Come meet Chicago’s fun next-door neighbors. They’re known for architecture and history, but the longer you visit, the more they reveal.

VISITOAKPARK.COM
Getting to Oak Park is easy. Deciding what to do first is harder.

Less than 10 miles from downtown Chicago, Oak Park is the city’s close western suburb—a quick side trip by car or train for sightseers. But the more you learn about Oak Park and its neighboring communities, the more you’ll see the area as a dynamic destination in its own right (or Wright).

Families come for all-ages outdoor adventures. International travelers seek out world-class architecture. Road-tripping couples young and old bond at galleries, shops and eateries. Nightlife-lovers kick back and kick up their heels. Want to spend the night(s)? You’ll find rooms at the inns.
CREATIVE GENIUS
Frank Lloyd Wright started his career in Oak Park, Ernest Hemingway started his life here, and Frederick Law Olmsted and others left their marks on the area.

ARCHITECTURE GEMS
Oak Park lays its reputation on a foundation of historic architecture, especially the Prairie School designs of Frank Lloyd Wright. The cornerstone is his own digs—the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio—one of many structures by Wright and others in the Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District. See them on a bike tour, such as Pedal Oak Park or The Wright Ride. A must-see list starts with Wright's Unity Temple (the greatest public building of Wright's Prairie period), George W. Maher’s Pleasant Home (now a museum), and E.E. Roberts’ Scoville Square, a rare Prairie School commercial building. Extend your Wright itinerary with a drive through River Forest and a walk around Riverside, an early planned community by America’s greatest landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. Take the Frederick Law Olmsted Society’s Historic Walking Tours to learn more about the architecture there, including Wright gems like the famed Coonley Estate. Just west of Oak Park, Maywood carries its own architectural pedigree, with homes on the National Register of Historic Places, including ones by Wright associates. And Berwyn, famous for bungalows, also delights with a variety of other home styles: Tudor Revivals, Victorians, Georgians, worker cottages and four-squares.

ESSENTIAL EVENTS
Go to VisitOakPark.com for dates and more information.

WRIGHT PLUS HOUSEWALK
May | Oak Park
Take rare interior tours of private homes and public buildings designed by Wright and others.

MAYWOOD HISTORIC HOMES HOUSEWALK + TROLLEY TOUR
July 2020 | Maywood
Explore homes encompassing several styles, including many houses designed by Wright associates, on the biennial tour.

ROUTE 66 CAR SHOW
August | Berwyn
Check out more than 500 vintage and custom cars, trucks and motorcycles like those from the Mother Road’s heyday.

BERWYN’S BUNGALOWS & MORE TOUR
September | Berwyn
Docents give tours of selected homes and churches constructed in the village’s signature styles.

HILLSIDE CEMETERY TOUR
October | Hillside
The mayor leads the tour, see Al Capone’s grave and get a rare look in the Bishops’ Mausoleum.

HISTORY LESSONS
Story lines of history arc through Oak Park. See where writer Ernest Hemingway was born—a lovely Queen Anne Victorian home that is now the Ernest Hemingway Birthplace Museum. The Oak Park River Forest Museum, in a renovated 1898 Oak Park firehouse, offers changing exhibits on the region’s history. Living by the Chicago 16 Inch Softball Hall of Fame Museum in Forest Park for dirt on the Chicago-rooted game played with a big mushy ball and no gloves. You know Chicago’s gangsters played hardball, but did you know many lived in Oak Park and River Forest? There Goes the Neighborhood Gangster Tour drives by hoodlums’ homes, with narration by mob historian and author John J. Binder. Continue your gangster tour at Mount Carmel Catholic Cemetery in Hillside, the final resting place for many mobsters, including Al Capone. The Historical Society of Forest Park cemetery tours take you to the graves of the famous (like radio legend Paul Harvey) and highlight local history. Historic routes pass through the area, too. A plaque in Maywood marks a stop on the Underground Railroad, and a stretch of Ogden Avenue is Berwyn’s forays follow the storied path of historic Route 66.

ARCHITECTURE + HISTORY

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT HOME AND STUDIO

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT HISTORIC DISTRICT BIKE TOUR

CHICAGO 16 INCH SOFTBALL HALL OF FAME MUSEUM

ERNEST HEMINGWAY BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM

OAK PARK RIVER FOREST MUSEUM

OAK PARK RIVER FOREST MUSEUM
FAMILY TIME
Toddlers, grade schoolers, teens and grown-ups can find their kind of fun at attractions throughout the Oak Park area.

