for you. The barbershop, or, as they call it, gentleman's grooming service, shouldn't be missed. Similarly, **The Palmer House Hilton**, the city's oldest hotel and the longest continually operated hotel on the continent, still offers a pretty fabulous welcome to the jillions of businesspeople passing through its portal. The sprawling **Hilton Chicago** is the sort of place where waiters have been known to work for 50 years—one doorman started the day the hotel opened in 1927 and only retired decades later when he was 95 years old. This minicity encompasses four restaurants and a steady stream of conventioners—making it a good place for families, but not such a great choice for couples in search of romance. Unlike other Chicago classics, the quietly refined **Ambassador East** is small enough that the concierge will probably remember your name. When you mention to locals that you're staying here, they nod a knowing nod and just say, "Ahhhh."

**A home away from home...** Looking for an escape from sprawling corporate hotels? **The Talbott Hotel**, with its pseudo-British, foxes-and-hounds decorating theme, has the casual comfort of a well-worn blazer and an unpretentiousness that is especially refreshing on the fringe of the Gold Coast. **The Whitehall Hotel**, a few blocks away, was a luxurious retreat for movie stars in the '40s and '50s and the Rolling Stones in the '60s; now it's a cozy boutique hotel with a clientele of regulars who prefer personal service to vast amenities (stop for a drink at the dark, clubby bar, which hasn't changed since the hotel opened in 1928,

and the bartender might point out Katharine Hepburn's favorite table).

**Best views...** There are only three things you really want to see out your windows in Chicago: the lake, the skyline, or the Chicago River. At the **Renaissance Chicago Hotel**, you can get all of the above, and sometimes from the same room (ask to face north), at least if you stay on one of the top floors. Across the river, **The Westin Chicago River North** has panoramic views of the Loop from all its south-facing rooms. At the modern but luxurious **Fairmont Hotel**, suites are lined up on the east side of the hotel to monopolize the best vistas of the lake. There are unobstructed views from every angle of the triangularly shaped **Swissôtel**, even from the 42nd-floor health club and pool, though otherwise the place is bland as vanilla, and the Wacker Drive location feels isolated. There are great lake views from the **Hilton Chicago**, too, but its perspective of Grant Park and its gorgeous formal and wildflower gardens are the real knockouts. The **W Chicago Lakeshore** is the only hotel in the city with a Lake Shore Drive address, which means fantastic panoramas of the city, lake, and Navy Pier. Though more expensive, the north-facing rooms at **The Drake** are the only ones in the city to overlook the lake, the Gold Coast, and Lincoln Park. At the postmodern **Sheraton Chicago**, the views are pretty terrific from both sides—it's how far up or down you are that makes all the difference. If you're facing north, try to get a room on a high floor for the best views of North Michigan Avenue and the lake, but if you're on the south side, book a lower floor for spectacular views of the Chicago River.

**New kids on the block...** Forget charming, forget vintage. Sometimes you want to stay somewhere brand-spanking-new. Newcomers to the Chicago hotel scene include the **Conrad Chicago**, a new boutique offshoot of the sprawling Hilton hotel empire. Surprisingly tranquil, given its just-off-Michigan-Avenue location, it's tucked inside the Westfield North Bridge mall (so you can hit the Nordstrom shoe sale in your robe and slippers if need be). The major selling point for the **Solis Chicago Hotel** (a rehab of the former Hotel 71) is its larger-than-average rooms—the building was originally designed to house small apartments,

so if you're looking for space to spread out, you'll find it here. The **Hard Rock Hotel** promised to bring some rock-'n'-roll attitude to Michigan Avenue—which so far means that the business travelers who stay here are younger and wear khakis rather than business suits. But the hotel is actively courting bands on tour, so you never know whom you may spot in the lobby bar. For sheer architectural impact, it's hard to beat the dramatic **Sofitel Chicago Water Tower**, which rises like a giant ship's prow into the sky; the inside is no less dramatic, with pulsing colored lights on the lobby floor and dramatic staircases rising above. Every room has a view of the surrounding cityscape (but you'll want to keep your shades closed come nighttime, unless you're the exhibitionist type).

**If everyone else stays on Michigan Avenue, I don't want to...** Along the Chicago River on the edge of the Loop, the boxlike gray **Renaissance Chicago Hotel** offers great city- and riverscapes. The sleek **Westin Chicago River North** sits across the river, well inland from Michigan Avenue. Although it's in bustling River North, the riverside setting is tucked away from the traffic, and the interior feels blissfully tranquil. A few blocks away is the **Best Western River North Hotel**—good for those who'll spend most of their time out enjoying the neighborhood, rather than basking in the standard motel-issue rooms. A trio of quaint, quiet, quirky hotels run by the same management, **The Majestic Hotel**, **The Willows**, and the **City Suites Hotel** are smart choices for budget-minded travelers willing to stay far from the downtown crowd. Each is within walking distance of many of the city's gay bars and dance clubs, Wrigley Field, and the Lincoln Park Zoo, and only a few blocks from the lake, tennis courts, and the Waveland Golf Course (and only a 15-minute bus ride from the Mag Mile). In the Lake View neighborhood, what used to be a depressing blight of a building on Broadway, a main drag filled with coffeehouses, bagel shops, clothing stores, and bars, is now the **Best Western Hawthorne Terrace**, a delightful, small hotel, perfect for those not wanting to stay downtown. Way off in Hyde Park, near the University of Chicago and the Museum of Science and Industry, there aren't many lodging choices except for the **Ramada Inn Lakeshore**. In the Gold Coast,



**Hotel Indigo** offers the same neighborhood feel and convenience in a more casual setting: the bright blue and white, beachy decor makes it feel more Miami than Midwest, and the rooms' hardwood floors and white furniture complete the resort look.

**Style and substance...** The **Hotel Allegro** and **Hotel Monaco** (owned by the same company) both go for a “fun” vibe with riotous colors and upbeat music—the Allegro attracts more of a family crowd, while the more compact Monaco aims for couples and small groups. Prepare for visual overload when you enter the **House of Blues Hotel**, with its eclectic mix of Asian, Moroccan, and New Orleans-inspired design. Also trying to lure in style-conscious guests are the **W Chicago City Center** and **W Chicago Lakeshore**, both of which feature self-consciously cool lobby bars, dim lighting, and rooms that you'll find either impressively nightclubby or depressingly dark. In the Loop you'll find the **Hotel Burnham**, the owners of which deserve the prize for best renovation, since it's housed in the architecturally significant Reliance Building, which they could have really messed up but instead preserved beautifully. A close runner-up in this category, however, goes to the **Crowne Plaza Chicago—The Silversmith**, originally built in 1897 by Peter J. Weber of the city's acclaimed architectural firm D. H. Burnham and Company. (The only downside: The midblock location means limited natural light in many of the rooms.) Nothing can compete with the utter fabulousness of the 13th-floor Art Deco swimming pool at the **Hotel Inter-Continental Chicago**. Surrounded by stained-glass windows, mosaics, wicker chaise lounges, huge potted palms, and wrought-metal sconces, the Italianate junior Olympic-size pool (75 ft.) was the training ground for the original Tarzan, Johnny Weissmuller. It's that cool.

