

Chicago is a bustling, energetic city that never stops

Travel Spotlight

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In the summer of 2007 my family and I made our first visit to Chicago. This was an extended stay in the Windy City and we thoroughly enjoyed our time there. More recently we returned, but this time only for a few days to attend a baby naming.

Chicago (www.choosechicago.com) is a bustling, energetic city that never stops no matter the season. It's a destination with world-class cultural attractions, diverse neighbourhoods and architectural wonders. Chicago is known for critically acclaimed restaurants, world-famous museums, first-class shopping, adventurous nightlife, action-packed sporting events and a thriving theatre scene. It is a fabulous spot to enjoy a family vacation.

Chicago's theatre industry pushes the envelope with cutting-edge performances in historic and state-of-the-art stages. The city is also world-renowned for its diverse collection of museums, which explore a variety of subjects. Chicago is home to a variety of spectacular attractions, including the Chicago Cultural Center, Navy Pier, Millennium Park, Buckingham Fountain at Grant Park, the Hancock Observatory, the Sears Tower Skydeck and some great sandy beaches.

A visit to Chicago wouldn't be complete without a shopping spree. Head to State Street and the famed "Magnificent Mile," which runs along Michigan Avenue from Oak Street to the Chicago River. For our first trip nearly three years ago, we found a home away from

home at the comfortable, affordable and conveniently located Homewood Suites Downtown Chicago (www.homewoodsuiteschicago.com) at 40 East Grand Avenue. So this time it was automatic choice. The fact that this facility is ranked number five among Chicago hotels by Trip Advisor is a pretty good endorsement. Since we there last extensive renovations have taken place in the rooms (flat screen tvs) and the general service areas.

The guest suite accommodations are just seconds away from the Chicago Loop area and other business districts. Here, the two room suites are designed with comfortable accommodations for both business and leisure travellers staying for a few days or a few weeks. Guests are well taken care of with the fully equipped kitchens complete with refrigerators, microwave ovens, stove top burners and cooking utensils. A dishwasher is also provided; however, the Suite-keepers insist on doing the dishes. A large Jewel and Osco grocery store is a mere block and a half away, making it easy to stock the fridge regularly.

All guest rooms come with high-speed internet access and a two-line phone with voicemail. Guests can pamper themselves in the indoor pool, located in the 19th floor with panoramic views of the beautiful Windy City or work out in the cardiovascular fitness center. Guests can overlook Chicago's well known architecture while enjoying the daily complimentary Suite Start hot breakfast or the Welcome Home reception featuring a complimentary light meal and beverages Monday through Thursday evenings. The breakfast is really something special. I was thoroughly impressed that the hostess recognized me from my last visit. They also have excellent valets who never forget a name.

A significant highlight for me on this trip was my first ever visit to legendary Wrigley Field, home of



(l-r) Richard W. Lenkov in Expos jersey (originally from Chomeley), Mike Cohen and Chicago Cubs owner Tom Ricketts at Wrigley Field

major league baseball's Cubs for the last 97 years. On this day the Cubs were hosting the Houston Astros. Tickets are easy to purchase online at www.cubs.com. The entire area, known as Wrigleyville, is party central before and after each game with all of the restaurants, clubs and souvenir shops packed. At the game, thanks to my brother-in-law Richard W. Lenkov's (originally from Chomeley) sharp eye, I got a chance to meet by chance the new owner of the Cubs. Tom Ricketts, 44, and his family recently purchased the club and Wrigley for about \$850 million. Ricketts is a real man of the people who was actually watching the game from a field level grill. For the record he said that he has been to Montreal a number of times and loves the city.

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