CHICAGO THROUGH OUR EYES

A neighborhood-by-neighborhood activity checklist for our wedding guests | July 2027

Choose what interests you and explore Chicago at your own pace. Browse Things to See, Things to Do and Places to Eat. Restaurants are grouped by dining style; ● VEG marks vegetarian- or vegan-friendly choices. Our personal favorites: the architecture river cruise, Andy’s Jazz Club, the Adler Planetarium skyline viewpoint where I proposed to Brenna, and Michigan-inspired treats. Five Chicago foods to try: deep-dish pizza, tavern-style pizza, Italian beef, Chicago-style hot dogs and jibaritos. Bonus: Detroit-style pizza and Northern Michigan fudge!

BEFORE YOU GO

Reserve popular activities and special-occasion restaurants early, particularly summer rooftops, architecture cruises and jazz clubs. Check July 2027 schedules for fireworks, baseball, Bastille Day events, Art on theMART and aquarium presentations. Hours and menus can change; we’ll update this guide closer to the wedding.

DOWNTOWN / CENTER

The Loop · River North · Riverwalk · Streeterville · Navy Pier · West Loop

THINGS TO SEE

☐ **Millennium Park & Cloud Gate | The Loop**

See the mirrored “Bean” sculpture, public art and surrounding skyscrapers.

☐ **Chicago Cultural Center | The Loop**

A free architectural gem featuring ornate interiors and a spectacular Tiffany stained-glass dome.

☐ **Chicago Riverwalk | Downtown**

Walk alongside the river beneath famous bridges and skyscrapers, with cafés and waterside terraces.

☐ **Magnificent Mile | Near North Side**

Explore Michigan Avenue’s landmark architecture, shops and historic buildings. Stop by the Starbucks Reserve Roastery on Michigan Avenue, the world’s largest Starbucks, with multiple floors dedicated to coffee.

☐ **Navy Pier | Streeterville**

A lakefront landmark with the Centennial Wheel, boat trips, attractions and panoramic water views.

THINGS TO DO

☐ **Chicago architecture river cruise — MUST DO | Chicago River**

Don't let the words 'architecture tour' fool you — this is anything but boring! Cruise between enormous skyscrapers, under moving bridges and through the heart of the city while entertaining guides share stories of the Great Fire, the invention of the skyscraper and how Chicago actually reversed its river. The views and photo opportunities are incredible. It's our number-one recommendation, even for people who aren't architecture fans. Allow about 90 minutes.

☐ **Skydeck at Sears / Willis Tower — The Ledge | The Loop**

Built for retail giant Sears in 1973, this 110-story skyscraper was the tallest building in the world for nearly 25 years. It became Willis Tower in 2009 after insurance broker Willis obtained naming rights, although many Chicagoans still call it the Sears Tower. On the 103rd floor, step into The Ledge: a glass cube projecting outside the building, with a transparent floor and the street 1,353 feet below your feet!

☐ **360 CHICAGO at the John Hancock Center — TILT | Magnificent Mile**

Ride up to the 94th-floor observation deck of the landmark formerly known as the John Hancock Center for sweeping views of the lake and skyline. For an extra thrill, try TILT: stand against a glass panel that slowly tips outward over Michigan Avenue, leaving you leaning over the city far below. TILT is a separate, optional attraction.

☐ **Art Institute of Chicago | The Loop**

A world-class art museum with works by Monet, Van Gogh, Seurat, Hopper and many others.

☐ **Chicago Athletic Association + Cindy’s Rooftop | The Loop**

Explore a beautifully restored historic athletic club, then head upstairs to Cindy’s for cocktails and views of Millennium Park and Lake Michigan.

☐ **LondonHouse rooftop | River North / Riverwalk**

Enjoy sunset cocktails overlooking the Chicago River, historic bridges and skyline.

☐ **Offshore Rooftop | Navy Pier**

A huge rooftop at Navy Pier overlooking Lake Michigan and the skyline. Our pick for watching Chicago’s Wednesday-night summer fireworks with a drink in hand! Fireworks and rooftop access depend on the July 2027 schedule; book ahead.