**Family values...** Suite hotels are generally a great solution when you've got kids in tow, giving you what amounts to two rooms for the price of one, usually with cooking facilities to boot. The **DoubleTree Guest Suites** and **Embassy Suites** have indoor pools as a bonus. (The Embassy also has in-room Nintendo.) If cooking for yourself is about the furthest thing from your mind, and you've got the money,

the family suite at the **Four Seasons Hotel** is definitely the way to go. There's a king-size bedroom for Mom and Dad and a smaller kids' bedroom with twin beds. Each suite has Nintendo, two bathrooms, kid-size bathrobes, and a mini-bar filled with jelly beans, chocolate-chip cookies, and M&Ms. The **Chicago City Centre's** spacious and bright—if standard—rooms are kid-friendly (and children under 18 stay free with a parent), and both indoor and outdoor pools give the kids a place to splash around no matter what the weather. Kids also stay free at the **Hampton Inn & Suites**, where the whole family can load up at the included breakfast buffet before heading out for the day.

**For lovers and those who want to be...** When you and your companion need to get away from it all (the office, the wife, the husband, the kids, the other lover), discretion is the key ingredient. Just steps away from Michigan Avenue, it's surprisingly cozy and intimate at **The Whitehall Hotel**, a small boutique hotel with the feel of a bed-and-breakfast. If money is no object, splurge at the **Peninsula Chicago**, where you can take advantage of an indulgent in-room couples massage, or the **Park Hyatt**, where some rooms have oversize bathtubs with a view, so you can lounge and bathe while enjoying a view of the city.

**Suite deals...** If you're traveling with the kids or insist on fixing your own eggs in the morning, try an all-suite hotel. Chicago has a number of them, where every guest room has at least a separate sitting area and some kind of kitchenette. Tops in this category are the sleek **Embassy Suites** with its echoing atrium, the crisply modern **Omni Chicago Hotel**, hovering above Michigan Avenue shops, and the traditionally furnished **DoubleTree Guest Suites** hotel, a high-rise right off Michigan Avenue that has great downtown views. All have pools and some kind of gym or health club, as does the somewhat smaller and more personal **Fitzpatrick Chicago Hotel**, where a book-lined lounge downstairs sets the homey tone. If you're talking suites—as in “I'm taking a suite of rooms for my entourage”—that's a different and more luxurious story. The opulent Conrad Hilton Suite, named after the former owner of the **Hilton Chicago**, is a two-story minipalace that sits on top of the hotel. The crash pad of choice for

visiting presidents, it comes with its own butler (naturally) and a helicopter landing pad.

**Megahotels for conventioners...** If you're here for a convention, you're probably staying at whatever place your company put you in. At least you've been saved from having to decide among the massive, charm-free convention hotels. If you've been given that unfortunate duty, though, here are the ones to keep in mind. For sheer size, the stand-outs are the **Chicago Marriott**, a bland marble box on Michigan Avenue with more than 1,000 rooms and 55,500 square feet of exhibition space, and the **Hyatt Regency Chicago**, a megahotel with more than 2,000 cookie-cutter guest rooms and 188,000 square feet of meeting space. Both have about as much charm as a freeway, and you may feel stupid if you aren't wearing a "Hello, my name is..." tag pinned to your gray pinstripe, but they serve their purposes. The Hyatt's attached to the Illinois Center business complex by an underground maze of hallways, which also links it to the **Swissôtel**, with more than 600 rooms, creating one big convention megalopolis. An enormous line of yellow cabs snaking around the **Hilton Chicago** is a sure sign a convention has just hit town. Ditto **The Palmer House Hilton**, well located in the Loop, whose more than

### **Crowded to Capacity**

*Want to avoid paying big bucks for a room? When a giant convention comes to town, hotels jack up their prices to the maximum (if you can even find an available room). Avoid a rip-off by staying away during these big annual shows (all dates given are for 2007): International Home & Housewares Show (Mar 11-13); National Restaurant Association Show (May 19-22); NeoCon—World's Trade Fair (June 11-13); Graph Expo (Sept 9-12); Worldwide Food Expo (Oct 24-27); Radiological Society of North America (Nov 25-30).*

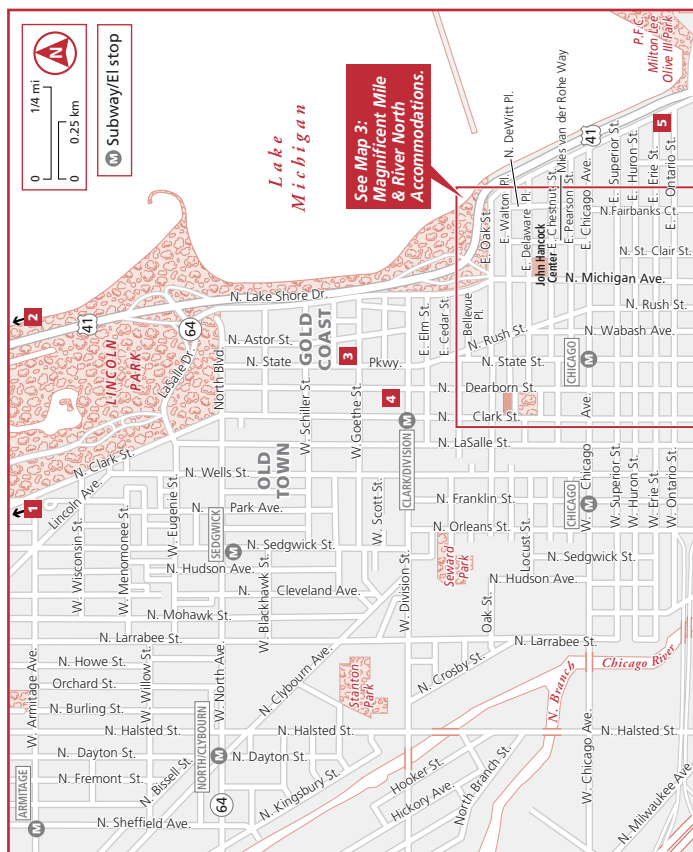
1,500 guest rooms fill up during peak convention season. Rooms at the **Sheraton Chicago** are more comfortable than you'd expect from this 1,200-room riverside hulk, and separate check-in areas help to keep conventioners and other guests out of each other's way. The shiny gold **Hyatt Regency O'Hare** has only two things going for it: size (1,099 rooms and 60,000 sq. ft. of exhibition space) and direct access to the O'Hare Expocenter.

