

TRAVEL

Chicago - the Windy City is bright, busy and bluesy

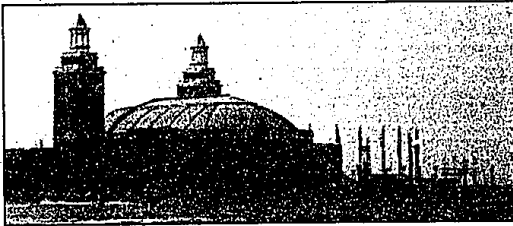
BY BRIGITTE D. KNUDSON SPECIAL WRITER

We flew into Chicago's Midway Airport on a Thursday morning. The weather was warm, sunny, and well breezy. In anticipation of my first trip to a big city, I completely forgot Chicago's nickname: the Windy City. One of my travelling companions, who packed several mid-thigh sundresses, quickly decided that she probably wouldn't be wearing them because of the wind problem.

Upon exiting the airport, we stepped over to the cab coordinator to get a cab downtown. She informed us that a cab would cost \$10 per person (\$40 for all of us), and suggested a limousine for only \$5 more (\$45 total). We agreed to the limousine, but skeptically anticipated one of those air-conditioned vans that many services try to pawn off as a limousine.

Five minutes later, a brand new 1998 white stretch limousine pulled up next to our designated waiting spot. A pleasant surprise, indeed. And, our driver, pointed out some of the buildings of interest as we made our way downtown. Upon exiting, he told us and our things stay, gave us his card and told us to call him for our trip back to the airport.

Although we arrived before 11 a.m., the DoubleTree had our suite ready, so we immediately checked in and had our things brought up. Our 26th floor suite overlooked Michigan Avenue and



the Greater Chicago area. The view was beautiful, especially at night when the town lights up like a Christmas tree.

Visiting a large city with a vibrant downtown has some great perks. Just about everything we did was within comfortable walking distance from the hotel. I didn't plan on a fitness vacation, but all the walking I did was definitely a change from my usual, at-home routine of walking to the car, driving, etc.

We took cabs on two occasions and found the drivers courteous, yet aggressive. One driver hit 68 mph traveling on Michigan Avenue - a very scary experience at any time of day.

Food is an important consideration on any vacation, and Chicago's choices are almost baffling. Every conceivable ethnic food, as well as more traditional fare, is available, and prices range from cheap to steep. An excellent, affordably priced

Italian eatery is Tucci Benuech. Located on the 5th Floor of the Bloomingdale's building, its décor is styled after an Italian country home, with room themes such as dining room and patio. The food here was fresh and prepared with care, and the wait staff was very attentive and knowledgeable. The fresh strawberries with pralines were delightful.

Chicago is known for its stuffed pizzas, so we ventured to Giordano's; one of Chicago's most popular. I found the stuffed spinach pizza average and the service was inattentive - definitely nothing to write home about. In contrast, the stuffed spinach pizza at Bacio's Heart Healthy Pizza was amazing. Bacio's fresh ingredients and full flavor will render any pizza lover in awe that it is actually a healthy meal.

Navy Pier is a must-see attraction for any visitor to Chicago.

Extending one-half mile into Lake Michigan and newly renovated in 1998, it offers a Children's Museum, IMAX theater, a one-acre botanical garden, a 150-foot Ferris Wheel, beer garden, live music, sightseeing boats and cruises, bike/inline skate rental, nine full-service restaurants, a food court, and various other stores.

Moreover, Navy Pier features a variety of modern sculptures that dot the landscape. It seems that every few feet there is a new sculpture to gaze at and appreciate - a very classy touch. New to Navy Pier this year is Joe's Be-Bop Café & Jazz Emporium. Featuring Cajun-style food and live Chicago jazz seven nights a week, with a special musical Sunday Brunch, Joe's is an establishment with good service and great music. During my visit, the Chicago Blues featuring piano, saxophone, drums, and a

singer, kept the place hopping. In addition, House of Blues and Buddy Guy's Legends offer live blues music, a Chicago staple; most nights of the week. Performers and prices can vary, so call ahead.

