

TRAVEL

That toddling town

Lose the blues in Chicago, the heart of the midwest

BY HABEL WILKERSON
NEW YORK TIMES SYNDICATE

When the country goes in search of itself it often lands in the Midwest where beige flatness seems closer to essential truth and where Chicago, the region's capital, is the primordial big city, all granite and brown and broad, noisy boulevards.

Without the veneer of Hollywood or Broadway it is perhaps the most frankly American of big American cities, surrounded by suburbs and cornfields, proud of its skyscrapers and bratwursts.

At heart Chicago is a journeyman's town with no time for pretension. But if it is an efficient workhorse, it is also a beautiful one. Frank Lloyd Wright, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and many others have made it a living museum of architecture.

And parks named after two presidents from Illinois — Lincoln and Grant — carpet the city's edge at the foot of steel-and-concrete mountains, with Lake Michigan glowing blue on the horizon.

The city has recovered from a freak underground flood that immobilized the downtown area called the Loop in April and is now settling in for the brilliant summer, when the city becomes the country's biggest beach town.

What to do

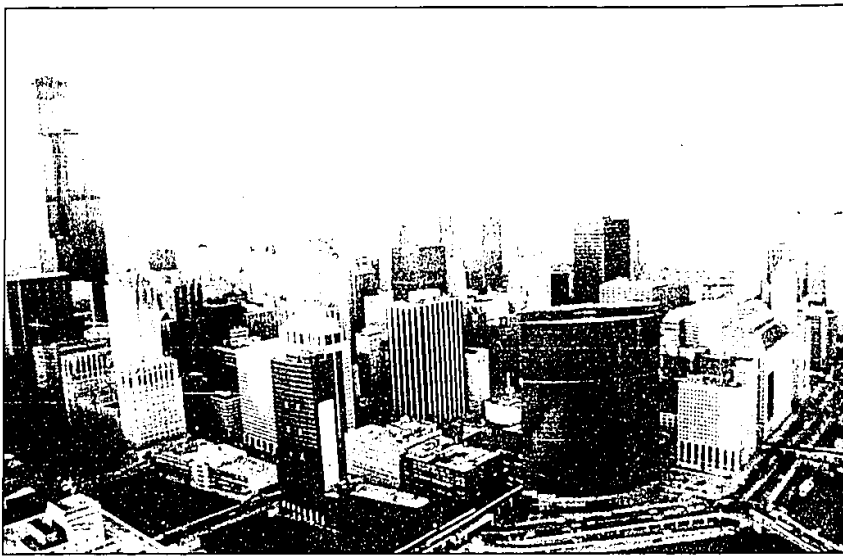
At the first hint of summer sun, swimwear-clad Chicagoans can be seen wrapped in towels and carrying beach chairs past the office buildings and boutiques of Michigan Avenue, past Canal and Armani and Hart Bendel. They are on their way to the Oak Street Beach, one of the most popular of Chicago's 29 beaches.

Other major beaches include those at North Avenue, Fullerton Avenue and Montrose Avenue.

The city's parks offer a wealth of free activities this time of year. The Grant Park Music Festival (312-819-0614), presents symphonic concerts Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday to Aug. 23. There, the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra, led by such conductors Sarah Caldwell and Michael Morgan, presents anything from Bernstein to Debussy at the park's Petrillo Music Shell at Columbus Drive and Jackson Boulevard.

The 14th annual Jazz Festival (312-744-3315) runs from Sept. 4 to 6, also at the Petrillo Music Shell. Hours are Friday 6 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday 3 p.m. to 10 p.m. Among the performers will be Mel Tormé, Diane Schuur and Spin Gyra.

The Lincoln Park Zoo, 2200 North Cannon Drive (312-294-4600), is one of the few big-city zoos



Windy city: Chicago's skyline, as viewed from the Chicago River, shows an unusual architectural mixture of bare-bones engineering principles and sleek steel-and-glass design.

still free to the public. There, at a working farm, visitors can see cows milked, butter churned, chicks hatched, Polar bears, lions, cheetahs and elephants, among others, are also on view. Open daily 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Briar Street Theater at 3133 North Halsted St. (312-348-4000), is presenting, to Sept. 13, John Guare's "Six Degrees of Separation" with Veronica Hamel. Tickets are \$29.50 to \$35.50.

The Apollo Theater, 2540 North Lincoln Ave. (312-935-6100), presents "Lend Me a Tenor" by Ken Ludwig, with John Astin, to Aug. 23. Tickets are \$27.50 to \$39.50.

