

Timeline Photos

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Behind The elevated L train, part of Chicago's skyline.



Try Lake Michigan. Probably not good to drink it.



Skating at Millennium Park.

\$12. Wrap up warm, though, for any outdoor activity, whether skating or sightseeing. The average November and December temperatures here range from below freezing to around 9°C.

HIT THE HEIGHTS AND SEE THE SIGHTS

Walking around is enough to cover your basic sightseeing needs, but if you want to see the city's most iconic buildings wearing throughout the city. The first skyscraper, built here in 1885 and just 10 stories tall, has long been surpassed by hundreds of high-rise blocks, including the distinctive 1921 Wrigley Building by Michigan Avenue bridge, built by the chewing gum company, and modelled on the Giralda in Seville. My personal favourite is the 1929 Art Deco Carbide & Carbon

Building, a shanty by Chicago standards, at just 37 storeys, finished in black granite and bronze.

Tired of craning my neck, I headed up to the Willis Tower (previously known as the Sears Tower) Skydeck. One hundred and three storeys above the ground, I was lucky to have chosen a clear day and looked down on stunning views of the city. Take millions of photos, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Michigan. If you're feeling brave, you can even step out on The Ledge, a series of glass-walled, glass-floored boxes that protrude about five feet out, and take a selfie of your feet above the tiny cars below.

For real thrill-seekers, there's Tilt at 360 Chicago on North Michigan Avenue. You stand in a specially designed window, which tilts

DON'T MISS

"Deep-dish pizza was invented here in 1943. Its toppings, or rather fillings, are spread down, with the tomatoes on the top. Head for vegetarian—vegan restaurants Kitchin D for the cheese-free version.

"Popcorn exploded on to the world's palate when a popping machine was designed in Chicago in 1885. Gerret Popcorn has been an institution since 1949, and now has 12 branches. Fresh and delicious in round mushroom and singular butterfly shapes (yes, I didn't know there were extra for them either).

The burrito is a sandwich made with battered fried potato slices instead of sweet corned beef by Puerto Rican immigrants. Try the pistachio mushroom burrito (and the mushroom soup), \$9.50 at Nona Cook, www.nonacook.com

GETTING THERE

American Airlines has seven jets a day to Chicago from Heathrow, with return flights from £436, including taxes, fees and charges. Flight time around eight hours. Stay at Embassy Suites, accommodation with kitchen facilities so you can self-serve. From \$250 a night, including breakfast and evening drinks reception.

'The L train looks like a rickety rollercoaster.'

climb the building, for a vertiginous view straight down to the ground! Journey even higher at the Adler Planetarium, housed in a circular Art Deco building by the Lake, with one of the best views in the city. See the stars in the planetarium, browse space-exploration merchandise and view sun spots - such as big as the earth, the dwarf red one - and solar flares with the Doane Observatory telescope. Kids - big and small - will love it.

On tracks raised above the road run the 'L' trains - short for 'elevated train'. It looks like a rickety rollercoaster, with tight bends zooming between buildings (but no steep ascents or descents) and sounds like one. It's an easy network to use, too, see transitchicago.com



Chocolate mousse pie

Makes 10-12 slices

From Alice & Friends' Vegan Kitchen, 5852 N Broadway St, aliceandfriendsvegankitchen.com, \$4.25 a slice

For the crust

- 65g walnut pieces or halves
- 190g wholemeal flour
- 110g vegan margarine
- pinch of salt
- 170g maple syrup

For the filling

- 450g vegan chocolate chips
- 500g silken tofu
- 600ml plant milk of your choice
- 85g maple syrup (adjust to taste)
- sprig of mint, to decorate (optional)
- vegan chocolate syrup, to drizzle (optional)

- 1 Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas 4.
- 2 Grind the walnuts to a fine powder in a food

processor or nut grinder.

- 3 Mix the flour, margarine, salt and maple syrup in a processor. Spread the mixture on a baking sheet and bake for 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and leave to cool.
- 4 To make the filling, melt the chocolate chips in the microwave or in a bowl with a pan of simmering water. Place the chocolate, tofu, milk and maple syrup in a food processor and blend until smooth.
- 5 Spoon the piecrust into a 23cm spring-form tin. Press the mixture in firmly, using a spoon or your hand, to form a thick crust. You can make it even thicker. (Any leftover piecrust can be kept in the freezer for up to 1 month).

- 6 Next, spoon the chocolate mixture on top of the piecrust. Smooth the top with a soft spatula. Put the pie in the oven for a minimum of 3 hours, or preferably 4 hours. Remove from tin, decorate with maple syrup, to drizzle with chocolate

CULTURAL CRAVINGS

Back down to earth, and keeping my focus local, at the Art Institute of Chicago, renowned for its impressionist collection, I headed out to the display of salvaged elements from demolished buildings. Frank Lloyd Wright's windows and elevator gauges, and American Folk Art weather vane and painted furniture. Even more excitingly, across the road I spotted the official start of Route 66. There's more US heritage in the Native American section of the Field Museum, famous for 'Sue', the world's largest

T-rex, in the foyer. Outdoor art abounds, too, from Kapoor's Cloud Gate (known as 'The Bean') in Millennium Park to Picasso's work outside the Willis Tower. The 'May Miles' about the major roads, and the street of North Michigan Avenue that's home to the city's art galleries, facades to feast your eyes on, the jobs department street life, and the museum's. No matter what you're doing, you will see the world's largest this wonderful town.