While sightseeing boats are available at Navy Pier, several are also docked in the Chicago River/Michigan Avenue vicinity, often at a reduced rate. For \$10, I had the pleasure of taking a 90-minute architectural cruise on the Chicago Riverboat along the Chicago River, through the locks, into Lake Michigan, and back.

Another great way to view Chicago's lovely architecture is to check out the view from the Hancock Observatory, located on the 94th floor of the John Hancock Center. Along with a 360-degree view of the city, the Observatory features a skywalk, a history wall tracing the history of skyscrapers in Chicago, and soundscapes. I found the view to be more scenic and crowds lighter than at the Sears Tower.

No trip to the Windy City is complete without checking out the Art Institute of Chicago. The Impressionist and Contemporary collections are among the best in the country. I found the view to be more scenic and crowds lighter than at the Sears Tower. No trip to the Windy City is complete without checking out the Art Institute of Chicago. The Impressionist and Contemporary collections are among the best in the country. I found the view to be more scenic and crowds lighter than at the Sears Tower.

thing from framed cards and shirts to books, framed art and jewelry. Unlike our own DIA, the AIC is open every day of the year except Thanksgiving and Christmas. A \$7 donation is requested, but Tuesday is free.

Lastly, if you're a shopper, the Magnificent Mile, consisting of a bunch of shops along Michigan Avenue between the river and Oak, is not to be missed. Here you will find Bloomingdale's, Cartier, the Viacom Store and others. Viacom is a great place to pick up goodies from your favorite movies and television shows. Merchandise from VH1, MTV, Star Trek, Blue's Clues, and Nick at Nite, among others, can be purchased here.

September brings the end of the festival season, but be sure to check out the Chicago Celtic Festival, Sept. 19-20 in Grant Park. Beginning Oct. 13, the AIC will feature a special exhibit featuring 125 paintings tracing the career of Impressionist painter Mary Cassatt. In addition, the Ford Center for the Performing Arts will host the Chicago premiere engagement of "Ragtime: The Musical," Oct. 27 through Feb. 14.

If you are planning a trip to Chicago, be sure to access the city's Web site at <http://www.chicago.il.gov>. Preview Travel can be found at [www.preview-travel.com](http://www.preview-travel.com).

Brigitte Knudson is a Livonia freelance writer.

GREAT ESCAPES

WINTER'S COMING

Do you have some favorite winter vacation getaways. We'd like to hear about them for travel stories. Whether you enjoy escaping the wind and snow of Detroit by flying to a tropical isle or you believe in embracing winter by skiing Whistler or dog sledding Alaska, let us know. Call Hugh Gallagher at 734-955-2118, or fax him at 734-591-7279 or e-mail him at [hgallagher@ec.homecomm.net](mailto:hgallagher@ec.homecomm.net).

**SERVICE TO NEWARK** - KIWI International Air Lines began service between Newark and Detroit's Metropolitan Wayne County Airport Aug. 31. Fares begin at \$79 each way and are available from any travel agent or by calling 800-JET-

KIWI

"We have an opportunity and fortunately the flexibility to quickly enter this market," said Jerry Murphy, President and CEO. "To the benefit of consumers, the airport officials deserve a lot of credit for the rapid pace at which they assisted our entry into the Detroit market."

Based in Newark, KIWI serves Newark, Chicago, Atlanta, Orlando, Palm Beach, Miami, Detroit, and San Juan and Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. KIWI started flying in September, 1992. It has a perfect flying record and is supported by pilots who average 23 years flying experience.

KIWI offers its Commuter

Book for regular flyers, which consists of ten fully transferable coupons for the price of nine tickets. Information and fare specials area available at [www.jetkiwi.com](http://www.jetkiwi.com).

SUMMER VACATION

Dave Tato will present "What I Did on My Summer Vacation: Backpacking in Glacier National Park," 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 24 at REI, 17659 Harper Road, Northville. Tato will offer low impact backpacking and back country photography information. His trip in July took him to

the southern part of the park to a wilderness.

A basic bicycle maintenance program will be presented 10 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 26, by REI staff. The program will cover proper fitting, how to fix a flat tire and do simple brake and derailleur adjustments.

