



worth ^{THE} trip

TRAVEL DESTINATIONS IN THE MIDWEST

Ultimate Guide to Winter Festivals and Events in Chicago Area



Visitors shop at Christkindlmarket Chicago on Dec. 4, 2013, in Chicago, Illinois. Christkindlmarket Chicago is a German-themed outdoor market open during the Christmas shopping season in Daley Plaza in the Chicago Loop. Vendors sell gifts, crafts, ornaments and traditional German food at the market. (Photo by Scott Olson/Getty Images)

The thought of winter weather in Chicago can cause feelings of dread, but the season also brings a host of fun festivals and events to the city to keep the winter blues away.

Take a look at our ultimate guide to the biggest festivals and events happening from Nov. 20 through February.

November:

Christkindlmarket

When: Nov. 20 to Dec. 24

Where: Daley Plaza, between Washington, Clark and Dearborn streets

Hours: 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday to Thursday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Admission: Free

What It's About: Inspired by the Christkindlesmarkt in Nuremberg, Germany, the Chicago Christkindlmarket celebrates German and European tradition with food, drink and gifts.

Magnificent Mile Lights Festival

When: Nov. 21

Where: Magnificent Mile on Michigan Avenue, between Wacker Drive and Oak Street

Hours: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. for the interactive holiday wonderland, a tree-lighting parade from 5:30-7:30 p.m. and fireworks at 6:55 p.m.

Admission: Free

What It's About: Each year before Thanksgiving, the Magnificent Mile lights up with more than 1 million lights adorning 200 trees. A parade and a fireworks show over the Chicago River accompany the lighting event.

Randolph Street Market Festival

When: Nov. 21-22, Nov. 28-29, Dec. 12-13

Where: Plumbers Hall, 1340 W. Washington

Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Admission: General admission for individuals is \$8 online or \$10 at the door. The family package for two adults/two drinks and up to four kids, including a kid's snack, is \$25 online. The "four girlfriends" package is \$30. Student admission is \$3, and the three-for-two student ticket special is \$6. Senior discounts for \$5 are available at the gate. Kids under 12 get in free.

What It's About: With more than 200 vendors, this European- style, indoor-outdoor urban market offers shoppers opportunities to buy everything from furnishings to collectibles to clothes.

Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony at Millenium Park

When: Nov. 24

Where: Millenium Park at the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Washington Street

Hours: Program begins at 5:30 p.m. with the official lighting at 6 p.m.

Admission: Free

What It's About: This is the first year the tree is located in Millenium Park, and spectators can watch officials light the giant Christmas tree to kick off the holiday season. Visitors can view the lit tree through the end of December.

McDonald's Thanksgiving Parade

When: Nov. 26

Where: State Street, beginning at Congress and moving northbound to Randolph

Hours: Parade begins at 8 a.m.

Admission: Free

What It's About: The annual Thanksgiving Day parade through downtown Chicago kicks off the long holiday weekend with marching bands, balloons and floats from groups around the city.

Lincoln Park Zoo's Zoolights

When: Nov. 27-29, Dec. 4-6 and nightly from Dec. 11 to Jan. 3 (excluding Dec. 24 and 25)

Where: Lincoln Park Zoo

Hours: 4:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Admission: Free

What It's About: The Lincoln Park Zoo will display more than 2 million lights as it transforms into a winter wonderland. Some days will feature a Santa, holiday crafts, food and an assortment of other family-friendly activities.

West Town Winterfest

When: Nov. 28

Where: Various locations near Halsted and Grand

Hours: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Admission: Free

What It's About: As fall wraps up, the winter festivities begin in Chicago. Businesses and restaurants in the West Town neighborhood welcome the oncoming season by offering the best in local shopping and dining.

Wreathing of the Lions at the Art Institute

When: Nov. 27

Where: Michigan Avenue entrance to the Art Institute of Chicago, located at 111 S. Michigan Ave.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Admission: Free

What It's About: Kick off the holiday season by watching the annual wreathing of the iconic lions at the Art Institute of Chicago and enjoying complimentary hot chocolate and music.

December:

Brewlights Brings Craft Beer to Zoolights at the Lincoln Park Zoo

When: Dec. 2

Where: Lincoln Park Zoo

Hours: 5:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Admission: Ticket prices start at \$40

What It's About: An assortment of 12 breweries will participate in this fundraising effort where all proceeds go to keeping the zoo free and open to the public. Explore the zoo with its Zoolight decorations while you sip a dozen sample pours of craft beers.

One of a Kind Holiday Show

When: Dec. 3 to 6

Where: The Merchandise Mart

Hours: 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Dec. 3-4, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Dec. 5 and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Dec. 6

Admission: Adult admission is \$12 (ages 12+), and online ticket deals are available until Dec. 2 for group packages and parking deals.

What It's About: More than 600 artists will sell their wares at the One of a Kind Show. A portion of the ticket sales will benefit Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago.

Holiday Magic at Brookfield Zoo

When: Opening ceremony on Dec. 5 at 5 p.m. Show continues every Saturday and Sunday in December plus Dec. 28-31.

Where: Brookfield Zoo

Hours: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., festivities begin at 4 p.m.

Admission: General admission is \$16.95 for adults, \$11.95 for seniors 65 and older and \$11.95 for children ages 3 to 11. Zoo members get free admission and parking. Military personnel also get free entry with valid ID.

What It's About: The Brookfield Zoo features over a million LED lights, new polar lights, an interactive light extravaganza, a 41-foot talking tree, interactive tic-tac toe, a train display, carolers, ice carvers and more. Santa will also make an appearance on select days.

Chicago's Holiday Renegade Craft Fair

When: Dec. 5 to 6

Where: Bridgeport Art Center, 1200 W. 35th Street

Hours: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Admission: Free

What It's About: This craft fair offers a curated selection of indie-craft goods perfect for holiday gifts. There are also DIY workshops in addition to shopping.