**Cheap sleeps...** You don't get much in the way of luxurious perks by staying at **The Majestic**

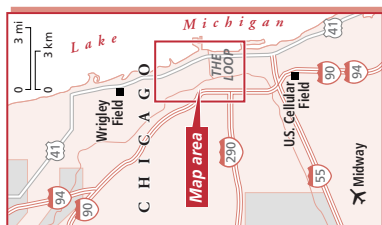
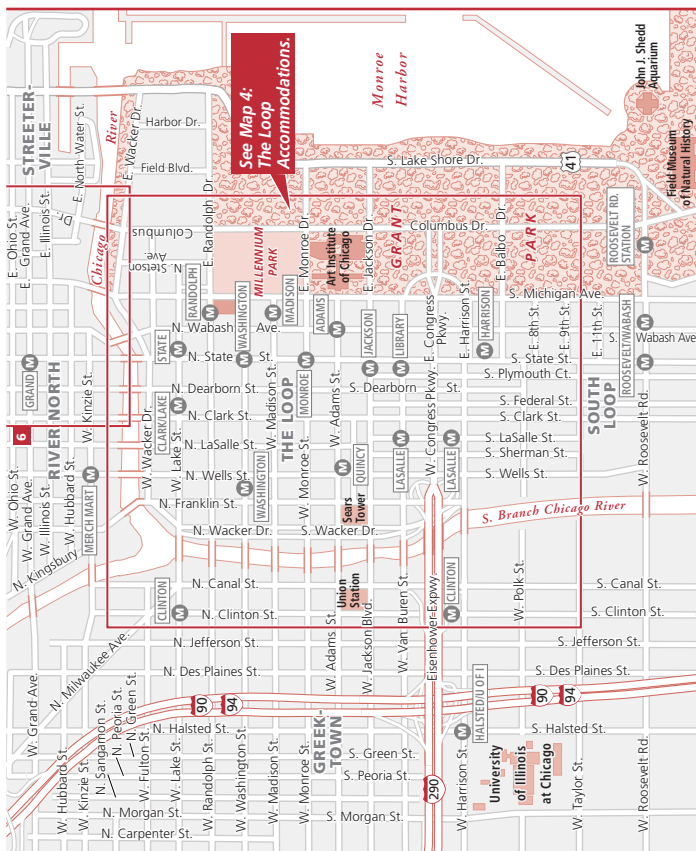
**Hotel, The Willows**, or the **City Suites Hotel**, three small, eccentric Lake View hotels, but you do get to lay your head on your pillow each evening knowing that you're not spending much. Conveniently located near the galleries and eateries of River North, the **Best Western River North Hotel** is a decent bargain: It's your standard chain hotel, but it does have a rooftop pool. If a central location is important to you, by far the cheapest place to stay near Michigan Avenue is the **Red Roof Inn**, just a block away from all the shopping. If you're willing to go for generic furnishings and minimal service, it's a perfectly fine cheap choice. Not quite as cheap but still a relative bargain is the **Allerton Crowne Plaza**—what the hotel obviously saves in decorating costs it apparently passes on to guests. But the hands-down cheapest places to stay are two local hostels: **Arlington House** (in residential Lincoln Park) and the **Harris Family Hostel** (on S. Michigan Ave.), where the clientele consists mainly of backpacking students and foreigners. The Harris Hostel is newer and offers more extras (museum discounts, an on-site restaurant, etc.); at Arlington House you'll have to bring your own linens or rent theirs—it's that kind of place (though the coffee is free).

**Oh so near O'Hare...** A courtesy van shuttles people and luggage between the airport and the nearby hotels, which are many but undistinguished. You can while away the hours in your room at the **Sheraton Gateway Suites** by playing Nintendo, which is included in each room. The folks at the **Embassy Suites Hotel O'Hare–Rosemont** are nice enough to include a microwave in every two-room suite, for those too travel-weary to face another restaurant. The Rosemont also scores points for its Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired decor, using mahogany trim, barrel chairs, and stained-glass windows. The **Hyatt Regency O'Hare** offers an automated check-in and checkout machine (like an ATM) that takes about 90 seconds: You just stick in your credit card, punch a few buttons, and you're on your way. Give the relatively small and civilized (for an airport hotel, anyhow) **Sofitel Chicago O'Hare** a round of applause for trying to create a little excitement for its guests: The rooms have a touch of European elegance (including faux-antique desks), and you get a rose on your bed each night at turndown.

## Map 2: Chicago Accommodations



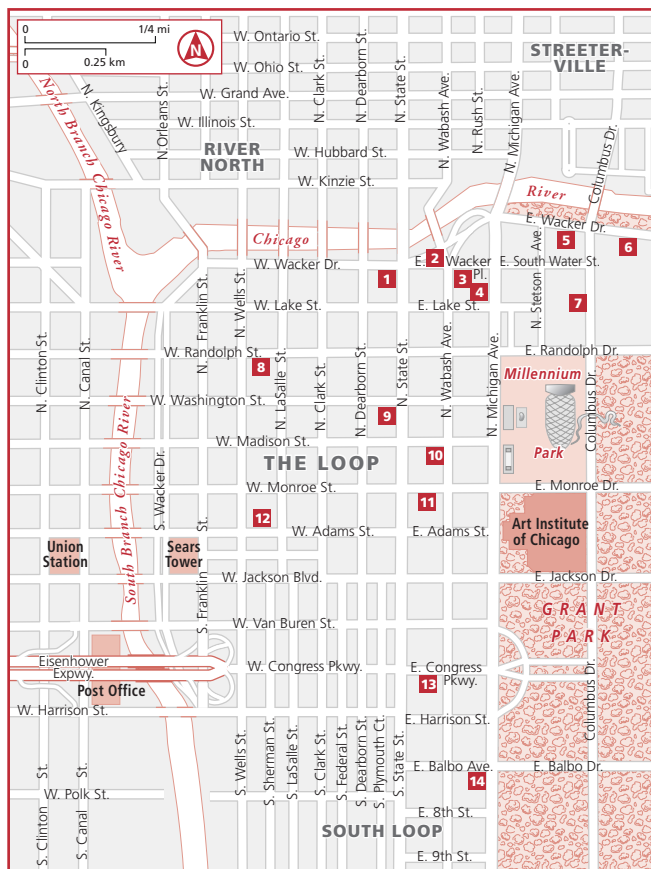
- Ambassador East Hotel **3**
- Arlington House **1**
- Best Western Hawthorne Terrace **1**
- Best Western River North Hotel **6**
- City Suites Hotel **1**
- Hotel Indigo **4**
- The Majestic Hotel **2**
- W Chicago Lakeshore **5**
- The Willows **2**
- Ambassador East Hotel **3**
- Arlington House **1**
- Best Western Hawthorne Terrace **1**
- Best Western River North Hotel **6**
- City Suites Hotel **1**
- Hotel Indigo **4**
- The Majestic Hotel **2**
- W Chicago Lakeshore **5**
- The Willows **2**