Art inside and out

It is a matter of self-esteem that Chicago has the tallest building in the world (Sears Tower, 1,469 feet), the busiest airport (O'Hare) and Michael Jordan. Statue is everything. And architecture is perhaps where Chicago gets to show off most.

Frank Lloyd Wright got his start and spent the first 30 years of his career in suburban Oak Park, 9

■ Without the veneer of Hollywood or Broadway, Chicago is perhaps the most frankly American of big American cities, surrounded by suburbs and cornfields, proud of its skyscrapers and bratwursts.



Attention getter: Alexander Calder's 53-foot-tall bright vermilion-painted steel Flamingo, in the plaza on Dearborn between Adams and Jackson, is a focal point for urban events.

miles east of the Loop, where his home and studio stand fully restored. Visitors can see the barrel-vaulted playroom he built for his six children and the octagonal drafting room where he launched the Prairie School of architecture.

Oak Park and adjacent River Forest, with 31 Wright structures between them, are the richest repositories of Wright's work. Guided tours of his home and studio, 851 Chicago Ave., Oak Park, Ill. (708-848-1500), run weekdays at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. and 3 p.m., and weekends continuously from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The cost is \$6.

Architectural walking tours of the Loop explore early skyscrapers such as the Chicago Board of Trade and the Rookery, or modern buildings such as Sears Tower, the space-ship-shaped State of Illinois Center, and monumental outdoor sculpture by Calder, Picasso and Miró.

The tours, sponsored by the Chicago Architecture Foundation, 224 South Michigan Ave. (312-922-3432), cover a mile and half and last two hours. Tours at a cost of \$7 are given April through September on weekdays at 10 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.; Saturday at 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. and

1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m., and Sunday at 1:30 p.m.

The rest of the year tours are only at 1:30 p.m. The foundation also gives boat tours along the Chicago River, charting landmarks such as the Wrigley Building, Marina City and the Merchandise Mart. Tours depart daily at 10 a.m., noon, 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Tickets cost \$15.

The Art Institute of Chicago, Michigan Avenue at Adams Street (312-443-3600), with its treasure of Impressionist and 20th-century American paintings, recently opened new galleries of Chinese, Japanese and Korean art.

Among its current exhibitions are: Master European paintings from the National Gallery of Ireland, featuring works by such artists as Goya, through Aug. 9; and paintings by Jacob Lawrence depicting the lives of abolitionists Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, to Aug. 6. Open 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday; 10:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday; and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Admission is \$6; Tuesday free.

Visitors to the Field Museum of Natural History, Roosevelt Road at South Lake Shore Drive (312-922-9410), can see a collection of robotic insects and arachnids up to 12 feet long in "Backyard Monsters: The World of Insects," to Sept. 7. Among permanent exhibits are prehistoric skeletons and a re-creation of an Egyptian tomb. Open daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$4, \$2.50 for children; Thursday free.

Across from the Field Museum, the Shedd Aquarium, 1200 South Lake Shore Drive (312-939-2438), juts out from the shore. Beluga whales and dolphins live in the 2 million-gallon Oceanarium, the centerpiece of a Pacific Northwest coastal re-creation, complete with driftwood and beach pebbles. Open daily, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is \$7; \$5 for children and senior citizens. Advance purchase through Ticketmaster (312-559-0200) is recommended in summer.

Farther south near the University of Chicago the enormously popular Museum of Science and Industry, 57th Street at Lake Shore Drive (312-684-1414), offers hands-on computer exhibitions, simulated submarines in tunnels and re-creations of coal mines. Open daily 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. General admission is \$5, \$2 for children; free on Thursday.

On view to early next year in the Omnimax Theater, "Ring of Fire," about volcanic eruptions in the Pacific Rim. Ticket prices are \$5.50; \$3.50 for children. For museum and theater: \$5.50, \$4.50 and 11 a.m. and

Marketing music: Opera buffs love Met shop

BY EVERTT POTTER
SPECIAL WRITER

For opera buffs — and people buying gifts for them — the closest place to heaven on earth is The Metropolitan Opera Shop in New York.

"There is nothing like it anywhere in the United States," said Greg Stauer, the shop's retail manager. It is filled with opera memorabilia, photographs, compact discs, videotapes and opera glasses.

The store is in a bright, airy space tucked into a corner of the Metropolitan Opera House — "the Met" — at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

The non-profit opera shop and its sister operations, The Performing Arts Shop and The Gallery at Lincoln Center, are operated by The Metropolitan Opera Association. They do business all year, not just during opera season, which is September to April.

"We're open from 10 in the morning right through the second intermission at 10 at night," Stauer says. "In fact, we probably do half our business between 8 and 10 every night. On Saturdays you can't shoehorn a person in here."

