

# TIME OUT! SUNDAY

## Your Planning Guide for Entertainment & Travel

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Mexican pop singer Luis Miguel takes the Rosemont Theatre stage » **2**

**Sudoku**

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December 20, 2015

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## Great escapes

Offbeat and interesting ways to spend your holiday break in Chicago» **6**

The terrace at Cindy's restaurant atop the Chicago Athletic Association Hotel is a popular gathering spot because of its fire pit and view of Millennium Park across the street.

# Explore Chicago arts, culture from storied Chicago Athletic Association



**By Katherine Rodeghier**  
Daily Herald Correspondent

You wouldn't expect a new hotel to hire a storyteller as it prepared to open its doors, but that's just what the Chicago Athletic Association Hotel did before it greeted its first guests last May. The building that housed a private club (the Chicago Athletic Association) for more than a century has a storied past, and the staff needed to be schooled in the art of telling tales so everyone from the doorman to the desk clerk could offer guests a tidbit of trivia.

Like the story that the Milk Room, the hotel's morning coffee shop and evening cocktail lounge, served as a speakeasy during Prohibition. Or that club member William Wrigley appropriated the club's logo for a little baseball team he owned, the Chicago Cubs.

An architectural treasure, with a Michigan Avenue facade modeled after the Doges Palace in Venice, the building faced demolition after the club disbanded and was listed among the nation's 11 most endangered places. But along came investors with a vision, among them John Pritzker, fourth generation Chicagoan of the wealthy Pritzker family, and the landmark was transformed into a 241-room boutique hotel with a hipster vibe.

Across the street from Millennium Park and a block from the Art Institute of Chicago, it makes an ideal base for an arts and culture exploration of downtown Chicago. Some of the city's top theaters lie within walking distance and opportunities for tours focusing on art and architecture abound.

## If buildings could talk

Even if you don't check into the Chicago Athletic Association Hotel, you can see it on a Chicago Architecture Foundation tour. Look up in the White City Ballroom where an unusual stalactite ceiling kept plaster artisans busy for months, and stroll through the Drawing Room, once the social gathering spot for the club's elite members who drank whiskey and smoked cigars by its colossal fireplace. The room still has a clubby feel with upholstered chairs and sofas, bas-relief woodwork, art glass windows and a long library table where scrapbooks belonging to Pritzker's grandfather, a prominent judge in the 1920s, display news clippings about famous court cases.

Plenty of architecturally significant buildings can be found in downtown Chicago, and the foundation offers tours of many of them. Take, for example, its

PHOTOS COURTESY OF  
KATHERINE RODEGHIER

**The Michigan Avenue facade of the Chicago Athletic Association Hotel is modeled after the Doges Palace in Venice, Italy.**



**"Dawn Shadows"** by Louise Nevelson is one of several pieces of public art a Chicago Greeter can show you.

tour of the Rookery at 209 S. LaSalle St., an office building that started out as a water storage tank that attracted birds, hence its name. Docents point out the 19th-century work of architects Daniel Burnham and John Wellborn Root who had their offices here, and tell stories about the remodeling of the lobby by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1904. Wright covered the dark interior in white marble and gave the glass and metal grill ceiling the light and airy look of a bird cage. Outside, the building resembles a rock-solid red fortress in a combination Moorish and Richardson Romanesque design.

## Art walk with an insider

Chicago's downtown has been blessed with public art, works that go way beyond the unnamed Picasso sculpture at the Richard J. Daley Center and "Cloud Gate," otherwise known as "The Bean," in Millennium Park. City and state programs require a percentage of the cost of new buildings in Chicago be set aside for public art. A Chicago Greeter can help you find them. These volunteers, knowledgeable and passionate about Chicago, give free tours on public art and a wide variety of other topics.

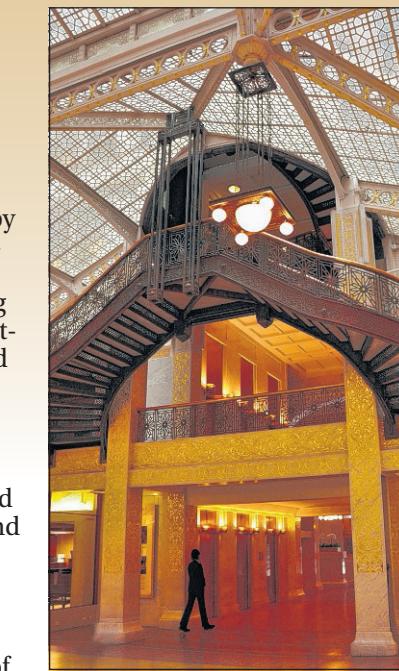
Maureen de Mattoff, who has led tours since the Greeter program began in 2002, takes visitors to see the abstract expressionist art of Frank Stella inside the building at 181 W. Madison St. and Louise Nevelson's "Dawn Shadows," influenced by the "L" tracks behind its home inside the office center at 200 W. Madison St. She points out the statue of Roman goddess Ceres atop the Chicago Board of Trade and explains why it has no face.