## Map 3: Magnificent Mile & River North Accommodations



## Map 4: The Loop Accommodations



- Crowne Plaza Chicago—  
The Silversmith **10**  
The Fairmont Chicago **7**  
Hard Rock Hotel **4**  
Harris Family Hostel **13**  
Hilton Chicago **14**  
Hotel Allegro **8**  
Hotel Burnham **9**  
Hotel Monaco **3**  
Hyatt Regency Chicago **5**  
The Palmer House Hilton **11**  
Renaissance Chicago Hotel **1**  
Solis Chicago Hotel **2**  
Swissôtel **6**  
W Chicago City Center **12**







## The Index

\$\$\$\$\$	over \$300
\$\$\$\$	\$201–\$300
\$\$\$	\$151–\$200
\$\$	\$100–\$150
\$	under \$100

Price ratings are based on the lowest price quoted for a standard double room in high season, including taxes and charges. Unless otherwise noted, rooms have air-conditioning, phones, private bathrooms, and TVs.

The following abbreviations are used for credit cards:

AE	American Express
DC	Diners Club
DISC	Discover
MC	MasterCard
V	Visa

**Allerton Crowne Plaza (p. 21)** MAGNIFICENT MILE The generic hotel decor inside can't compare to the carved stone 1920s exterior, but this place does have a spectacular location right on Michigan Avenue, and you can often snag a decent room rate (as long as there's no big convention in town).... *Tel* 312/440-1500 (800/621-8311). *Fax* 312/440-1819. [www.allertonchicrowneplaza.com](http://www.allertonchicrowneplaza.com). 701 N. Michigan Ave., at Huron St., 60611. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 443 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Ambassador East (p. 15)** GOLD COAST Home to the world-famous Pump Room, a restaurant living on nostalgia from the days when Judy Garland and Frank Sinatra used to eat here, this quiet hotel ranks high on glitz as well as refinement. Guest rooms, though all outfitted with classic furnishings, are not cookie-cutter similar. And, it's nice that the hotel doesn't take itself too seriously: The minibars are stocked with frozen Snickers bars, and a kids' program (also available at the Omni Chicago; discussed later) makes the hotel surprisingly family-friendly.... *Tel* 312/787-7200 (800/323-7500). *Fax* 312/787-4760. [www.preferredhotels.com](http://www.preferredhotels.com). 1301 N. State Pkwy., at Goethe St., 60610. Clark/Division el stop (Red Line). 285 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 22.**

**Arlington House (p. 21)** LINCOLN PARK This cheap little hostel (operative word: cheap) is on a leafy Lincoln Park street, about a 15-minute bus ride from downtown and within walking distance of many of the city's best blues, jazz, and dance clubs. Rooms (both private and dormitory-style) vary from bare-bones-simple to bare-bones-decrepit; remember, this is a *hostel*, not a hotel.... Tel 773/929-5380 (800/HOSTEL-5). Fax 773/665-5485. [www.arlingtonhouse.com](http://www.arlingtonhouse.com). 616 W. Arlington Place, at Clark St., 60614. Fullerton el stop (Red or Brown Line). 200 beds, 40 private rooms. MC, V. \$

See Map 2 on p. 22.

**Best Western Hawthorne Terrace (p. 17)** LINCOLN PARK A former flophouse made adorable with a couple of bolts of cheery chintz, a renovation of its exterior, and a pleasant staff, this inexpensive neighborhood hotel has it all: walking distance to Wrigley Field and your pick of either sports bars or gay bars.... Tel 773/244-3434 (888/860-3400). Fax 773/244-3435. [www.hawthorneterrace.com](http://www.hawthorneterrace.com). 3434 N. Broadway, at Hawthorne Place, 60657. Addison el stop (Red Line). 59 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$

See Map 2 on p. 22.

**Best Western River North Hotel (p. 17)** RIVER NORTH The two main things the Best Western has going for it are its location amid trendy galleries and restaurants and its price (which includes free parking—a huge savings if you bring your car). There's also an indoor rooftop pool.... Tel 312/467-0800 (800/528-1234). Fax 312/467-1665. [www.rivernorthhotel.com](http://www.rivernorthhotel.com). 125 W. Ohio St., at the corner of LaSalle, 60610. Grand el stop (Red Line). 150 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$

See Map 2 on p. 23.

**Chicago City Centre—A Holiday Inn Hotel (p. 19)** MAGNIFICENT MILE A huge high-rise a few blocks from Michigan Avenue, this glass-clad, 26-story monolith hosts lots of tour groups and business travelers. If you're looking for a kid-friendly place with a pool, you can't go wrong here: There's an outdoor pool and sun deck, and guests also get free access to the Lake Shore Athletic Club next door, which has a large indoor pool. Room decor is nicer than your average Holiday Inn but still innocuous.... Tel 312/787-6100 (800/HOLIDAY). Fax 312/787-6259. [www.chicc.com](http://www.chicc.com). 300 E. Ohio St., at Fairbanks Court, 60611. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 500 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$

See Map 3 on p. 24.

**Chicago Marriott (p. 20)** MAGNIFICENT MILE Despite a late-1990s exterior renovation, this is still quite possibly the ugliest hotel in the city. This mega-sleepery has three things going for it, though: location, location, and location. Because of its vast capacity, it tends to offer deals that make it one of the cheaper Magnificent Mile options (when it's not bursting with business

groups).... Tel 312/836-0100 (800/228-0265). Fax 312/836-6139. [www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com). 540 N. Michigan Ave., at Grand Ave., 60611. Grand el stop (Red Line). 1,192 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**City Suites Hotel (p. 17)** LINCOLN PARK There aren't too many hotels that would boast about their former incarnation as the home to gangsters and their molls, but this small, funky place does. And why not, considering its location right on busy Belmont Avenue amidst restaurants, coffeehouses, nightclubs, and stores selling everything from Doc Martens to sun-dried-tomato bagels? With the floors heavily carpeted and the windows equally draped (rooms are simply decorated with suave black-and-white tile bathrooms), the fact that the el rumbles by 24 hours a day only a few hundred yards away doesn't seem to bug anyone.... Tel 773/404-3400 (800/248-9108). Fax 773/404-3405. [www.cityinns.com](http://www.cityinns.com). 933 W. Belmont Ave., between Halsted and Clark sts., 60657. Belmont el stop (Red or Brown Line). 45 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 22.**

