

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL DESTINATIONS

No matter where you go, there's a spectacular view — whether it's of Chicago's skyline, from the skyline, from a boat, or of a famous building or piece of art. John and Monica Frim crisscross the Windy City and its varied neighborhoods to get an eyeful of the artworks and architectural masterpieces that define Chicago as a great city on a Great Lake and one of the most influential in the world.

Photography by John Frim and Monica Frim

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In Chicago, there's no individual hallmark that defines the city the way the Eiffel Tower defines Paris or the unintended tilt of a cathedral's campanile defines Italy's town of Pisa. Instead there's a smorgasbord of architectural masterpieces, galleries and museums, shoreline parks and cultural monuments that, together, render Chicago one of the most visionary examples of urban architecture in America.

This is the historical home of the skyscraper, a late 19th century innovation that spawned a worldwide movement that continues to push buildings closer to the stratosphere as countries vie for the tallest buildings. For years Chicago's Sears Tower, now known as the Willis Tower, was the world's tallest, an honor that was subsequently bestowed on a variety of buildings all around the world — in New York, Shanghai, Taipei, Kuala Lumpur and beyond — and now belongs to the Burj Khalifa in Dubai. Soon the Kingdom Tower, currently under construction in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, will occupy the top position.

But Chicago's famous skyline is still one of the most dramatic. Over the years it has evolved to include a variety of architectural styles that reflect the city's history and cultural achievements. Scattered among the city's four tallest buildings — in order: the Willis Tower, Trump International Hotel and Tower, Aon

CHICAGO:

It's All About Architecture and Art

by Monica Frim

Chicago River

Center (former Amoco Building) and Hancock Building — an assortment of high-rises emerge like paradigms of the city's post-1871 history. That was the year that, according to one yarn, a cow kicked over a lantern in the O'Leary's barn and spawned one of the most destructive American fires of the 19th century. Known afterwards as the Great Chicago Fire, the conflagration spread east and north across the Chicago River, killing almost 300 people, leaving 100,000 homeless and destroying most of the downtown core. In its aftermath, architects and builders triggered the largest building boom in American history with a new style of vertical, fire-proof, steel-frame construction that included extensive plate-glass surfaces and became known, appropriately, as the Chicago School.

Chicago is now the third largest city in the United States and a world-famous hub of finance, communications, technology and transportation (O'Hare International Airport is the busiest in the world measured by aircraft movements). Laid out in a grid pattern of eight city blocks to the mile in one direction and 16 in the other, Chicago is also one of the most walkable.

To that end, many companies provide themed and general walking tours of the various neighborhoods that make up the city, some free, others for a fee. The Choose Chicago® Greeter

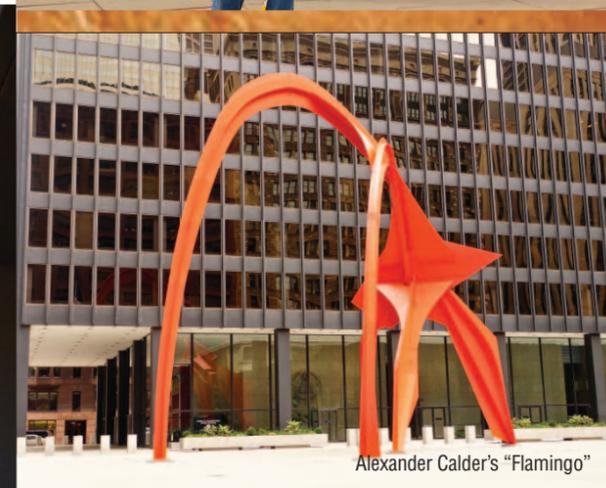
service offers free personalized guided walks by knowledgeable local volunteers in 25 neighborhoods and covers over 40 specialized interests. Participants must register at least 10 business days in advance for the tours, which last two to four hours. Those who cannot register in advance can still participate in Choose Chicago's "Instagreeter" program, which offers hour-long guided walks of the downtown every half hour but only on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. These tours provide excellent introductions to Chicago's defining characteristics, emblematic buildings and public spaces. They start at the Visitor Information Center in the Chicago Cultural Center, a late 19th century building originally built as a meeting hall for the Grand Army of the Republic and as a central library. Today the largely neo-classical (but with Italian Renaissance touches) building is one of Chicago's most visited landmarks with more than a thousand cultural programs and exhibitions. Its two stained glass domes, coffered ceilings, sweeping staircases as well as the marble and mosaic walls and floors make it one of the city's most attractive focal points.