All classes are free and open to the public. For information, call (248)347-9100.

FALL TOURS

Berkley Tours in Southfield is offering several fall color tours by bus. Sept. 23 to Oct. 3 and

Oct. 4-10 features a tour to Cape Cod for fall color and whale watching for \$659. On Oct. 3-10 and Oct. 10-17 they are offering a tour of Boston, Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard for \$779. On Sept. 26-27 and Oct. 9-11, they are offering a trip to the Soo for a ride on the Agaw Canyon Train and gambling at the Kawadani for \$308. On Sept. 30 to Oct. fall color in Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire is featured at \$799. If you mention the Observer & Eccentric Berkley will give you a \$5 dis-

count on your trip. For information on these and other trips, call (248)559-8620 or (800)876-8687.

GAMBLING TRIP

West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation is sponsoring a trip to the Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort in Mount Pleasant on Wednesday, Oct. 7. The trip costs \$37 for a resident of West Bloomfield and \$40 for a non-resident. The fee includes transportation plus double your money's worth when you buy tokens. Register by Sept. 28 by calling (248)738-2600.

Shakespeare Goes West! Sept. 16 through Oct. 11. The Bard's hilarious comedy has moved to 1890s New Mexico! But the "merry wives" still prevail over John Falstaff, their unwanted suitor. the Merry Wives of Windsor by William Shakespeare. MEADOW BROOK THEATRE. For Tickets Call Meadow Brook Box Office (248) 377-3300. Ticketmaster (248) 645-6666. Hudson & Harmony House.

SUGARLOAF'S 4TH ANNUAL NOVI art fair OCT. 23, 24, 25, 1998. 325 ARTISANS WITH OVER 38 CATEGORIES OF FINE ART & CONTEMPORARY CRAFTS... gold & silver jewelry • leather handbags & wallets • silk and hand woven clothing • custom hardwood furniture • clay • porcelain pottery • blown glass vases & leaded glass panels • metal & wood sculptures • originals & prints • wildlife & scenic photography • forged iron accessories • and much more! DIRECTIONS: Located on I-96 northwest of Detroit at Exit 162. Go south on Novi Road. Turn right onto Expo Center Drive. DOWNTOWN ADMISSION COUPONS AVAILABLE AT PARTICIPATING FROM OUR WEBSITE OR CALL 800-210-9900.

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY CASSATT... Something truly impressive. The Mary Cassatt/Modern Woman exhibit is on display at the Art Institute of Chicago from October 13th through January 10, 1999. Packages including preferred tickets begin at only \$119.00. 1-800-621-6909. CALL NOW WHILE PACKAGES LAST. ESSEX INN on Grant Park. LESS ON THE ROOM, MORE ON THE TOWN. 800 S. Michigan Avenue • Downtown Chicago, Illinois 60605.

NOVI EXPO CENTER THUR. SEPT. 24, 2-10 pm FRI. SEPT. 25, 2-10pm SAT. SEPT. 26, 10 am-10pm SUN. SEPT. 27, 10 am-7 pm Hundreds of exhibitors bringing you thousands of products, services and ideas to improve your home! WIR'S JOE GAGNON, "THE APPLIANCE DOCTOR" Answers your questions. THE 1998 FALL REMODELING SHOW

BRITISH HOME IMPROVEMENT EXPERT Michael Colbode demonstrates the art of wall treating and faux finishes. As seen on Lifetime and HGTV. PLUS... National Kitchen and Bath Association members' sale of cabinets and counters. Proceeds to benefit Habitat for Humanity. Daily demonstrations on home improvement. Treasure Chest contest with daily prizes. SHOWCASE OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES Display of new homes, sponsored by Standard Federal Bank. ADMISSION: ADULTS \$6.00 SENIORS \$4.00 CHILDREN 6-12 \$3.00 CHILDREN UNDER 6 FREE Family tickets for two adults and accompanying children available at Farmer Jack - \$9.00. NOVI EXPO CENTER • 1-96 & NOVI RD. SEPTEMBER 24-27 www.bulldozers.org