Much of the merchandise is commissioned for the shop itself.

■ "We're open from 10 in the morning right through the second intermission at 10 at night. In fact, we probably do half our business between 8 and 10 every night. On Saturdays you can't shoehorn a person in here."

Greg Stauer
the shop's retail manager

One of the hottest items is the Metropolitan Opera Ticket Portfolio, an elegant cowhide wallet with 12 pockets for opera, theater and sports tickets. Available in red or black, it's priced at \$95.

Shoppers can also find a Carissimi Verdi handmade Italian silk scarf decorated with images of 19th-century Verdi opera scenes. It costs \$200.

The shop also carries small white Italian-made busts of famous composers. They come in four different sizes and range in price from \$19.95 to \$120.

The busts, which Stauer says are "very sought after," look like marble set on an alabaster base. There are 15 composers available, including Mozart, Verdi, Wagner, Puccini and Beethoven.

"Perhaps one in 10 opera lovers own opera glasses," said Stauer. The shop carries the Taven brand in prices ranging from \$95 to \$185.

As for opera glasses made of mother-of-pearl and gold, Stauer says they're hard to see with, not to see with. But the shop

stocks a handsome pair for \$125.

"We've had a lot of requests for lorgnettes as well," he says, referring to the classic opera glasses mounted on a handle. "We found some and we'll have them for next season."

The shop carries collectibles too, such as a hand-painted majolica statue of Violetta, the heroine of Verdi's "La Traviata." The statues are made in an edition of 500 and each one sells for \$98.

There is also a large selection of autographed vintage photos, letters and manuscripts, including a signed black-and-white photo of soprano Maria Callas, framed with the program for her performance in "Tosca" at the Met on Feb. 28, 1958. It costs \$750.

For the budget-minded, there's the opera game Trivium for \$29.95; both towels depicting a scene from "Aida" or "Madame Butterfly" for \$26.95; and mugs decorated with scenes from such operas as "Carmen" and "Der Rosenkavalier" for \$11.95.

The shop's collection of opera

tapes, compact discs and videos is extensive.

Downstairs at The Performing Arts Shop children's gifts are the specialty.

This is where to find a "Peter and the Wolf" T-shirt for \$12.95; a hardcover book of "Madame Butterfly," illustrated by Kim Palmer (Simon & Schuster, 1987), for \$7.99; and a stuffed rabbit in a pink ballet tutu for \$39.

Adults may prefer a Mozart mug for \$12 or an oven mitt covered with musical notes for \$7.95. For further information contact The Performing Arts Shop at (212) 580-4356.

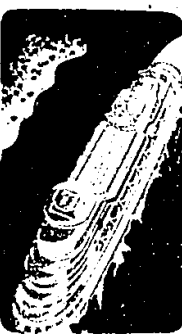
Adjacent to this shop is The Gallery at Lincoln Center, which specializes in fine art posters and prints, many of which have been commissioned by Lincoln Center.

Contemporary artists such as Howard Hodgkin, David Hackney, Judith Murray, Gary Bukovnik and Patrick Gordon are represented. A work by Bukovnik called "Hybrid Lilies," for example, is available as a signed and numbered lithograph in an edition of 150 for \$600 or as a poster for \$50. For further information call (212) 580-4673.

The Metropolitan Opera Shop publishes a catalog that lists some of its offerings.

For a free copy or for further information on all the shops contact The Metropolitan Opera Shop, 70 Lincoln Center, New York, N.Y. 10023 or call (800) 892-2625 or (212) 769-7010.

ROYAL CARIBBEAN BREAKS THROUGH IN '92.



Now is your golden opportunity to cruise with Royal Caribbean at very special rates on selected ships and sailing dates. Enjoy breakthrough savings on the cruise line that sails the world over, to the Bahamas, Bermuda, the Caribbean, Alaska, Europe and Mexico, from 3 to 12 nights. Hurry and make your reservations today as rates will increase or be withdrawn without notice. Any NEW bookings received by 8-1-92 will "receive a special bonus gift."

From
\$595

ROYAL CARIBBEAN®
THE LEADER IN CRUISE LINE SERVICE



Cruise Network Luxury Cruises at affordable prices

Farmington Hills Trans Global Travel 851-2232	Garden City Your Travel Planner 322-7020 1-800-873-0722	Livonia Business & Pleasure 478-3525 1-800-837-9832
Rochester Great Oaks Travel 652-1004 1-800-853-4887	Donneson World Class Travel 353-5811	Sterling Heights Business & Pleasure 939-7070

Prices per person based on double occupancy cruise-only. Prices vary by season. Certain conditions apply. Low air add-on available upon request.