**Conrad Chicago (p. 16)** MAGNIFICENT MILE Yes, it's part of the vast Hilton hotel empire, but the Conrad's easy-to-overlook location inside the Westfield North Bridge high-rise mall makes it a retreat from the city's other megahotels. Rooms are modern and bright, and the location is a big plus for winter visitors (you can shop at Nordstrom without going outside). For high rollers, this is the only place in town where you can book a suite with a balcony overlooking Michigan Avenue.... Tel 312/645-1500 (800/HILTONS). Fax 312/645-1550. <http://conradhotels1.hilton.com>. 521 N. Rush St., at Hubbard St., 60611. Grand el stop (Red Line). 311 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Crowne Plaza Chicago—The Silversmith (p. 18)** THE LOOP Located in a renovated and revitalized National Historic Landmark, this Loop hotel is an interesting alternative to the Marriotts and Sheratons of the world: Its Mission-style furniture harks back to the city's early days, which will at least identify your stay as being in Chicago as opposed to Anywhere, U.S.A.... Tel 312/372-7696 (800/2-CROWNE). Fax 312/372-7320. [www.ichotelsgroup.com](http://www.ichotelsgroup.com). 10 S. Wabash Ave., at Madison St., 60603. Washington el stop (Red Line) or Madison el stop (Brown Line). 143 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 4 on p. 25.**

**DoubleTree Guest Suites (p. 18)** MAGNIFICENT MILE What this all-suite hotel lacks in drama, it makes up for with two-room suites, lots of service, panoramic views, and an excellent rooftop gym facility and pool. White-gloved bellhops hanging around the lobby are a nice touch, though the Muzak ruins the

effect.... Tel 312/664-1100 (800/222-TREE). Fax 312/664-8627. [www.doubletree.com](http://www.doubletree.com). 198 E. Delaware Place, at Mies van der Rohe Way, 60611. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 345 suites. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**The Drake (p. 15)** MAGNIFICENT MILE Quite possibly the city's most famous hotel, this limestone edifice is so gracious you feel like you have to whisper. The rooms, none of which are decorated exactly the same, are quietly elegant, with fancy draperies and furniture that's expensive but not showy. The hotel's bar, Coq d'Or, is one of the best—if not *the* best—hotel bars in the city. Dig those martinis.... Tel 312/787-2200 (800/55-DRAKE). Fax 312/787-1431. [www.thedrakehotel.com](http://www.thedrakehotel.com). 140 E. Walton Place, at Michigan Ave., 60611. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 537 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Embassy Suites (p. 19)** RIVER NORTH Rimming the huge central atrium, all suites have a living room with a sleeper sofa and a bedroom with either a king-size or two double beds, as well as kitchenettes. A complimentary breakfast buffet, indoor pool, workout room, and a very good restaurant, Papagus Greek Taverna, are all also on premises.... Tel 312/943-3800 (800/EMBASSY). Fax 312/943-7629. [www.embassysuiteschicago.com](http://www.embassysuiteschicago.com). 600 N. State St., between Erie and Ontario sts., 60610. Grand el stop (Red Line). 358 suites. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Embassy Suites Hotel O'Hare–Rosemont (p. 21)** O'HARE AIRPORT Spiffy forest-green, beige, and burgundy two-room suites are clean-lined and bright and have sofa beds, a microwave, refrigerator, and two TVs. You get a free full breakfast delivered to your suite every morning.... Tel 847/678-4000 (800/EMBASSY). Fax 847/928-7659. [www.embassysuites.com](http://www.embassysuites.com). 5500 N. River Rd., Rosemont, IL 60018. 293 suites. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 22.**

**The Fairmont Chicago (p. 16)** THE LOOP Overlooking Grant Park, this pink granite high-rise hotel has bigger-than-usual rooms flooded with sunlight. You'll love the details here—feather and foam pillows, bed sheets of premium cotton, standing butlers, tie racks, and the best thick terry robes in town. Superbly outfitted bathrooms come complete with Neutrogena beauty products, a heat lamp (rare for Chicago hotels), and a television. The only problem? The sense of isolation you'll feel once you walk out the front door.... Tel 312/565-8000 (800/526-2008). Fax 312/856-1032. [www.fairmont.com](http://www.fairmont.com). 200 N. Columbus Dr., at Randolph St., 60601. State/Lake el stop (Red Line). 692 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 4 on p. 25.**

**Fitzpatrick Chicago Hotel (p. 19)** **MAGNIFICENT MILE** A nice combination of a small, European-style hotel with room-to-stretch-out suites, the Fitzpatrick is cozy and charming. Perks include VCRs in every room, kitchens in most, and a health club and rooftop pool plus complimentary continental breakfasts and hors d'oeuvres.... *Tel 312/787-6000 (800/621-8004). Fax 312/787-6133. www.fitzpatrickhotels.com. 166 E. Superior St., at Fairbanks Court, 60611. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 140 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$*

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Four Seasons Hotel (p. 14)** **MAGNIFICENT MILE** Located in the same postmodern go-go '80s building that houses Bloomingdale's and Gucci, this hotel is one of the few that Chicagoans themselves frequent—the restaurants are top-notch and the bar and lounge are nightlife destinations for folks dressed in anything from jeans to tuxes. Guest rooms are done up in muted peaches, foam greens, and pinks, with shiny English furniture, heavily draped windows, and botanical prints; the minibar supplies not only the requisite booze and nuts but a disposable camera.... *Tel 312/280-8800 (800/332-3442). Fax 312/280-1748. www.fourseasons.com. 120 E. Delaware Place, at Michigan Ave., 60611-0142. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 343 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$*

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Hampton Inn & Suites Chicago Downtown (p. 19)** **RIVER NORTH** This family-friendly hotel features one- and two-room suites, some with full kitchens, and on-site laundry facilities. There's a small workout area and an indoor pool, but otherwise it's all pretty standard stuff. Pluses: walk-to-everything location, free breakfast buffet, free local calls and no charge for long-distance access (both a rarity nowadays), and kids under 18 stay free with a parent.... *Tel 312/832-0330 (800/HAMPTON). Fax 312/832-0333. www.hamptoninn.com. 33 W. Illinois St., between State St. and Wabash Ave., 60610. Grand el stop (Red Line). 230 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$*