☐ **Andy’s Jazz Club — OUR FAVORITE | River North**

Enjoy live jazz and dinner at the club we visited before getting engaged.

☐ **Green Door Tavern + The Drifter | River North**

Start at the historic Green Door Tavern, then head downstairs to find The Drifter, its hidden Prohibition-style cocktail bar. Look for the ordinary door concealed behind a bookshelf/knick-knack wall. Do not knock: wait for staff to open it when they are ready to welcome you. Small groups are preferred; expect limited capacity and possible waits.

☐ **Art on theMART | Riverwalk**

Free large-scale digital art projections on the Merchandise Mart façade; check July 2027 dates.

☐ **Navy Pier fireworks | Navy Pier**

Summer fireworks over Lake Michigan, traditionally on Wednesday and Saturday evenings; confirm the 2027 schedule.

☐ **Bastille Day celebrations | Downtown / Navy Pier**

Look for French-themed events around July 14; specific 2027 programming is not yet confirmed.

☐ **Al Capone & Prohibition tour | Downtown / River North**

A guided introduction to Chicago’s gangster stories, speakeasies and bootlegging history.

PLACES TO EAT

PIZZA

☐ **Lou Malnati’s | Downtown**

Classic Chicago deep dish with buttery crust and chunky tomato sauce.

☐ **Giordano’s | Downtown**

Chicago stuffed pizza, loaded with cheese.

CHICAGO CLASSICS & CASUAL

☐ **Portillo’s | River North**

Chicago-style hot dogs and Italian beef.

☐ **Al’s #1 Italian Beef | Downtown**

Try cheese and peppers; giardiniera can be spicy. Ask for gravy on the side for dipping.

☐ **Au Cheval | West Loop**

Cult-favorite diner-style cheeseburgers; expect a wait.

CONTEMPORARY DINING & SPECIAL NIGHTS

☐ ● **VEG · Aba | Fulton Market**

Stylish Mediterranean small plates, greenery-filled rooftop terrace and excellent spreads.

☐ **Cabra | Fulton Market**

Colorful Peruvian-inspired share plates, ceviche and cocktails on The Hoxton rooftop.

☐ **Rose Mary | Fulton Market**

Buzzing Italian-Croatian restaurant with handmade pastas and Adriatic flavors.

☐ **Beatnik on the River | Downtown / Loop**

Bohemian riverfront dining, lush decor, global flavors and cocktails with a view.

☐ **The Publican | Fulton Market**

Lively communal dining with seafood, seasonal produce and hearty Midwestern cooking.

☐ **Duck Duck Goat | Fulton Market**

Playful, chef-driven Chinese-American plates in a richly decorated dining room.

BRUNCH & VEGETARIAN / VEGAN

☐ ● **VEG · Beatrix | Fulton Market**

Bright all-day café for brunch, coffee, salads and lighter meals.

☐ ● **VEG · PLANTA Queen | River North**

Stylish, fully plant-based Asian-inspired dining with creative sushi and dumplings.

NORTH SIDE

Lincoln Park · Lakeview · Wrigleyville · Uptown · Andersonville

THINGS TO SEE

☐ **Lincoln Park Zoo | Lincoln Park**

A free zoo surrounded by gardens and parkland, with animals from around the world. Great for families.

☐ **North Avenue Beach | Lincoln Park**

A lively sandy beach with spectacular downtown skyline views, swimming, sunbathing and volleyball.

☐ **Montrose Beach | Uptown**

A spacious, more relaxed Lake Michigan beach, ideal for a summer afternoon.

☐ **Andersonville neighborhood | Andersonville**

Explore independent boutiques, bookstores, antique shops, cafés and the neighborhood’s Swedish heritage.

THINGS TO DO

☐ **Chicago Cubs at Wrigley Field | Wrigleyville**

Experience baseball at one of America’s most historic ballparks, surrounded by lively pre- and post-game bars.

