Adler Planetarium  Staffed by world-class researchers at the forefront of their field, the museum's real draw will always be the virtual-reality trips through time and space in the Sky Theater. Museum Campus, 1300 S Lake Shore Dr, Chicago, IL 60605 (312) 922-7827

Brookfield Zoo  Set on 216 acres, the zoo is home to nearly 6,000 animals, including 3,000 invertebrates, representing 436 species. 8400 W 31st St, Brookfield, IL 60513 (708) 688-8000

Chicago History Museum  Not so long ago this vibrant museum was the stodgy old Chicago Historical Society, which let you wallow through thousands of archived photographs and curios. Joining it are several permanent and temporary exhibits, including "Chicago: Crossroads of America," a treasure trove of historical objects. 1601 N Clark St, Chicago, IL 60614 (312) 642-4600

DuSable Museum of African American History  The Hyde Park cultural hub is now one of the oldest African-American-focused museums in the country, displaying documents and artifacts from the lives of overlooked movers and shakers. 740 East 56th Place, Chicago, IL 60637 (733) 947-0600

Grant Park  Spanning 319 acres of lakefront property, Chicago's "front yard" is filled with notable landmarks like the Millennium Park, Buckingham Fountain, the Art Institute and Museum Campus. 337 E Randolph St, Chicago, IL 60601 (312) 742-3918

360 Chicago  Formerly known as the John Hancock Observatory, 360 Chicago offers dining, sights, and an interactive tour far above the city streets. A recent addition is the Tilt attraction, which allows visitors to step onto an enclosed platform that extends from the building at a 30-degree angle. 875 N Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611 (312) 654-5019

Lincoln Park Zoo  See some 1,200 animals, from apes to zebras, at the oldest, and one of only a few free--zoos left in the country. It is small, only 35 acres, but attractions like the Kovler Lion House and the Regenstein Center for African Apes are worth the trip. 2001 N Clark St, Chicago, IL 60614 (312) 742-2000

Museum of Contemporary Art  MCA houses one of the largest collections of modern art in the nation and frequently hosts major touring exhibits. In addition to its galleries, it also hosts a gift store, restaurant, theater, and sculpture garden. 220 E Chicago Ave, Chicago, IL 60611 (312) 280-2660

Music Box  For movie lovers who don't care for traditional Hollywood blockbusters there's no better theater than the Music Box, a two-screen cinema that shows the latest art house films and documentaries. 3753 N Southport Ave, Chicago, IL 60613 (733) 871-6607

Navy Pier  This tourist spot features shops, eateries, an IMAX cinema and a bevy of sightseeing boat tours. Navy Pier is home to a 150-foot-high Ferris wheel, plus an old-fashioned swing ride and 18-hole mini-golf course. 600 E Grand Ave, Chicago, IL 60611 (312) 555-5282

The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum  From prairie and river ecosystems to the biology of Ice Age--mammals, nature and its conservation, the focus at this Lincoln Park museum situated alongside a lagoon is vast and varied. 2430 N Cannon Dr, Chicago, IL 60614 (733) 755-5100

Water Tower Place  If you're downtown and looking for a place to go for a shopping spree, this Michigan Avenue mall is just the ticket. 835 N Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60611 (312) 440-3166

Wrigley Field  Even when baseball's not in season, there's plenty to do at this legendary stadium. Seasonal tours offer an insider peek at the Friendly Confines. 1060 W Addison St, Chicago, IL 60613 (733) 404-2827

Green Mill  Al Capone and other gangsters used to hang here in the 1920s, but these days it's all about the music. 4802 N Broadway St, Chicago, IL 60640 (773) 878-5552

Art
Institute of Chicago  AIC owns more than 300,000 artworks and artifacts from all over the world--antiquity to the present--including Japanese prints, fragments of local buildings by Frank Lloyd Wright and the Thorne Miniature Rooms. 111 S Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60603 (312) 443-3600

Chicago Cultural Center  Since being converted from the Chicago Public Library in 1991, this city-block-wide institution now offers free classical concerts. 78 E Washington St, Chicago, IL 60602 (312) 744-6630

Chicago Riverwalk  If you're looking for breathtaking views of some of Chicago's most gorgeous architecture, take a stroll along the Riverwalk. Featuring boat tours and water taxis as well as waterfront cafes and restaurants. E Upper Wacker Dr, Chicago, IL 60601 (312) 742-7529

The Field Museum  Founded to house the biological and anthropological collections assembled for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, this massive natural history museum still packs 'em in with more than 30 permanent exhibitions. 1400 S Lake Shore Dr, Chicago, IL 60605 (312) 922-9410

Lincoln Park  Named for the 16th President of the United States shortly after his assassination in 1865, the park stretches along the lakeshore and contains the Lincoln Park Zoo, the Lincoln Park Conservatory and the Lincoln Park Cultural Center. 2045 N Lincoln Park W, Chicago, IL 60614

Millennium Park  This 24.5-acre park features Frank Gehry's Pritzker Pavilion and a serpentine bridge; sculptor Anish Kapoor's 110-ton Cloud Gate (aka, "The Bean"); and Jaume Plensa's Crown Fountain, with its ever-changing array of locals' faces spewing water every five minutes in the summer months. The Lurie Garden wows with year-round flower displays and monthly garden walks. 201 E Randolph St, Chicago, IL 60602

Museum of Science and Industry  If you're into exhibits loaded with interactive bells and whistles, this expansive Hyde Park locale is your ticket. 5700 S Lake Shore Dr, Chicago, IL 60637 (733) 684-1414

National Museum of Mexican Art  Visit the museum and you'll find a 6,000-piece permanent collection, rotating exhibits, performing-arts showcases and educational programming that represents an illustrious Mexican culture. 1852 W 19th St, Chicago, IL 60608 (312) 738-1503

North Avenue Beach  As one of Chicago's most popular beaches, it features a unique beach house inspired by a beached ocean liner. Visitors can hit the volleyball courts, grab a snack, rent a bike or take a dip in the waters of Lake Michigan. 1600 N Lake Shore Dr, Chicago, IL 60613 (733) 363-2225

Shedd Aquarium  This 75-year-old institution features favorites such as piranhas, frogs and snakes of the Amazon; rays, turtles and many eel of the Caribbean; predator sharks and, the most storied of them all, a 100-plus-year-old Australian lungfish believed to be the longest-living fish in any aquarium in the world. 1200 S Lake Shore Dr, Chicago, IL 60605 (312) 939-2438

Willis Tower Skydeck  The second-tallest building in the country, this 1973 landmark features views from the 103rd floor which allow you to see as far as 50 miles out, and its newest feature, the Ledge, allows you to crawl into a glass cube structure suspended 1,353 feet off the ground. Willis Tower, 233 S Wacker Dr, Chicago, IL 60606 (877) 759-3325