Choose Chicago® also operates a second information center at Macy's on State Street. Both centers offer free maps and brochures, special discount passes (such as the Go Chi-

Millennium Park's famous "Bean" reflects the crowds and nearby buildings



The Chicago Theater's distinctive marquee has been featured in numerous movies and TV shows.



Alexander Calder's "Flamingo"



Field Museum

ago Card and Chicago CityPASS) to various attractions, dining reservations via OpenTable and a booking service for several sightseeing tours.

Visitors to Chicago can also explore the city at their own pace through a program called Metrowalkz that provides maps and descriptions of self-guided tours in 11 neighborhoods. The number of neighborhoods one visits is, of course, dependent on how much time one has in the city. Most popular, especially among first-time visitors, is the central business area south of the Chicago River known as the Loop and the North Shore's prestigious shopping and hotel district known as the Magnificent Mile. Together these areas represent Chicago's quintessential core.

The Chicago River runs between the Loop and the Magnificent Mile, forming an historical divide among the early skyscrapers on the south side and the more futuristic (think Trump Tower) buildings on the north. Today, however, the lines are blurred as new construction projects crop up on both sides of the river so that one would be hard-pressed to say that one side eclipses the other in terms of architectural innovation. Even the tallest buildings are shared by both sides with the Willis Tower and Aon Center on the south, and the Hancock Building and Trump Tower on the north. The city's architectural diversity is astounding when one considers that almost all the buildings



The Chicago Water Tower is the only public building that survived the Great Chicago Fire of 1871



CHICAGO:

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View of Chicago and Lake Michigan from 360 CHICAGO, formerly known as the John Hancock Observatory.

were built after 1871. The exception is the Water Tower, the only public building left standing after the Great Chicago Fire as a symbol of old Chicago.

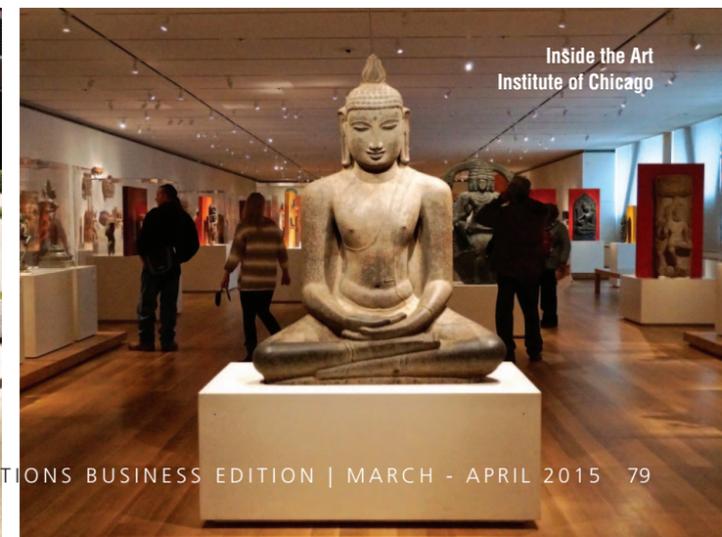
Almost every attraction — from art installation to park pavilion — can be linked to an iconic building, which is perhaps why architectural tours are the leading activity in a city known for, well, architecture (Okay, also for comedy à la Second City, but that still comes in — pardon the pun — second). But to really appreciate Chicago, visitors who have time for only one activity simply must make it a guided architectural cruise on the Chicago River. The river offers some of the

best vantage points for viewing and photographing the city. To that end, at least one company, The Chicago Architecture Foundation River Cruise, offers a special Capture Chicago Photography Cruise aboard Chicago's First Lady on Sunday mornings as well as regular day and twilight cruises.