☐ **Cubs vs. White Sox rivalry | Wrigleyville**

The Crosstown Classic is a memorable Chicago sports experience. Check the July 2027 schedule and start times before booking.

☐ **Kingston Mines | Lincoln Park**

A legendary late-night blues club with live bands and an energetic Chicago atmosphere.

☐ **Green Mill Cocktail Lounge | Uptown**

A historic jazz club associated with Prohibition-era Chicago and Al Capone. Come for live music and vintage ambience.

PLACES TO EAT

PIZZA

☐ **Pequod’s Pizza | Lincoln Park**

Pan-style deep dish with an irresistible caramelized cheese crust.

☐ **Pat’s Pizza | Lincoln Park**

Thin, crispy Chicago tavern-style pizza cut into squares.

CONTEMPORARY & DATE-NIGHT DINING

☐ **North Pond | Lincoln Park**

Romantic seasonal American dining beside a pond in Lincoln Park.

☐ **Tala House | Andersonville**

Creative globally influenced dishes and a lovely garden-like patio.

☐ **Anteprima | Andersonville**

Cozy Italian neighborhood dining with seasonal pasta and wine.

☐ **Sochi Saigonese Kitchen | Lakeview**

Modern Vietnamese dishes in an intimate neighborhood dining room.

VEGETARIAN, CASUAL & SWEETS

☐ ● **VEG · The Chicago Diner | Lakeview**

Iconic meat-free comfort food, vegan Reubens and shakes.

☐ ● **VEG · Andie’s Restaurant | Andersonville**

Mediterranean favorites including falafel, hummus and vegan choices.

☐ **Kilwins | Andersonville**

Fudge and ice cream from a company founded in Petoskey, Michigan — a nod to Brenna’s roots.

☐ **Hopleaf | Andersonville**

Cozy Belgian-inspired gastropub, exceptional beers and famous mussels & frites. 21+.

NORTHWEST SIDE

Wicker Park · Bucktown · Logan Square

THINGS TO SEE

☐ **Wicker Park & Bucktown | Wicker Park / Bucktown**

Stroll Milwaukee, North and Damen Avenues for boutiques, vintage shops, record stores and cafés.

☐ **Logan Square boulevards | Logan Square**

Explore historic, tree-lined boulevards, the neighborhood monument and local independent businesses.

THINGS TO DO

☐ **The Up Room at The Robey | Wicker Park**

A rooftop bar with neighborhood views and a distant downtown skyline.

☐ **Logan Square nightlife | Logan Square**

Discover cocktail bars, breweries and lively restaurants along Milwaukee Avenue.

PLACES TO EAT

PIZZA & CHICAGO SPECIALTIES

☐ **Paulie Gee’s Logan Square | Logan Square**

“Logan Squares” Detroit-style pizza with crispy cheese edges.

☐ **Jibaritos y Más | Logan Square area**

Chicago-born Puerto Rican-inspired sandwiches using fried plantains instead of bread.

☐ **Omarcito’s Latin Cafe | Near Logan Square**

Latin American comfort food and jibaritos; confirm current location.

CONTEMPORARY & DATE-NIGHT DINING

☐ ● **VEG · Daisies | Logan Square**

Vegetable-forward Midwestern cooking and excellent house-made pasta.

☐ **Union | Logan Square**

Seasonal American share plates, cocktails and an impressive beer selection.

☐ **Schwa | Wicker Park**

Inventive tasting-menu fine dining with a famously unconventional atmosphere.

VEGETARIAN & DESSERT

☐ ● **VEG · Handlebar | Wicker Park**

Laid-back vegetarian and vegan tacos, sandwiches and brunch.

☐ ● **VEG · Lula Cafe | Logan Square**

Creative seasonal neighborhood cooking with strong vegetarian choices.

☐ **Margie’s Candies | Bucktown**

Old-fashioned ice cream parlor with giant sundaes.

