Emergency Information

The third largest city in the US is also one of its most historic and cultural – a place where a wide variety of attractions and activities are available. The central business district is full of architectural gems and art installations, and there are dozens of outstanding museums and galleries showcasing awe-inspiring art and educational exhibitions. Nature lovers aren't given short shrift either - the shores of Michigan lake are lined with vast golden beaches and parks just made for picnicking, running and spending free time. Chicago is also a city of music – jazz and blues fans will be happy to find bars with live music and amazing ambiance, old recording studios and vinyl shops.

Time Zone
Central Time (CT) – UTC/GMT -6 hours, Daylight Saving Time +1 hour is in use from March to November.

Contacts
Tourist Contacts
- Non-emergency hotline (traffic, information on events, reporting crime): 311
- Chicago Convention & Tourism Bureau: +1 312 567 8500
- Chicago Hotel Association: +1 312 346 3135
- Illinois Bureau of Tourism: +1 800 2CONNECT

Money
Currency: United States dollar, $1 = 100 cents.

There are money changers nearly on every corner of the city centre. A more convenient way to get cash, however, is to withdraw money from an ATM – they are plentiful and the rates are better than in the exchange offices.

All major cards are widely accepted, the most useful are probably Visa and MasterCard – always double-check the door stickers. Paying with credit cards is much more common than in Europe and there are some transactions you can’t even carry out without using your card, such as reserving tickets by phone or renting a car.

Tipping
Tipping is common and is, in fact, expected. It is a way to show that you’re satisfied with the service – if you’re not, tip less or not at all and complain. You should generally tip between 10-15% of the total bill. It is customary to tip hotel doormen, bellhops and car valets around $2 for every service. Taxi drivers expect a 15% tip, too.

Tax Refunds
There is no VAT refund system in Illinois. The price displayed is generally without sales tax, which is added at the register. The local sales tax for non-food items is 9.75%.

Prices
Chicago is known for expensive accommodation. On the other hand, going out and dining is relatively cheap, and there are variety of free days and discounts for attractions so overall your stay in Chicago may not necessarily be expensive.

- Meal, inexpensive restaurant – $10
- Meal for 2, mid-range restaurant, three-course – $45
- Combo Meal at McDonald’s – $6
- Bottle of water at supermarket – $1.30
- Domestic beer (0.5 liter, draft) – $3.75
- Cappuccino – $3.45
- Souvenir t-shirt – $20
- Gasoline (1 liter) – $1
- Hostels (average price/night) – $29
- 4* hotel (average price/night) – $180
- Car-hire (medium-sized car/day) – $60
Electricity
The standard electricity supply in the United States is 110-120 V with North American Grounded socket type (two parallel flat pins and a round ground pin). If you’re coming from outside America, you will need a voltage transformer as your appliances are most probably built for 220-240 voltage. The primary exception is computer/laptop/tablet/phone power supplies – check the label, a transformer is probably not necessary.

Languages
The dominant spoken language is, of course, American English. There are significant Spanish and Polish minorities but they are rarely engaged in the tourist industry.

Mobile Phones
There are two standards in use: GSM and CDMA. The latter one is used almost exclusively and unfortunately may not be compatible with your phone if coming from outside of the USA. The GSM standard is operated by T-Mobile and AT&T. However, the frequencies of the North American GSM are different from the rest of the world and not all phones can handle them.

The international access code for the USA is +1, the area code for Chicago is 312.

Internet
Almost every café offers free Internet connection – just ask the staff. The major chains such as Starbucks usually have free Wi-Fi for their customers. The services vary – sometimes there are computers for use or you get an access code good for some two hours, sometimes you get an unlimited access.

The Chicago Public Library offers free Internet access through terminals as well as Wi-Fi. You only need to show your ID to prove that you’re not from Chicago and you will be granted temporary access.

There are also many hotels that offer Internet connection for free.

Internet Resources
- Official Tourism Website (www.explorechicago.org)
- Official Illinois Tourism Website (www.discoverillinois.org)
- Cultural Events and Things to Do (timeoutchicago.com)

HOLIDAYS
- New Year’s Day (January 1)
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (third Monday in January)
- Lincoln’s Birthday (February 12)
- Washington’s Birthday (third Monday in February)
- Easter Sunday
- Memorial Day (last Monday in May)
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Labor Day (first Monday in September)
- Columbus Day (second Monday in October)
- Veterans’ Day (November 11)
- General Election Day (Tuesday after 1st Monday in November in even-numbered years)
- Thanksgiving Day (fourth Thursday in November)
- Christmas Day (December 25)

All offices and the majority of museums are closed on the major holidays, but malls and shopping centers usually stay open, and are closed or have reduced opening hours only on Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.

