

DESTINATION CHICAGO

10 REASONS TO HONEYMOON IN

CHICAGO

A mix of old-fashioned glamour and urban chic, Chicago is the insider's choice for American cool. The Windy City may seem low-key, but this culture-rich metropolis makes for a fast-paced and fabulous honeymoon hangout, says Jillian Bolger.

1 Birthplace of the skyscraper, Chicago is a **living museum of modern architecture** and its dramatic skyline charts the rise of this important city. Immerse yourself in the history with a Chicago Architecture Foundation's boat tour along the majestic Chicago River. For 90 minutes you'll glide past an array of dazzling skyscrapers, from Art Deco to mid-century modern, accompanied by an expert guide pointing out the highlights. www.cruisechicago.com

2 Chicago boasts more than **5,500 restaurants**. Home of the deep-dish pizza, it's also beloved by foodies who make a pilgrimage here to dine at Alinea (www.alinearestaurant.com) and Charlie Trotter's (www.charlietrotters.com), two of the world's most celebrated restaurants. For something more affordable and all-American hit up Q where barbecue is king. The hip spot offers a vast menu that includes award-winning ribs, smoky pulled pork, fried green tomatoes and cornbread. (www.chicagoqrestaurant.com) For a stylish lunch or cocktail-fuelled evening the Irish-owned Gage, opposite Millennium Park, is one of the city's buzziest restaurants and bars. www.thegagechicago.com

3 With almost 200 galleries Chicago packs a punch in the art-loving world, but it's the **world-class Art Institute of Chicago** that's the biggest draw. Holding the largest collection of Impressionist paintings outside the Louvre, it's second only in size to New York's Metropolitan. The impressive Beaux-Arts building includes a dazzling modern wing that houses contemporary art, modern European paintings and sculpture in a breathtaking setting. www.artic.edu





4 As America's second biggest financial and cultural centre, Chicago offers some **seriously stylish accommodation**. Our pick is the cool and swanky Park Hyatt Chicago, a downtown hotel with swoonsome style credentials. Smack bang on the city's Magnificent Mile, with views over Lake Michigan, it's perfectly placed for shopping, cultural outings, lakeshore pursuits and nightlife. The bedrooms ooze luxury appeal while the Bottega Veneta Lake Suite is the ultimate indulgence. For great food and great views, book a table at the hotel's destination restaurant, NoMi. Rooms from \$375 per night. www.parkchicago.hyatt.com

5 At the heart of the city lies **Chicago's Millennium Park**, a green public space dominated by Frank Gehry's gleaming pavilion and cascading fountains. A modern-day town square, the park boasts an impressive collection of art, architecture and landscape design which form the backdrop for an exciting schedule of free concerts, exhibitions and performances. Favoured by locals and tourists, hang out here with a coffee or picnic and soak up the lakeside vibe. www.millenniumpark.org

6 Until this year, **Willis Tower** (formerly the Sears Tower) was the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere. Take the speedy elevator 103 storeys above the city to Skydeck Chicago and drink up vast views from the observation deck, which rises 1,353 feet above street level. On a clear day, you can see as far as Michigan. *Reaching for the Sky*, a short movie on Chicago's fascinating architectural evolution is included in your entry fee as is the opportunity to step out onto The Ledge, a terrifying glass balcony that hangs precariously above the city. www.thenewskydeck.com

7 The Windy City is **sports mad** and tickets to the game – any game – will deliver the kind of fanatical and high-energy atmosphere that everyone should experience once in their lives. It doesn't matter if you've no clue of the rules (hint: The Chicago Bears play football, the Bulls basketball – Michael Jordan played for them – the Blackhawks ice hockey and the Cubs and White Sox are both local baseball rivals!)

8 On Michigan Avenue, starting at the Chicago River and heading north for 1 mile, lies **The Magnificent Mile**, a bustling shopping, dining and business district that defines Chicago. With hundreds of shops spread over 8 blocks, you'll find every brand you ever wanted, with plenty of cultural and restaurant distractions en route. For designer heaven, neighbouring Oak Street is addictive! www.oakstreetchicago.com

9 With 26 miles of lakefront, 19 miles of bike paths, and 552 parks, Chicago is unique, offering a city with beach life, watersports, hiking and cycling on its doorstep. **Lake Michigan** is vast and keeps the city air pure and fresh. You can escape the urban vibe in minutes and explore some of the city's outlying natural attractions.

The city that gave the world Curtis Mayfield, The Smashing Pumpkins, Kanye West and OK Go is most associated with the blues. Whatever your **musical taste**, you'll find a live show to appeal. If you fancy mixing dining with entertainment then hang with smart Chicagoans at the hip City Winery. The one-stop spot is packed with locals enjoying great wine, light food and live music. www.citywinery.com

Clockwise from top left: Chicago city skyline and Lake Michigan looking south; Chicago River cruise; Enjoying the world-class Art Institute Chicago; A luxurious suite at chic Park Hyatt Chicago

Need to know

- * Pick up a **Chicago CityPASS** on arrival for \$94 to save 46% off entrance fees to the city's top attractions. Holders can skip most queues and the pass can be purchased at venues or online. www.cityPASS.com
- * www.choosechicago.com is the official tourist site.
- * **IRISH BRIDES** was a guest of **American Airlines**, which offers return flights direct from Dublin to Chicago from €648 (inc taxes and surcharges). For best prices fly midweek (Mon-Thurs) and include a Saturday night stay. Business class is worth the splurge! Book at www.aa.com or call 01 602 0550. ■