At 120 N. LaSalle St., de Mattoff tells the story of Daedalus and Icarus from Greek mythology. You see it depicted just above the entrance in a mosaic by Chicago artist Roger Brown. The building itself is the work of internationally renowned architect Helmut Jahn, who also designed the James R. Thompson Center a few blocks away. Here de Mattoff beckons visitors to stand inside "Monument with Standing Beast" for a different perspective of Jean Dubuffet's fiberglass sculpture.

## Art on stage and in galleries

Guests at downtown Chicago hotels who venture out for an evening's entertainment can find plenty of choices in the performing arts close by, from the Chicago Symphony to the Lyric Opera, to the venerable Goodman Theatre and Broadway in Chicago productions at the Oriental, Cadillac Palace and Bank of America Theatre.

The Joffrey Ballet performs at the Auditorium Theatre. The Harris Theater, on the north end of Millennium Park, hosts Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, one of the world's top contemporary dance companies founded in 1977 as the Lou Conti Dance



**Frank Lloyd Wright left his mark on the Rookery when he remodeled the lobby in 1904.**

collection of other European modern and contemporary art as well as American art and Japanese prints. Its most popular holdings include Grant Wood's "American Gothic," Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks," Georges Seurat's "A Sunday on the Isle of La Grande Jatte — 1884" and Pablo Picasso's "The Old Guitarist."

The neoclassical building itself ranks as a work of art. Constructed on what was then Chicago's lakefront to house delegates to the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, its two bronze lions still guard the Michigan Avenue entrance.

## A storied hotel

The exposition also prompted the building of the Chicago Athletic Association property. Members of the private club wanted to impress exposition delegates with their Venetian Gothic building, but a fire and funding issues delayed completion of the building until the exposition was winding down.

No matter. With members such as Wrigley, AG Spalding (sporting goods), Cyrus McCormick (International Harvester) and Marshall Field (department stores and publishing), it continued to thrive as a privileged hangout for the city's elite — men only until the 1970s.

A two-year restoration preserved the building's treasures while adding hotel amenities for the Millennial generation. You can hold true to the club's athletic spirit by playing billiards, shuffleboard, table soccer or bocce ball in the Game Room. Afterward enjoy a highball or glass of Schlitz while downing the Heffelfinger hot dog named for William "Pudge" Heffelfinger who played amateur football for the Chicago Athletic Association. More refined meals are served in the Cherry Circle Room that exudes a "Mad Men" feel. Classic cocktails can be mixed tableside, if you wish, and several meat entrees can be carved at your table, too.

Guest rooms hark back to the early 20th century with marble baths and lacquered wooden armoires containing faux boxing robes. You'll find the mini bar stocked with locally sourced spirits and confections, such as Cracker Jack and Wrigley's chewing gum.

The hotel's crowning glory, Cindy's, sits under a skylight on the roof. Platters of the award-winning chef's best circulate family-style on picnic tables evoking the ambience of a Great Lakes beach house. Crowds pack the terrace to sit around a fire pit and take in sweeping views of Millennium Park. Art has a privileged position in the restaurant's private dining space. A portrait of its namesake, Cindy Pritzker, the family's eccentric matriarch, hangs above the fireplace. It's an Andy Warhol original.

• Information for this article was gathered on a research trip sponsored by Choose Chicago.

# 3 new spaces where adults can channel their inner child

## Where to stay

### Virgin Hotels Chicago

203 N. Wabash Ave.,  
(855) 946-6600, virginhotels.com  
Modern and playful, four eateries and a spa on-site. Rooms from \$229.

## Where to eat

### The Commons Club at Virgin Hotel

203 N. Wabash Ave., (312) 940-4400, virginhotels.com  
Trendy and busy. Watch the chefs at work. Open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily. Entrees from \$21. Local favorite: the \$44 tattooed rib-eye.

## What to do

### Maggie Daley Park

337 E. Randolph St., Park: (312) 552-3000, Fieldhouse: (312) 742-3918, maggidaleypark.com  
Open from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.  
Fieldhouse hours are 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday.  
Seasonal rock climbing equipment, ice skating rentals and/or lessons: \$15-\$90.

### Hike or bike the 606

Starting point: Walsh Park, 1722 N. Ashland Ave., 606.org  
An elevated old railway line has been transformed into a curvy green park pathway. Crossing boutiques, eateries and former industrial neighborhoods, it is now hipper than hip. Find bike rentals at divvibikes.com. Open from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Information: choosechicago.com



**An adventurer scales one of the two rock-climbing walls in Chicago's Maggie Daley Park.**

See PLAY on page 10

## By Anne Calcagno

Special to The Washington Post

Play makes for happier children and resurrects the inner child in the rest of us. Applying this philosophy to urban planning, Chicago has inaugurated three bold venues in the past year that season childlike exuberance with just the right jolt of grown-up creativity.

An underground garage's leaking roof was transformed into a verdant park, a foreclosed bank was reinterpreted as a cheeky hotel, and a derelict rail line has been repurposed into an urban-cool bike and hike trail. Welcome to Chicago's newest playgrounds.