During the cruise, knowledgeable guides, called docents, offer up commentaries on some 50 landmark buildings of varying styles, compressing a century's worth of river history into a 90-minute oral blueprint of Chicago's architectural development. All around high-rises with flourishes from all the seminal styles — neo-classical to modern and postmodern



Marc Chagall's "Four Seasons" mosaic in Chase Tower Plaza



Inside the Art Institute of Chicago

— showcase their individuality, yet share common ground in the modern building techniques that identify them as adherents of the Chicago School. One finds Spanish and French Renaissance details in the white-glazed façade of the Wrigley Building; neo-Gothic, medieval and Greek revival elements in the Chicago Tribune building; and a string of postmodern façades on the buildings that line West Wacker Drive.

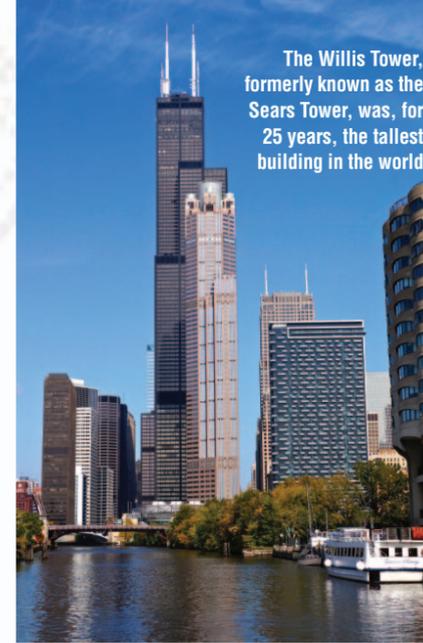
As the boat enters the northern branch of the river where former factories and warehouses now house riverside lofts and condos, the air grows thick with the rich, sweet smell of chocolate from the West Loop's Blommer Chocolate Company. There is actually a website dedicated to mapping the smell according to each day's wind direction for cocoa die-hards.

At Goose Island, the boat reverses direction and heads for the southern branch of the river — a concrete cavern of tall buildings where highlights include the plain back façade of the Civic Opera Building (the second largest in North America); the River City Condominiums whose scalloped wings and eyebrow-shaped windows are evocative of architect Bertrand Goldberg's other famous Chicago landmark, the two giant corn cobs known as Marina City located near the Trump Tower; and even a glimpse of the old O'Leary farm, which now ironically houses the Chicago Fire Academy.

Back on the main branch of the Chicago River, the highly

polished Trump Tower commands center attention over neighboring landmarks that were once the defining hallmarks of the city. Located at the edge of the River North Gallery District, the Tower looms over the highest concentration of art galleries outside of New York, a block away it oversees the southern tip of the Magnificent Mile and across the river, the Michigan Wacker Historic District. The Trump Tower had originally been destined to become the tallest building in the world but in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Donald Trump scaled back the working plans. Now, as the second tallest building in Chicago, it is nevertheless the most prominent, visible from most parts of the city and within walking distance of the most popular neighborhood — feasibly the Loop across the river.

Not only is the Loop the commercial core of the city but also its artistic center, known for its theaters, parks and a world-class collection of outdoor sculptures. Former mayor Richard M. Daley revitalized the area by creating a Theater District to bring in the biggest names in music, dance and live theater. He also oversaw the construction of Millennium Park — a 24.5-acre expanse of gardens, fountains and public art — all of massive proportions. Dominating the park, Frank Gehry's sculptural Pritzker Pavilion effectively soars with ribbons of brushed stainless steel that curl into the sky. A gaping



The Willis Tower, formerly known as the Sears Tower, was, for 25 years, the tallest building in the world



Navy Pier is considered to be Chicago's top tourist attraction.

steel trellis allows for precise placement of an overhead sound system designed to envelope the outdoor audience with indoor quality acoustics and an evenly distributed sound field. The facility was designed for classical concerts and holds 11,000 people.