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Hard Rock Hotel (p. 17)** **THE LOOP** The newest hotel in town promised to shake up the competition with some rock-star attitude. But the overall vibe at this rehab of a former 1920s office building is contemporary cool rather than party-hearty decadence. The lobby bar rocks on into the late-night hours, a rarity in the Loop.... *Tel 312/345-1000 (877/ROCK-HOTEL). Fax 312/345-1012. www.hardrockhotelchicago.com. 230 N. Michigan Ave., at Lake St., 60601. State/Lake el stop (Red Line). 381 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$*

**See Map 4 on p. 25.**

**Harris Family Hostel (p. 21)** **THE LOOP** A modern rehab of a downtown office building, this is far from your stereotypical

shabby backpacking stop. The place is spotless and well run, and it offers lots of activities for visitors (tours, museum discounts, etc.). Plan on sleeping dormitory-style (although a few “family rooms” are available), but the central location and helpful staff make this an impressive bargain.... *Tel 312/360-0300. Fax 312/360-0313. www.hichicago.org. 25 E. Congress Pkwy., between State St. and Wabash Ave., 60605. Jackson el stop (Red Line). 500 beds. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$*

**See Map 4 on p. 25.**

**Hilton Chicago (p. 15)** THE LOOP Grand in every way, from the ornate lobby with its 60-foot ceiling to the gilded ballrooms, this place has very well appointed rooms—cherrywood cabinets and quilted bedspreads—and a terrific health club. This sprawling minicity is great for families but is bad for couples looking for quiet romance.... *Tel 312/922-4400 (800/HILTONS). Fax 312/922-5240. www.chicagohilton.com. 720 S. Michigan Ave., at Balbo Dr., 60605. Harrison el stop (Red Line). 1,544 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$*

**See Map 4 on p. 25.**

**Hotel Allegro (p. 18)** THE LOOP An old hotel gone hip—or, should we say, a corporation’s idea of hip. Cramped rooms are somewhat redeemed by the cheerful pink color scheme (too bad the bathrooms don’t have enough space to spread out your stuff). Still, it’s got a great Loop location, good service, and wine in the evenings for guests.... *Tel 312/236-0123 (800/643-1500). Fax 312/236-0917. www.allegrochicago.com. 171 W. Randolph St., between LaSalle and Wells sts., 60601. Washington el stop (Red Line). 483 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$*

**See Map 4 on p. 25.**

**Hotel Burnham (p. 18)** THE LOOP For years the world-famous, architecturally significant Reliance Building was an urban disgrace, but now, after a wonderful renovation, it’s back to its glamorous self. There are great urban vistas from the huge windows, and an excellent restaurant with a vintage feel (Atwood Café; see p. 59).... *Tel 312/782-1111 (866/690-1986). Fax 312/782-0899. www.burnhamhotel.com. 1 W. Washington St., at State St., 60602. Washington el stop (Red Line). 122 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$*

**See Map 4 on p. 25.**

**Hotel Indigo (p. 18)** GOLD COAST This small Gold Coast hotel is a breath of fresh air in the cookie-cutter-business-hotel scene. Smallish rooms are brightened with white furniture, colorful artwork and an overall resortlike vibe (rooms on the north side of the building are larger but don’t get much natural light).... *Tel 312/787-4980 (800/2-INDIGO). Fax 312/787-4069. www.chicagogoldcoast.hotelindigo.com. 1244 N. Dearborn Pkwy., one block north of Division St., 60610. Clark/Division el stop (Red Line). 165 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$*

**See Map 2 on p. 22.**

**Hotel Inter-Continental Chicago (p. 18)** **MAGNIFICENT MILE** This dual personality palace is actually two side-by-side hotels—one modern, one originally built in 1929 as an athletic club—joined together in 1994. Though the lobby is blandly contemporary, rooms in the older section have a lovely vintage feel, with Biedermeier furniture, heavy draperies, and brass lamps. The Art Deco indoor pool is considered one of the best in the city.... *Tel 312/944-4100 (800/327-0200). Fax 312/944-1320. <http://chicago.intercontinental.com>. 505 N. Michigan Ave., between Grand Ave. and Illinois St., 60611. 807 rooms. Grand el stop (Red Line). AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$*

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Hotel Monaco (p. 18)** **THE LOOP** Kind of urban hip with a French twist, this place has a pretty good American restaurant, South Water Kitchen, on its ground floor, a goldfish in each room, and great views (which you can drink in from your very own plush, wide window seat).... *Tel 312/960-8500 (800/397-7661). Fax 312/960-1883. [www.monaco-chicago.com](http://www.monaco-chicago.com). 225 N. Wabash Ave., between Lake St. and Wacker Dr., 60601. State/Lake el stop (Red Line). 192 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$*

**See Map 4 on p. 25.**

**House of Blues Hotel, a Loews Hotel (p. 18)** **RIVER NORTH** A rock-'n'-roll-themed hotel sounds tacky, but it's actually a lot of fun, located right next to one of the city's modern landmarks: the 1960s-era corn-cob-shaped Marina Towers apartment buildings. Upon check-in you're given a free "CD packet," with key cards and a complimentary compact disc. There's a cool bowling alley (yes, bowling alleys can be cool), and you can even rent a boat and cruise the Chicago River. Now *that's* nifty.... *Tel 312/245-0333 (800/235-6397). Fax 312/923-2444. [www.houseofblueshotel.com](http://www.houseofblueshotel.com). 333 N. Dearborn St., at Kinzie St., 60610. Grand el stop (Red Line). 365 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$*

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Hyatt Regency Chicago (p. 20)** **THE LOOP** The lobby lounge covers half an acre; its greenhouse look, fountains, pools, and restaurants seem cool at first, but this entire hotel complex is so big, and signage is so bad, that you can't help but get lost at least once during your stay.... *Tel 312/565-1234 (800/233-1234). Fax 312/565-2966. [www.chicagoregency.hyatt.com](http://www.chicagoregency.hyatt.com). 151 E. Wacker Dr., at Columbus Dr., 60601. State/Lake el stop (Red Line). 2,019 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$*

**See Map 4 on p. 25.**

**Hyatt Regency O'Hare (p. 21)** **O'HARE AIRPORT** Except for its huge, 11-story sky-lit atrium lobby with four glass elevators, this gargantuan convention hotel (there are 60 meeting rooms) is pretty standard stuff. A recent renovation has helped update the guest rooms, but this is still mainly convention country, with

sprawling restaurants serving adequate food, and lots of people wearing name tags.... Tel 847/696-1234 (800/233-1234). Fax 847/698-0139. [www.ohare.hyatt.com](http://www.ohare.hyatt.com). 9300 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., Rosemont, IL 60018. 1,100 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 22.**