ON THE WILD SIDE
World-famous Brookfield Zoo in Brookfield provides one-stop suburban safari-ing for adventurers of all ages. Have close encounters of the creature kind by feeding a giraffe, petting a penguin, and watching dolphins leap and dive. Older kids can sign up for Backstage Adventures that put them to work with zookeepers. Little ones flock to the Hamill Family Play Zoo, where they can touch guinea pigs, rabbits and reptiles. At the three-acre Hamill Family Wild Encounters, kids (and parents) might be able to touch or feed goats, parakeets and wallabies. And oh-oh, those Summer Nights—enjoy evening concerts in the park with activities for kids and a laser light show finale.

EARTH AND SKY
Kids kick off their shoes and put on their creative thinking caps at the Wonder Works children's museum in Oak Park, loaded with six multisensory, interactive exhibits like Lights, Camera, Action! for darling divas and Build It! for future Frank Lloyd Wrights. Aspiring astronomers and astronauts get all starry-eyed at the Cernan Earth and Space Center in River Grove. They can gaze at Apollo astronaut Gene Cernan's space suit, replica spacecraft and dazzling planetarium shows. Plants put on a show of their own at the Oak Park Conservatory. Citrus trees, scented geraniums, dreamy tropical palms, and desert cacti and succulents take turns in the spotlight. Kids love the chatty parrots.

FUN AND GAMES
It's all-you-can-beat gaming at the Galloping Ghost Arcade in Brookfield, which lays claim to being the largest video arcade in the world. Pay $20 at the door and play up to 700 classics like Frogger and Mario Kart for free—no quarters or tokens needed. Do some family bonding by teaming up to win your freedom. Both Vault Escape Rooms in Riverside and Escape Factor in Forest Park give you 60 minutes to find hidden clues, solve puzzles and decipher cryptic messages. Or escape reality entirely at iCombat, a tactical laser tag experience in Schiller Park. Engage in ultra-realistic combat on a Hollywood movie-style set.

ESSENTIAL EVENTS
Go to VisitOakPark.com for dates and more information.

MONTHLY SKYWATCH
Second Saturday of each month | Cernan Earth and Space Center, River Grove
Visit the planetarium for live presentations and, in clear weather, peek at the night sky through a telescope.

DISCOVERY GARDEN EXPLORATION TIME
Summer Wednesday and Saturday mornings | Oak Park Conservatory
Docents guide you and your child to natural finds in the Elise Jacobson Discovery Garden outside the conservatory.
NATURALLY FUN
Town names drawn from nature should tip you off: This area teems with green space, waters and wildlife to enjoy at your own speed and vantage point.

ACTIVE ADVENTURES
Make like Tarzan (or Jane) and monkey around 40 feet off the ground at Go Ape Adventures in Western Springs. The three-hour trek through the forest includes ziplines, swings and rope ladders. Rather keep your feet closer to the ground? Explore the tallgrass prairie at Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve in Westchester. Bike the Salt Creek Trail’s 7-mile Red Paved Trail from Brookfield Zoo in Brookfield, or head out on the Illinois Prairie Path from the trailhead in Maywood.

NATURE DISCOVERIES
You never know what natural wonders you’ll see at the Hal Tyrrell Trailside Museum of Natural History in River Forest. A charming 1870s Victorian mansion nestled in the woods near the Des Plaines River provides a storybook setting for kids curious about nature. Inside, they can hear creature tales and see creature tails (via wildlife displays). Outside, there are nature trails and a pond to explore, a play area for fort building, and picnic-perfect wildflower gardens for relaxing. You can also hike by the Des Plaines River or bird-watch in surrounding Thatcher Woods, part of the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

ON THE WATER
The Des Plaines River and Salt Creek aren’t just for viewing—they’re for doing, too. Canoe or kayak the river from the new boat launch at Maywood Grove in Maywood. Or take to Salt Creek from the Brookfield Village Hall Canoe Landing in Brookfield.

NATURE DISCOVERIES
HAL TYRELL TRAILSIDE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

ARTISTIC SPIRIT
Events like Harrison Street’s Third Friday Gallery Walk in the Oak Park Arts District reflect the rich vein of artistic energy in Oak Park and neighboring communities.

DAZZLING DISPLAYS
Appreciate the work of local artists or brush up on your own skills at the Oak Park Art League in Oak Park, a gallery and school founded in 1921. Riverside Arts Center and Freeark Gallery in Riverside offers a quirky artistic escape into themed exhibits, special events and classes. The gallery is known for its edgy, risk-taking creations. So, too, is the O’Connor Art Gallery at Dominican University in River Forest, where contemporary works expose students to cutting-edge concepts and approaches. Or think outside the gallery by taking in public art. A walk around the area reveals many examples large and small, including the Village of Oak Park’s Community Mini Mural Project, transforming the concrete walls of the town’s railroad viaduct.