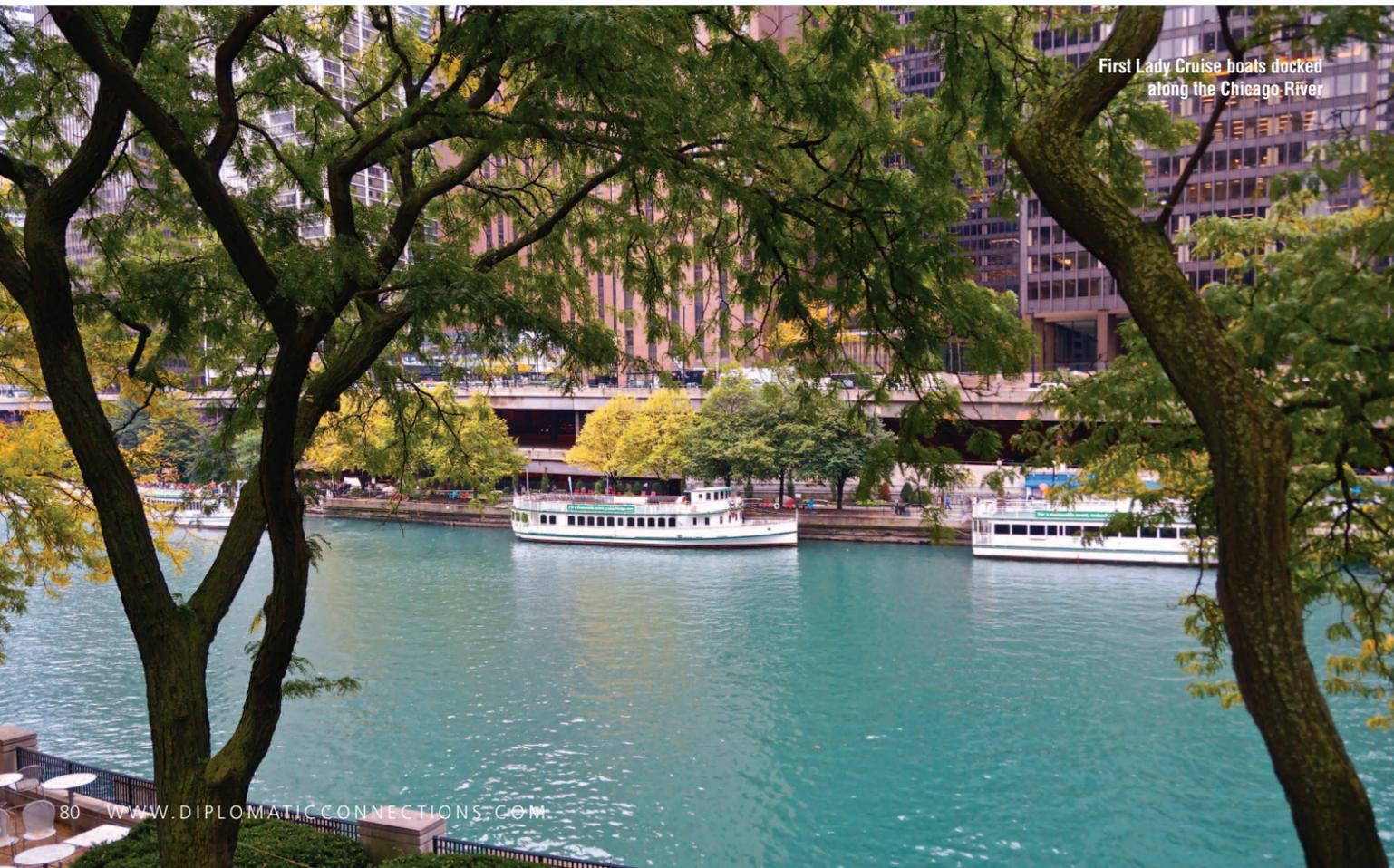
While sculptures by famous international artists such as Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró, Henry Moore, Marc Chagall, Alexander Caldwell and Jean Dubuffet are distributed throughout the city, Millennium Park seems to have cornered the grandest installations. Most photographed is perhaps Anish Kapoor's giant glob of 168 stainless steel plates, inspired by mercury, welded smoothly together and polished into a giant "bean" that distorts the Chicago skyline and the reflections of visitors who walk around and under it. Kapoor called it Cloud Gate, but to everyone else it's the Bean.