SOUTHWEST SIDE

Pilsen · Chinatown · Bridgeport · Little Italy

THINGS TO SEE

☐ **Pilsen murals | Pilsen**

Colorful public art celebrating Mexican-American heritage, immigration and community history.

☐ **18th Street | Pilsen**

A lively corridor of Mexican bakeries, taquerias, independent shops and local art.

☐ **Chinatown Gate | Chinatown**

An iconic entrance to a neighborhood of Chinese shops, restaurants, markets and bakeries.

☐ **Chinatown Square | Chinatown**

A pedestrian-friendly shopping and dining plaza with Chinese-inspired architecture.

☐ **Ping Tom Memorial Park | Chinatown**

A peaceful riverfront park with unusual views of Chicago’s skyline and bridges.

THINGS TO DO

☐ **National Museum of Mexican Art | Pilsen**

A free museum dedicated to Mexican and Mexican-American art, history and culture.

☐ **Chicago Maritime Museum | Bridgeport**

Learn how Great Lakes shipping, rivers and waterways shaped Chicago’s development.

☐ **Browse Chinatown markets | Chinatown**

Explore grocery stores, bakeries, tea shops and specialty food markets.

PLACES TO EAT

MEXICAN & LATIN AMERICAN

☐ **Carnitas Uruapan | Pilsen**

Slow-cooked pork carnitas served with tortillas.

☐ **5 Rabanitos | Pilsen**

Welcoming Mexican restaurant for tacos and regional dishes.

☐ ● **VEG · Penelope’s Vegan Taqueria | Pilsen**

Fully plant-based Mexican street-food favorites.

CHINESE & DIM SUM

☐ **MingHin Cuisine | Chinatown**

Dim sum, steamed buns and small plates to share.

☐ **Qing Xiang Yuan Dumplings | Chinatown**

Handmade dumplings with a variety of fillings.

☐ ● **VEG · Veggie House | Chinatown**

Vegetarian Chinese favorites and plant-based options.

FRENCH BISTRO & CHICAGO CLASSICS

☐ **Chez Joël Bistro | Little Italy**

Our favorite French restaurant in Chicago! Southern French cooking with a warm bistro feel.

☐ **Al’s Italian Beef | Taylor Street**

Order cheese and peppers; giardiniera can be spicy. Ask for gravy on the side for dipping.

SOUTH SIDE

Museum Campus · Bronzeville · Hyde Park · Jackson Park · Armour Square

THINGS TO SEE

☐ **University of Chicago campus | Hyde Park**

A beautiful campus of Gothic Revival architecture, historic courtyards and leafy paths.

☐ **Jackson Park & Garden of the Phoenix | Jackson Park**

Historic parkland and a tranquil Japanese garden with ties to the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition.

☐ **Adler Planetarium lakefront viewpoint — OUR STORY | Museum Campus**

One of the most breathtaking views of Chicago’s skyline across Lake Michigan — and the very spot where I proposed to Brenna.

☐ **Bronzeville heritage | Bronzeville**

A neighborhood central to Chicago’s Black cultural history, jazz, literature and the Great Migration.

THINGS TO DO

☐ **Obama Presidential Center | Jackson Park / Woodlawn**

A museum and public campus exploring Barack Obama’s presidency, his family’s Chicago roots, democracy and civic engagement.

☐ **Shedd Aquarium | Museum Campus**

See sharks, penguins, belugas, dolphins and aquatic habitats from around the world.

☐ **Shedd aquatic presentations | Museum Campus**

Educational marine mammal presentations may feature dolphins, belugas or sea lions; check the day’s program.

☐ **Field Museum | Museum Campus**

A major natural history museum with SUE the T. rex, Máximo the titanosaur and ancient Egyptian exhibits.

☐ **Griffin Museum of Science and Industry | Hyde Park / Jackson Park**

Hands-on exhibits exploring technology, engineering, transportation and scientific discovery.

☐ **Chicago White Sox at Rate Field | Armour Square**

See the South Side’s Major League Baseball team; check the home-game schedule.