SINGULAR SHOPPING
There’s art you just look at, and art you can take home. Laura Atwood Studio Beads and Trading Co. in Brookfield sells wearable art—beads, clothing, jewelry and handbags. Higgins Glass Studio in Riverside crafts home decor such as sconces, tableware and wall art. Riverside Arts Weekend (May) in Riverside and Brookfield Fine Arts Festival (September) in Brookfield let you browse the works of many artists. And for Garage Galleries (August) in Forest Park, residents open their garages as exhibit spaces, creating casual art receptions. Go to VisitOakPark.com for specific event dates and more information.
EAT HERE
Whether you’re thinking fine-dining date night, a casual meal at a neighborhood joint, grab-and-go comfort food or a tempting special treat, Oak Park area eateries cater to all appetites.

DISTINCTIVE DINING

Hemingway’s Bistro (yes, two Ms) in Oak Park adds fresh Midwest flavors to seafood and French classics like duck & foie gras. Latin-fusion cuisine heats up Maya Del Sol in Oak Park. Pair spicy fare with a margarita on the spacious patio. The focus is seasonal at The Heritage in Forest Park, featuring cocktails—try the weekly Hemmingway’s Bistro in Hillside. Spanish-style black bean soup with tapas—think bacon-wrapped dates or chile con carne—and house-made sangria await.

PROPOSE A TOAST

Signature drinks and traditions set off these places for potent potables.

SWEET (AND SALTY) INDULGENCES

Say uncle to temptation at Aunt Diana’s Old Fashioned Fudge in Riverside. If the aromas are amazing, taste the chocolate-covered anything here. After a century in business, Petersen’s Ice Cream in Oak Park follows the same recipe—up to 18 percent butterfat creates super-rich flavor. By comparison, The Brown Cow Ice Cream Parlor in Broadview, boasts old-fashioned soda fountain charm. Enjoy their house-made ice cream and popcorn in Broadview. Swapping tracks for snacks, local DJ Chris Benjamin turns the no-seating place has doled out dogs the Chicago way—no ketchup (there’s none on the premises).

FAMOUS BEEF AND DOGS

Where’s the beef? Johnnie’s Beef in Elmwood Park serves Chicago-style Italian beef sandwiches aka no-frills, cash-only spot. The late celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain once paid a visit. Another TV chef, Rachael Ray, voted Gene and Jude’s in River Grove the best hot dog in America. Since 1946, the no-seating place has doled out dogs Chicago-style. Mickey’s Drive-In in Bellwood opened in 1959, and is famous for hot dogs, too, as well as Italian beef. Polish sausage in a bun is still owned by the same family.
RESTFUL RETREATS

After a day (and evening) of adventure, relax in these Oak Park lodgings:

The Carleton of Oak Park
Historic hotel with elegant furnishings and a boutique vibe in rooms and suites.

The Write Inn
The former Oak Park Manor, with a variety of room types, including family rooms.

Harvey House Bed and Breakfast
Named for the giant imaginary rabbit in the old Jimmy Stewart film.

Bishops Hall
A 1916 Georgian revival, now a bed-and-breakfast with three guest suites; once home to the local bishop of the Orthodox Church.

THE CARLETON OF OAK PARK

AFTER DARK

Nightlife buzzes at theaters and nightclubs in Oak Park, as well as in neighboring communities such as River Forest, Berwyn and Broadview.

PLAY ON

Catch soliloquies under the stars at the Oak Park Festival Theatre, set outdoors in Austin Gardens. Summer productions of Shakespeare and other masters captivate all ages. Students help run the show at The Collective, part of Concordia University Chicago in River Forest, staging newer works and twists on classics. Innovation and inspiration fill the bill at the Open Door Theater in Oak Park. Expect music, comedy and drama designed to entertain and provoke. Inclusivity and affordability draw fans to the 16th Street Theater in Berwyn, now in its second decade of eye-opening plays (with a recent move to a larger space). Madison Street Theatre in Oak Park hosts shows by dozens of Chicago-area theater, improv and dance companies at its 180-seat Main Stage and smaller Studio Theatre.

ALL THAT JAZZ

One of the Chicago area’s top live-music venues hides in Berwyn. FitzGerald’s, in an old building with a hip history, features roots artists and hosts an annual summer music festival. Drag divas and comedians entertain at Hamburger Mary’s Show Lounge in Oak Park. Take the stage yourself on MaryOke (karaoke) night. See local and national acts at Wire, a tech-focused music school, performing venue, recording studio, private event space and record label in Berwyn. Buy craft beer and cocktails, too. Folks love to dance at The Blue Note Jazz Club in Broadview. Hear house, hip-hop and R&B music. At Dominican University Performing Arts Center in River Forest, treat yourself to nationally acclaimed, award-winning acts in a venue with excellent acoustics.

HAMBURGER MARY’S SHOW LOUNGE

There’s way more to do in the Oak Park area than we can include in this guide. Go to our website and follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for information on more attractions, as well as details on upcoming events.