Even more playful is the interactive Crown Fountain on the west side of the park. Catalan artist Jaume Plensa combined art and video technology in his sculpture of two 50-foot glass block towers that stand at either end of a shallow reflecting pool. Embedded in the towers, LEDs are used to display images of 1,000 Chicago citizens sporadically spewing water from their mouths — a throwback to the gargoyles of old — via an outlet hidden in the screen. Although the fountain is turned off during the winter, the video displays remain active throughout the year.

Given that a defining feature of Millennium Park is its wealth of outdoor art, it is fitting that the park be located next to, and connected by bridge to, Chicago's grandest indoor repository of art — the Art Institute of Chicago. The institute is made up of many different buildings and wings that house a variety of national and international artworks, but is best known for having the largest display of Impression-

ist paintings outside the Louvre. Highlights of its American collection are Grant Wood's American Gothic and Edward Hopper's Nighthawks.

In a city rife with museums and galleries, it would take months to see them all. The Art Institute is arguably the best starting point for variety, but for visual and performance art since the second half of the 20th century, the Museum of Contemporary Art offers insight into the creations of the artists of this era. Located near the Old Chicago Water Tower, the



First Lady Cruise boats docked along the Chicago River



Nuclear Energy sculpture by Henry Moore



A Tesla coil arc demonstration at the Museum of Science and Industry



Ernest Hemingway's birth house in Oak Park



Trump International Hotel and Tower

Museum of Contemporary Art is a great stop-off on itineraries that can include shopping and cultural experiences along the Magnificent Mile and/or a visit to the Hancock Center with its panoramic views of Lake Michigan and the city.

Concentrating more on culture and nature, the Field Museum's massive anthropological and natural history collections go back 4.5 billion years with comprehensive displays of dinosaurs, Egyptian mummies, gems, plants and bugs. Science and art find common expression in displays of African

art, ancient American artifacts, and cultural accouterments from Papua New Guinea and the Arctic. The Field Museum is the first of a triumvirate of establishments on Museum Campus that also includes the Shedd Aquarium and the Adler Planetarium. Each of these museums merits a stay of several hours on its own, but it is possible to see them all in one day with an early start.

Chicago's museums, open-air sculptures and architectural tours go hand in hand, each complementing the other,



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each integral to the city's character and reputation. Of course, there is much more to the city. Restaurants offer some typically Chicagoan fare, like the casserole-like deep dish pizza with toppings smothered in thick tomato sauce (some critics consider it an acquired taste) or the all-beef frankfurters (hot dogs for the masses) that lie buried under mounds of salad ingredients but remain conspicuously bereft of ketchup.

Neighborhoods all have their own ethnic-inspired culinary traditions along with their own building styles. The quiet tree-lined streets of Chicago's upscale Gold Coast provide a pricey buffer of elegant brownstones and historic mansions against an often wind-whipped lake; the quaint Victorian homes and Lilliputian cottages of Old Town's 1970s



The Wrigley Building on Chicago's Magnificent Mile



The Navy Pier Ferris Wheel is open year round, weather permitting

Courtesy of Frank Lloyd Wright Trust. Photographer, Tim Long



Frank Lloyd Wright's Home and Studio in Oak Park.



Bob Newhart, who played the 1970's TV psychologist Bob Hartley, is immortalized in bronze at the east end of Navy Pier.



Frank Lloyd Wright's studio/drafting room.

Courtesy of Frank Lloyd Wright Trust. Photographer, Heidi Blessing

hippies have now been turned into fashionable residences; the tile trim and dragon motifs of Chinatown are as distinctive as the upturned corners of the stereotypical pagodas; and Hyde Park's diverse architectural styles attest to the eclectic interests of the local university-centered populace.

While the downtown commercial district soared skyward with the vertical dictates of the Chicago School, the residential architecture of the surrounding neighborhoods historically kept a low profile. But not low enough for Frank Lloyd Wright, arguably, America's greatest architect who believed houses should be in harmony with the landscape. In his mindset, the vertical elements of the Victorian, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival homes that dominated Chicago's residential districts simply did not suit a prairie landscape. Toward that end, he pioneered a new school of architecture, known as the Prairie School, which featured horizontal lines, long sloping roofs, overhangs, open interior spaces with central fireplaces and built-in furniture. The Prairie School became as well known for residential buildings as the Chicago School was for commercial ones.

