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Lonely Planet Chicago (City Guide)



Synopsis

Discover Chicago Splash in Millennium Park's Crown Fountain, with its gargoyle-style video fountain
Canvass West Loop galleries, Chicago's beachhead for contemporary arts
Browse Wicker Park boutiques for vintage pillbox hats, graphic novels and Tortise CDs
Score bleacher seats for the Cubs at Wrigley Field
In This Guide: Three authors, 1800 research hours, 97 well-tested bars, clubs and concert halls
Expanded coverage of Chicago's culinary scene, from gourmet hot dogs to celebrity chefs
New itinerary Builder helps you choose your own adventure
Content updated daily - visit lonelyplanet.com for up-to-the-minute reviews, updates and traveler suggestions.

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Customer Reviews

“Lonely Planet for honesty, history, irreverence and budget.” --Esquire

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therefore a better world.

I'm a hardcore fan of the Lonely Planet travel guides, having used them in virtually all my travels. I recently decided to take a trip to Chicago for five days with a friend and naturally chose this guide over all others, because of the quality I've come to expect from LP. Unfortunately, I feel this is the most problematic LP guide I've come across to date. This guide will get you to all the touristy must-sees of the city (e.g., Millennium Park, Sears/Willis Tower, etc.), and even some of the more obscure places (e.g., the Pilsen Mexican American murals). However, I have several gripes with the book that I would like to see in a later edition:

- 1) First and foremost is the format of the guide. When I used the Boston guide, all of the eating/shopping/drinking/etc. was grouped by neighborhood, which made getting around and exploring each neighborhood very easy. This guide, however, has you flipping between Neighborhood, Eating, Drinking, Shopping, etc., when you're exploring each area. For example, if you're in the Loop neighborhood, you have to flip to three different sections if you want advice on what to eat, shop, or where to go for drinks. Very annoying!
- 2) Many of the places described in the book are already out of business or have moved location. On several occasions my friend and I walked to a place for eating, only to find it closed and gone! Definitely double check online before you go anywhere this book suggests!
- 3) So many of the museums (e.g., Art Institute) and other attractions that are noted as having "free" nights/days are free for ILLINOIS RESIDENTS ONLY, which is not noted in the book! Also, some of the events described at certain establishments (e.g., free foreign food at the Map Room bar on Tuesdays) have been discontinued since publication.
- 4) The fold-out map in the back was entirely too limited, as it didn't encompass all the neighborhoods described in the book.
- 5) Perhaps international travelers find this information useful/unique, but to me, adding chain stores like Best Buy, Puma, or H&M is not conducive to an authentic experience of ANY American city! It's like recommending a traveler to eat at McDonalds! I feel the author must have added these stores in for filler. Which I find ridiculous, because after talking to a few locals, it seems like there are plenty of food/drink/shopping/etc. suggestions that I feel would fit well into this guide.

With a moderate to heavy reliance on the internet to fact check, as well as some savvy locals, this book did a passable job. I'd definitely like to see a better one in the future.

Bought this book having previously travelled all over with Lonely Planet, TimeOut and Eyewitness Travel. Just came back from Buenos Aires and my TimeOut guide was incredible. Had travelled to Europe with Lonely Planet and had similar experiences. So what's wrong with this book:

- 1- Not

intuitive: There are dozens of blue and white maps, but they told me nothing about special places, how to plan my routes, which Metro stations to take, and they are laid out in a confusing manner that doesn't give much perspective of location inside the metropolitan area. BTW I am no travel rookie, have over 25 big South American and European cities under my belt..2- No COLOR anything: Bought the book hoping to see real life pictures of landmarks and places of interest, just like in the TimeOut or Eyewitness Travel books. But NO sir, nada, I found myself looking for "someplace" that sounded cool but I had no visual reference to aid me. Downtown where everything looks similar and there's a maze of streets, it's where this issue really became annoying.3- Although it divides Chicago into areas or sectors, there is no logical lay-out behind them. With previous LP books or the TimeOut guides I could easily plan 10-12 day itineraries quickly and effortlessly, knowing I wouldn't miss any of the good stuff. This book does have some day-trip suggestions classified by entertainment preference like history, art, shopping, etc., but the places are so far away from each other that if you really wanna cover all the spots in one day, you basically spend half the day in commute, and have 30-45 minutes tops to visit places that have tons to offer. One of the reasons I bought this book was because it was released in 2011 so I expected it to be up-to-date (which it was) and because the other alternative was Frommer's which I hate due to the lack of visual references (they are never-ending red, white and black manuscripts that I just don't appreciate). Sad to say, LP dropped the ball with this one, and they pretty much copied the Frommer's "recipe"... they just replace red with blue!!! Long-story short, while in travel I bought the TimeOut 2009 Chicago Edition... it was obviously out-dated in terms of prices, some places changed addresses/closed, and things of that sort. BUT as a TRAVEL COMPANION it was miles better, it helped me re-organize my schedule and maximize my days in the city. It hit the sweet-spot in terms of covering the best Chicago had to offer in an orderly fashion. Stay away from this book, go with Eyewitness Chicago or TimeOut (even if it's a little out-dated).

This might be the best Chicago guide book available -- I don't know of a better alternative, but I think I would look for one if I were traveling there again. The biggest problem is that very many of the page number references throughout the book are just plain wrong! For example on page 51 in the section titled Famous Loop Architecture is a reference to tours offered by the Chicago Architecture Foundation on page 262. But page 262 has sections for Relocating, Safety, Taxes, and Telephone usage -- nothing about Chicago Architecture Foundation or tours or architecture. Sometimes it's possible to find the reference a few pages nearby the referred page but at least half the time I just had to scratch my head and wonder. Also the book is laid out quite differently from other LP books.

I've used LP books all over the world and this one just wasn't as helpful as I hoped.

I had an opportunity to put this guide to use during a recent trip to the windy city, and it was helpful. The hot spots in the neighborhoods were clearly marked out, and that made it easy to prioritize places to visit. One thing that I wished this guide had (and which I have seen in other Lonely Planet guides) is a list of things to do and places to visit if someone is there for a day versus two days versus three days etc. Overall, a good value.

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