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Chicago for Families



With great restaurants, top hotels, and tons of kid-friendly attractions, Chicago is an ideal family vacation destination.

By [Judy Koutsky](#) July 27, 2018

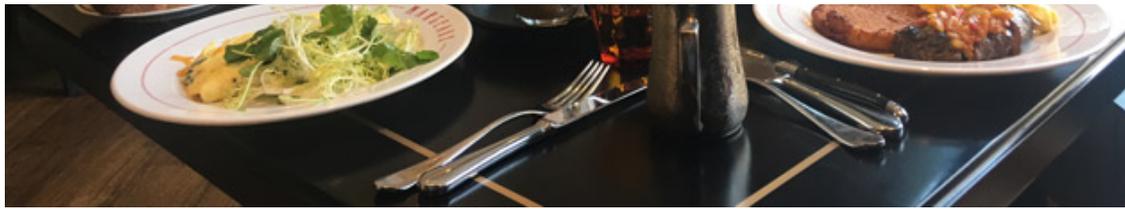
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The Windy City has long been a top destination for New Yorkers. It's a quick flight, it offers plenty of amazing restaurants, unique attractions, and great hospitality, plus—this is key to New Yorkers—walkability. Here's what you need to know to have a great trip when you're visiting Chicago with kids:

Where to Stay:

For my family, it's all about location and a great pool. The [Kimpton Hotel Palomar Chicago](#), located in the heart of River North, checks off both boxes (and then some). It's walking distance to most of the city's top attractions, and the roof deck pool is amazing. My kids loved it so much we went twice a day: once when they got up in the morning and again after a long day of sightseeing, before bed. (It opens at 6am and closes at 10pm—so many hours of fun.) This pool is no joke: It's a great size and the fact that there's no deep end (my boys are 7 and 9 so anything deeper than 4 feet is deep) made this mom relaxed and happy. Plus, there's a lovely outdoor deck next to the pool, great for having a snack and taking in the city skyline. In addition, all summer long they have movies under the stars with free popcorn and lemonade. Kids get a Palomar welcome bag with sunglasses, coloring books, stickers, and some toys upon check-in. If you're traveling with babies, be sure to take advantage of the Palomar Baby Butler—they can stock your room with baby essentials including diapers (regular and swim), diaper cream, wipes, baby lotion, baby Tylenol, and pacifiers. You can also borrow a humidifier, sound machine, baby bathtub, and nightlight. Our family booked a suite plus parlor room, and it was great to have the extra space of two bedrooms and a pull-out sofa, so we could spread out.

Where to eat:

[Sable Kitchen & Bar](#)

Located in the [Kimpton Hotel Palomar Chicago](#), this casual restaurant offers lots of choices including salmon and branzino for fish lovers, the Sable burger and NY strip for meat lovers, and plenty of tapas for sharing (the mussels and charcuterie platter are great picks). The kids' menu has mac 'n cheese, chicken fingers, and pizza.

[Margeaux Brasserie](#)

As much as I love restaurants that appeal to loud, high-energy boys (namely, my own kids), there's something to be said about exposing kids to a nicer restaurant. Inspired by Parisian culture, Margeaux Brasserie combines fresh Midwestern ingredients with rench flair. The omelets, steak and eggs, and French toast were a big hit. The restaurant is classy without being stuffy and the waiter was super kid-friendly.

[Gino's East](#)

Chicago is known for its deep-dish pizza and one of the best places have it is at Gino's East. They've been making it the same way for 50 years, with secret-recipe dough, mounds of fresh mozzarella cheese, a variety of toppings, and tangy tomato sauce. If your kid is more of a thin-crust fan, don't worry; Gino's thin-crust pizzas are super yummy, too. Adults can try Gino's Brewing Co. craft beer and kids will love the deep-dish brownie gooey chocolate dessert, served with ice cream.

[Bohemian House](#)

A River North classic, this restaurant has fare inspired by the cuisine of the Czech Republic, Germany, and Austria, utilizing the best of what's in season. Adults will love the extensive selection of beer including European and domestic artisan brewers, alongside a selection of domestic and international wines from both boutique producers and renowned wineries. This is a good place for weekend brunch, when the offerings can include an open face pork schnitzel sandwich, Bavarian pancakes, and farmer's cheese doughnuts.

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[Texas De Brazil](#)

Combing the cuisine of Brazil (think lots of meat!) with the spirit of Texas (think big portions and lots of seconds!), this steakhouse is great for families who want to try a lot of different things. With 50+ items on the salad bar—including roasted vegetables, fresh artisan breads, charcuterie, imported cheeses, authentic Brazilian dishes and other specialties—you will not leave this restaurant hungry. The service is amazing—friendly and attentive, without being intrusive—and the selections of beef, lamb, pork, chicken, and sausage all cooked over an open flame and carved tableside by the Gauchos means even the pickiest eater will find something he likes. Be sure to leave room for dessert; both the Brazilian and American sweet options are delish.

Where to Play:

[Chicago CityPass](#)

When traveling with kids, it can sometimes be hard to plan each day's itinerary, but CityPass makes it easy. The pass allows access to the following attractions:

* [Shedd Aquarium](#)

* [Skydeck Chicago](#)

* [The Field Museum](#)

* [Museum of Science and Industry](#) OR [360 Chicago](#)

* [Adler Planetarium](#) OR [Art Institute of Chicago](#)

During our stay, we hit the Skydeck (the glass ledge felt like we were literally walking among the skyscrapers); the Shedd Aquarium (my kids loved the 4D Shark movie and the dolphin show); the Museum of Science and Industry, and the Adler Planetarium. The nice part about the CityPass is you can spend a few hours—or all day—at each attraction and wait until the morning of to figure out where to go.

[CAF River Cruise aboard Chicago's First Lady Cruises](#)

Chicago is known for its architecture and one of the best ways of really getting the experience—and history—of it is through a river cruise. The Chicago Architecture Foundation River Cruise aboard Chicago's First Lady Cruises is a 90-minute informative tour up and down the Chicago river. It's narrated by a CAF-certified docent and this expert told us about Chicago's various

architectural styles and the stories of the people who designed and built the city. Highlights of the tour include the Tribune Tower, the Chicago Riverwalk, and the Wrigley building.

[Exhale spa](#)

Parents looking for a little R&R should hit the Exhale spa, located on the Gold Coast. Treatments range from facials and massages to scrubs and acu-healing. My favorite is the 90-minute Fusion massage, a customized treatment that focuses on getting all the kinks out, while still providing a relaxing experience. Exhale also offers a variety of barre, cardio, and yoga classes — all well worth a try.

So come to the Windy City for great food, interesting attractions, and the famous Midwestern hospitality.

Main image: The author and her boys enjoying a fancy breakfast at Margeaux Brasserie.



Author:

Judy Koutsky is an award-winning writer and editor and her work has appeared in over 30 publications, including Conde Nast Traveler, Travel + Leisure, Redbook, Parents, Scholastic, and Prevention. She writes often about travel, parenting, health, and lifestyle. Follow her [@JudyKoutsky](#) or visit her website [JudyKoutsky.com](#).

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