**The Majestic Hotel (p. 17)** LAKE VIEW This small out-of-the-way hotel is more inspiring for its low prices than its faux-English-manor decor. No restaurant or room service here, but there are complimentary continental breakfast and afternoon tea.... Tel 773/404-3499 (800/727-5108). Fax 773/404-3495. [www.cityinns.com](http://www.cityinns.com). 528 W. Brompton St., between Lake Shore Dr. and Pine Grove Ave., 60657. Addison el stop (Red Line). 52 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 22.**

**Omni Chicago Hotel (p. 19)** MAGNIFICENT MILE Considering the location and the fact that every room is a suite complete with fax and voice mail, this sleekly modern business favorite is something of a bargain (it's also the place where Oprah books rooms for her guests). The Italian restaurant, Cielo, has superb Mag Mile views. Full health club (including lap pool).... Tel 312/944-6664 (800/THE-OMNI). Fax 312/266-3015. [www.omni-hotels.com](http://www.omni-hotels.com). 676 N. Michigan Ave., between Erie and Huron sts., 60611. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 347 suites. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**The Palmer House Hilton (p. 15)** THE LOOP Once one of the city's grandest hotels, the huge Palmer House has a fabulous lobby and not-so-fabulous, standard-issue guest rooms. A huge renovation brought everything up-to-date but erased any historic charm along the way. A convention favorite, it's got several good-looking but so-so restaurants that help feed the hordes.... Tel 312/726-7500 (800/HILTONS). Fax 312/917-1707. [www.hiltonchicagosales.com](http://www.hiltonchicagosales.com). 17 E. Monroe St., between State St. and Wabash Ave., 60603. Monroe el stop (Red Line). 1,640 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 4 on p. 25.**

**Park Hyatt (p. 15)** MAGNIFICENT MILE Offering luxury for the tech set, this modernistic hotel wows even the most jaded jet-setters with sleek contemporary furnishings, flat-screen TVs, and DVD players in every room. The place is definitely a nice break from the excessive ruffles at the other high-end Chicago hotels.... Tel 312/335-1234 (800/778-7477). Fax 312/239-4000. [www.parkchicago.hyatt.com](http://www.parkchicago.hyatt.com). 800 N. Michigan Ave., at Chicago Ave., 60611. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 203 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Peninsula Chicago (p. 14)** MAGNIFICENT MILE The Peninsula is a mix of understated glamour inspired by 1930s Hong Kong and



modern bells and whistles (e.g., a hands-free telephone and TV in every bathroom). Come here if you crave light: Floor-to-ceiling windows in the grand lobby and health club/spa make these spaces especially inviting. Everything here feels brand-spanking-new, and the service is top-notch (at these prices, it better be!).... Tel 312/337-2888 (866/288-8889). Fax 312/751-2888. <http://chicago.peninsula.com>. 108 E. Superior St., between Michigan Ave. and Rush St., 60611. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 339 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Ramada Inn Lakeshore (p. 17)** HYDE PARK This is a standard high-rise hotel with unexceptional cookie-cutter rooms, but it's your best bet if you want to be near the University of Chicago, the DuSable Museum, and the Museum of Science and Industry. At least there's an outdoor pool, and many rooms have views of the city skyline and the lake.... Tel 773/288-5800 (800/228-2828). Fax 773/288-5819. [www.ramadachicagohotel.com](http://www.ramadachicagohotel.com). 4900 S. Lake Shore Dr., at 49th St., 60615. 184 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$

**Red Roof Inn (p. 21)** MAGNIFICENT MILE You're not going to get a room any cheaper than this unless you're willing to stay in a place that rents by the hour—and even then, you won't find one so close to Michigan Avenue. All the no-frills rooms were refurbished a few years ago; although the bathrooms are tiny, they're spotless. The service is as close to nonexistent as you can get.... Tel 312/787-3580 (800/RED-ROOF). Fax 312/787-1299. [www.redroof-chicago-downtown.com](http://www.redroof-chicago-downtown.com). 162 E. Ontario St., between Michigan Ave. and St. Clair St., 60611. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 195 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Renaissance Chicago Hotel (p. 16)** THE LOOP This hulking business-traveler hotel sits prominently on the Chicago River; inside the lobby, it's high glitz, with faux French-provincial furniture, oversize crystal chandeliers, a wishing fountain, uniformed bellhops, and ashtray stands branded with a curlicue "R." Guest rooms have marvelous views and stylish modern decor that's a step above the standard convention-friendly hotel.... Tel 312/372-7200 (800/468-3571). Fax 312/372-0093. [www.renaissancechicagodowntown.com](http://www.renaissancechicagodowntown.com). 1 W. Wacker Dr., between State and Dearborn sts., 60601. State/Lake el stop (Red Line). 553 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 4 on p. 25.**

**The Ritz-Carlton (p. 14)** MAGNIFICENT MILE Located above the windowless, marble-clad behemoth known as Water Tower Place shopping mall, this ultradeluxe hotel offers handsomely outfitted traditional rooms and a lobby full of plush furniture and endless fresh flowers. Under the same ownership as the Four Seasons Hotel a few blocks away, the Ritz is brighter and just a bit

flashier. There's a well-equipped gym facility and small pool, though the hotel charges a daily fee to use them.... Tel 312/266-1000 (800/621-6906). Fax 312/266-1194. [www.fourseasons.com](http://www.fourseasons.com). 160 E. Pearson St., between Michigan Ave. and Mies van der Rohe Way, 60611. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 435 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Sheraton Chicago (p. 16)** **MAGNIFICENT MILE** Along the flower- and shrub-lined Chicago River promenade, this postmodern hotel is a blight, but it succeeds where it really counts, with its interiors and service. The main lobby is all pretty wood trim and huge expanses of glass taking in the gorgeous riverscapes outside; there are separate check-in areas for conventioners and regular guests to keep everybody out of each other's way. The rooms are pretty standard, in muted peaches, browns, and creams, but they're more comfortable than many rooms in competing hotels. The hotel also has good service, despite its size.... Tel 312/464-1000 (877/242-2558). Fax 312/464-9140. [www.sheratonchicago.com](http://www.sheratonchicago.com). 301 E. North Water St., at Columbus Dr., 60611. Grand el stop (Red Line). 1,209 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Sheraton Gateway Suites (p. 21)** **O'HARE AIRPORT** About as generic as possible, this all-suite hotel has one thing going for it: proximity to the airport. Oh, plus Nintendo in every room to help fill the long hours between flights. Otherwise, you get a grim concrete atrium surrounded by drab beige-and-greenish rooms with sofa beds, refrigerator, coffeemaker, and two TVs. There's also a free shuttle to and from O'Hare.... Tel 847/699-6300 (877/242-2558). Fax 847/699-0391. [www.sheraton.com](http://www.sheraton.com). 6501 N. Mannheim Rd., Rosemont, IL 60018. 297 suites. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**Sofitel Chicago O'Hare (p. 21)** **O'HARE AIRPORT** This hotel will bring you a little bit of French-fried hospitality amid the bland office towers that surround the airport. The marble-floored lobby with its babbling fountain creates a calm, surprisingly un-airportlike atmosphere. Despite the blond wood armoires and floral-print padded headboards, the rooms are pretty average—unfortunately, you won't feel like you've landed in Paris.... Tel 847/678-4488 (800/SOFITEL). Fax 847/678-4244. [www.sofitel.com](http://www.sofitel.com). 5550 N. River Rd., Rosemont, IL 60018. 300 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**Sofitel Chicago Water Tower (p. 17)** **MAGNIFICENT MILE** Sleek and modern, the Sofitel aims for a younger, cooler clientele than the surrounding conventioner hotels (Le Bar is popular for late-night drinks, and Café des Architectes attracts a very stylish lunch crowd). Standard guest rooms are on the small side, but the marble bathrooms (with separate shower and tub) get a big