## Maggie Daley Park

Chicago's motto is Urbs in Horto, or City in a Garden, and it feels truer now that downtown boasts 20 new acres of lush green parkland honoring Maggie Daley, the late wife of former Chicago mayor Richard M. Daley. Set atop the now-repaired underground garage and connected to Millennium Park via a pedestrian bridge, Maggie Daley Park completes a 45-acre tract that Mike Kelly, superintendent of the Chicago Park District, describes as "the largest combined green roof area in the United States."

The park, which opened last December, rises along the west side of busy Lake Shore Drive. It's a hilly landscape, created by stacking and molding 71,000 cubic yards of polystyrene-based geofoam, then burying them under horticultural soil.

On a frigid February afternoon, I watched die-hard Blackhawks fans swoop around elated wobbly children on the park's Ice Ribbon skating path. In April, when the weather warmed, I wandered among the upside-down tree trunks of the Enchanted Forest. All summer, orange-helmeted grown-ups and kids scaled the two 40-foot outdoor climbing walls.

A couple of hills over, the three-acre Play Garden shows off water-themed and some water-sprouting play equipment. From the Lighthouse to the Harbor, the Boat House, and the Watering Hole, children get to play captain,

Washington Post

Here's a look at DVDs coming out Tuesday, Dec. 22:

**"Pan"** (PG, 111 minutes, Warner): Peter Pan origin story set during World War II stars Hugh Jackman as the pirate Blackbeard. "(F)laws and all, 'Pan' is clever, funny and emotionally and visually rewarding," declared Washington Post "Family Filmgoer" columnist Jane Horwitz. Contains fantasy action violence, language and some thematic material. Extras include "The Boy Who Would Be Pan" featurette. Blu-ray adds director's commentary, "Never Grow Up: The Legend of Pan," "The Scoundrels of Neverland" and "Wondrous Realms."

**"War Room"** (PG, 120 minutes, Sony): Christian movie in which prayer saves a marriage that's on the rocks. Contains mild profanity and thematic elements. Extras include deleted scenes; commentary with director Alex Kendrick and producer Stephen Kendrick; eight featurettes: "Making of War Room," "War Room in 60 Seconds," "The Heart of War Room," "From Auditioning to Acting: A Look at What It Takes to Cast a Movie," "Molly Bruno — Modern Day Miss Clara," "Investing in the Next Generation," "The Church on Its Knees" and "A Pastor's Call to Prayer." Blu-ray adds bloopers and outtakes; two additional featurettes:



**Peter Pan (Levi Miller) saves the day, and his movie, in the new fantasy prequel "Pan."**

"The Art of Jumping Rope" and "Behind the Scenes: Color Grading"; and a "Warrior" music video by Steven Curtis Chapman.

**Also:** "Dragon Blade," "The Giant King," "Nasty Baby," "Queen of Earth" and "12 Rounds 3: Lockdown."

## author appearances

- Authors and husband-and-wife writing team **Refe Tuma** and **Susan Tuma** sign copies of their new book, "What The Dinosaurs Did Last Night: A Very Messy Adventure," at 10 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 26, at Anderson's Bookshop, 123 W. Jefferson Ave., Naperville. For a place in the signing line, purchase a copy of the book from Anderson's. (630) 355-2665 or andersonsbookshop.com. The

authors will also sign copies of their book at noon Saturday, Dec. 26, at Anderson's Bookshop, 5112 S. Main St., Downers Grove. (630) 963-2665 or order online at andersonsbookshop.com. The Tumas will visit a third Anderson's location for a book signing beginning at 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 26, at 26 S. La Grange Road, La Grange. (708) 582-6353.

— Laura Milbrath Stewart

**PLAY** from page 7

pirate or stowaway.

### Virgin Hotel

It's only a short walk from the park to the former Old Dearborn Bank Building, now recast into the very first Virgin Hotel. Flamboyant founder Richard Branson's vision: "We're here to wake up the industry and bring back the fun."

And the 250-room hotel certainly seems to be animated by a wacky sense of humor. The red carpeting in the entry hall tumbles down the stairs, mimicking a spilled bucket of red paint. The restroom signs feature crouched desperate-to-go male and female icons. The framed art reinterprets European masterpieces with stuffed animals. (Think "Fluffy With a Pearl Earring.")

### The 606

Two miles northwest of the Loop is the 606, named for Chicago's Zip code prefix. Pointedly inaugurated on 6/06/15, Chicago's newest baby is a decade in the making and still growing. While the wheel-friendly plaza and solar observatory are still under construction, all the runners, skaters, skateboarders, dog walkers and bikers zooming past sumacs and poplars aren't pausing to worry.

The 2.7-mile trail has linked and revitalized four congested neighborhoods — Bucktown, Wicker Park, Humboldt Park and Logan Square — that had been chopped up by the abandoned Bloomingdale rail line. Amid the squeals and chatter of perambulating families, I can almost hear the cha-ching of rising real estate values.