Frank Lloyd Wright designed more than 1,000 buildings (not all of them built) with the largest concentration



Outdoor sculpture at the Museum of Contemporary Art



Chicago Harbor Lighthouse

in Chicago and in the suburb of Oak Park. Accordingly, no architectural or cultural tour of Chicago can be considered complete without a visit to his most famous Prairie house, the Robie House in Hyde Park, or to his home and studio in Oak Park where he worked for the first 20 years of his career. His Oak Park home is also the starting point of a self-guided tour of the surrounding neighborhood, which contains 25 Wright-designed homes in one compact area.

People are drawn to Chicago for many reasons, but

regardless of what brings them there, they can't help but be pulled in by the sheer sweep of the city's architecture. It's all part of the history, the culture and the art — powerful and exhilarating, just like the wind that blows off Lake Michigan and is one explanation for its nickname of the Windy City. Even those who know nothing of architecture and may not have heard of Frank Lloyd Wright become almost giddy at the first sight of the Chicago skyline. That's the power of the Chicago School. That's Chicago. ■

View of Chicago skyscrapers taken from Navy Pier



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Choose Chicago® is the official destination marketing organization for Chicago, Illinois. Its two official information centers are located in the downtown Loop: at the Chicago Cultural Center at 77 E. Randolph Street and Macy's on State Street. The service offers free brochures, multilingual maps, walking tours, help planning itineraries, information on attractions and events, booking tours and making dining reservations.

Chicago CityPASS

This is one of the best deals for admission prices to five of seven of Chicago's most popular attractions. A CityPASS saves both money and time by eliminating the need to wait in ticket lines. It is valid up to nine days from first day of use at the following attractions: Shedd Aquarium, Skydeck Chicago, The Field Museum, Museum of Science and Industry, 360 Chicago (formerly John Hancock Observatory), Adler Planetarium and the Art Institute of Chicago. Passes can be purchased at www.citypass.com or in-person at any member attraction. Passes are also available at the Choose Chicago® information centers.



Chicago Architecture Foundation and Chicago's First Lady Cruises

Chicago's First Lady Cruises is the official cruise line with the Chicago Architecture Foundation. Tours depart from Riverside Gardens at the southeast corner of the Michigan Avenue Bridge. Advance reservations are recommended as this is a very popular cruise. Tickets can be purchased online through Ticketmaster at www.ticketmaster.com/rivercruise, in-person at the dock (at the blue awning) or through the Chicago Architecture Foundation at 224 S. Michigan Avenue.

Museum of Contemporary Art

The Museum of Contemporary Art is known for its surrealist and minimalist collections, works by local artists and temporary exhibitions. Docents lead free 30- and 45-minute tours at scheduled times. For information on hours and admission costs, go to www.mcachicago.org. The museum is closed Mondays and free for residents of Illinois on Tuesdays. It is located at 220 East Chicago Avenue.

Robie House/Frank Lloyd Trust

Robie House (1908 – 1910) is one of Frank Lloyd Wright's best examples of Prairie style architecture. Hour-long guided tours of the interior are available Thursdays to Mondays, 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., with a special 90-minute in-depth tour on weekends at 9:00 a.m. The house is located in Hyde Park at 5757 Woodlawn Avenue. Tickets can be purchased online at cal.flwright.org/tours, by calling the box office at 312-994-4000 or in the Museum Shop at Robie House.

Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio/ Frank Lloyd Wright Trust

Frank Lloyd Wright's home in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park has been described as the "birthplace of an architectural revolution." It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1976. Tickets for guided tours of his house and studio as well as self-guided audio tours of the surrounding neighborhood, which features the largest concentration of FLW homes in the world, can be purchased online at cal.flwright.org/tours, by calling the box office at 312-994-4000 or in the Museum Shop at 951 Chicago Avenue, Oak Park.

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The Chicago Tribune