thumbs-up.... Tel 312/324-4000 (800/SOFITEL). Fax 312/324-4026. [www.sofitel.com](http://www.sofitel.com). 20 E. Chestnut St., at Wabash Ave., 60611. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 415 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**Solis Chicago Hotel (p. 16)** THE LOOP The newest entry in the city's ultracompetitive luxury market doesn't look like much from the street (a former apartment building, this hulking modern tower still has the vibe of...well, an apartment building). Besides a massive spa and fitness center (which takes up the entire fifth floor), the Solis's main claim to fame are guest rooms far larger than most of the competition. Nice city and river views, too.... Tel 312/346-7100 (800/621-4005). Fax 312/346-1721. [www.solishotels.com](http://www.solishotels.com). 71 E. Wacker Dr., at Wabash Ave., 60601. State/Lake el stop (Red Line). 454 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 4 on p. 25.**

**Swissôtel (p. 14)** THE LOOP This wedge-shaped, glass-clad tower takes advantage of the views at the far eastern tip of Wacker Drive, a few blocks off Michigan Avenue, but the hotel feels rather isolated. It's exactly what you'd expect from the Swiss: well-ordered, clean, and with all the usual luxury amenities (marble tubs). One nice twist: Each room has its own doorbell. Don't miss the bakery stand in the lobby, which serves fabulous European-style pastries and snacks.... Tel 312/565-0565 (888/737-9477). Fax 312/565-0540. [www.swissotel.com](http://www.swissotel.com). 323 E. Wacker Dr., at Columbus Dr., 60601. State/Lake el stop (Red Line). 632 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 4 on p. 25.**

**The Talbott Hotel (p. 15)** MAGNIFICENT MILE Built as an apartment building in 1927 and converted to a hotel in 1989, the family-run Talbott offers large rooms with a variety of layouts that include either kitchenettes or full kitchens. The English hunting-themed decor is almost too cutesy but mostly comes off as warm and comfortable.... Tel 312/944-4970 (800/TALBOTT). Fax 312/944-7241. [www.talbotthotel.com](http://www.talbotthotel.com). 20 E. Delaware Place, at State St., 60611. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 149 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**W Chicago City Center (p. 18)** THE LOOP A complete rehab of the former Midland Hotel, this is the Loop's edgiest hotel (not that there's much competition). The two-story lobby bar, lined with marble columns, feels like a bank that's been taken over by a nightclub. The staff is beautiful, but the rooms are very dark—recommended for night owls rather than light-lovers.... Tel 312/332-1200 (877/W-HOTELS). Fax 312/917-5771. [www.whohtels.com](http://www.whohtels.com). 172 W. Adams St., between LaSalle and Wells sts., 60603. Quincy el stop (Brown Line) or Monroe el stop (Red Line). 390 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 4 on p. 25.**

**W Chicago Lakeshore (p. 18)** **MAGNIFICENT MILE** Formerly a Days Inn, this swanky renovated hotel on Lake Shore Drive offers great views and a stylish restaurant and bar. Take the underpass beneath the busy drive and you're only a block away from Ohio Street Beach (though you might not swim long in the frigid water). The rooms, decorated in tones of gray and purple, are self-consciously trendy and feel very dark.... Tel 312/943-9200 (877/W-HOTELS). Fax 312/255-4411. [www.whotels.com](http://www.whotels.com). 644 N. Lake Shore Dr., between Erie and Ontario sts., 60611. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 556 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 22.**

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**The Westin Chicago River North (p. 16)** **RIVER NORTH** Yet another of Chicago's business hotels, the Westin's main selling point is its south-facing rooms, with fantastic views overlooking the river and the Loop. The tranquil lobby features a bamboo garden and the Hana Lounge, which serves sushi as a reminder of the days when this was the Japanese-owned Hotel Nikko.... Tel 312/744-1900 (877/WESTIN-1). Fax 312/527-2650. [www.westinchicago.com](http://www.westinchicago.com). 320 N. Dearborn St., at Kinzie St., 60610. Grand el stop (Red Line). 424 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**The Whitehall Hotel (p. 15)** **MAGNIFICENT MILE** Come here for the personal service, not the amenities. The Whitehall feels like the country house of a wealthy, elderly aunt: tasteful furniture, gold-framed artwork, and narrow hallways with lots of nooks and crannies. The large guest rooms have recently been redecorated, but the overall feel is classic rather than contemporary. Overall, this is a tranquil escape from the bustling streets outside.... Tel 312/944-6300 (800/948-4255). Fax 312/944-8552. [www.thewhitehallhotel.com](http://www.thewhitehallhotel.com). 105 E. Delaware Place, between Michigan Ave. and Rush St., 60611. Chicago el stop (Red Line). 221 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$\$

**See Map 3 on p. 24.**

**The Willows (p. 17)** **LAKE VIEW** Instead of a doorman, this out-of-the-way hotel greets guests with an imposing bust of Louis XIV, or XV, or some other wig-wearing, poufed-up French guy. He adds just the right loony touch to this small, quirky (and inexpensive) hotel on a sleepy residential Lake View side street. The rooms and suites, though simple, have all the requisite amenities (and the popular lakefront walking and bike paths are only a few blocks away).... Tel 773/528-8400 (800/787-3108). Fax 773/528-8483. [www.cityinns.com](http://www.cityinns.com). 555 W. Surf St., between Broadway and Pine Grove Ave., 60657. Diversey el stop (Brown Line). 36 rooms. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. \$\$

**See Map 2 on p. 22.**