Opening Hours
The shopping hours are usually Monday to Saturday 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sundays, and extended hours during holidays. Office hours are typically 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Chicago museums tend to stay open until late, at least until 7 or 8 p.m. throughout the week.
Public Transportation
The public transportation system operated by the Chicago Transit Authority (www.transitchicago.com) covers the entire city and is cheap and efficient. Before getting on a vehicle, you need to get a stored-value fare card from a vending machine in the nearest CTA station or have the exact fare in cash (no change provided). Depending on how much you plan to travel, you can also purchase a CTA Unlimited Ride Card (one-day for $10, three-day $20, seven-day $28). The single fare is $2.25 (or $2 with farecard), reduced fare is $1.
- **Trains** – the system is very comprehensive, all train lines connect at the Loop.
- **Buses** – The buses run in a dense net and cover almost all major streets. The route is mapped at every stop.
- **Metra trains** (metrarail.com) – commuter trains connecting the city with the suburbs. They also run the Electric Line connecting Loop, Convention Center, Museum of Science and Industry, and Rainbow Beach – check the schedule beforehand. You need to buy a ticket from a vending machine before getting on board.
- **Pace suburban bus service** (pacebus.com) – several lines connect the CTA stations. Seventeen of its routes also serve O'Hare and Midway airports. The regular fare is $1.75 and the Transit card can be used on their routes.

Useful links:
- Regional Transportation Authority (rtachicago.com)
- Route Planner (goroo.com)

Taxis
When compared to other US cities, taxi fares are very low in Chicago. There’s plenty of them and they can be conveniently hailed from downtown streets. The initial charge is $3.25 for the first 1/9 mile and $0.20 for each additional 1/9 mile or 36 seconds elapsed. The surcharge for the first additional passenger is $1.00 and $0.50 for each additional passenger. There are no other surcharges. If travelling to or from the airports, the fare is one and half times the metered rate.

Phone numbers:
- +1 312 791 1273 Royal Three CCC Cab Co
- +1 773 248 7600 American-United Taxi
- +1 773 736 3883 Sun Taxi
- +1 773 561 1444 Flash Cab
Alternatively, you can use the services of the Chicago Water Taxi (www.chicagowatertaxi.com) if you are visiting the city in spring or summer. A single ride costs $3 and a day ticket costs $7. The taxi goes from Chinatown to Michigan Avenue with stops at Madison Street and LaSalle/Clark.

Regional Transportation
**Amtrak** – operates trains on five lines between 28 downstate cities and Chicago. The trains are often delayed but otherwise convenient. It is good to book longer-distance trips in advance.

**Buses** – operated by Greyhound, Megabus and Coach USA. The tickets can be purchased in advance at the respective offices, with agencies or online.

Useful links:
- Amtrak (www.amtrak.com)
- Greyhound (www.greyhound.com)
- Megabus (us.megabus.com)
- Coach USA (www.coachusa.com)

Driving
You will do best if you avoid driving in Chicago downtown. The parking is very expensive and traffic slow, often congested. When parking on street, always check the signs if it’s not residential parking. On the contrary, driving in Illinois is a pleasant experience. There is a dense net of highways and interstates generally in a good condition and only highways around Chicago are subject to toll.
- Speed limits in urban areas – 30 mph
- Rural interstates – 65 mph
- Highways and interstate highways near or in major cities – 55 mph
- Highways – 100 km/h (62 mph)
- Blood alcohol limit – .08% BAC (0.8 pro mille)
- Always use hands-free for your phone when driving.
- Using seat belts is compulsory even in the back seat. Children under 8 must travel in a child seat.

Walkability
Chicago ranks among the most walkable cities in the US. The most walkable neighborhoods are Printers Row, Near North and Sheridan Park. Overall, walking in Chicago is a pleasurable experience and a great way to get to know the city well.

Disabled access is also outstanding. The majority of train stations have rails or lifts and all trains and buses are wheelchair accessible. Almost all attractions also take the disabled into account – the access information is usually included on the website and the places are mostly well-accessible. You can find useful information on the Easy Access website (easyaccesschicago.org) or by calling +1 773 388 8839.
**Deep dish pizza (or Chicago-style pizza)** – baked in a pan with a high rim, with a thick layer of tomato sauce, meats and vegetables.

**Italian Beef sandwich** – slow-roasted, shaved steak in Italian-style bread.

**Chicago hot dog** – beef sausage served in a poppy-seed bun, topped with huge portion of pickled and fresh vegetables.

**Maxwell Street Polish** – same as hot dog, topped only with grilled onions, mustard, and chili peppers.

**Chicago-style fried chicken** – fried in mix of beef fat and vegetable oil.

The most common way to enjoy a night out in Chicago is bar-hopping. The city is reputed to have the second highest density of bars in the US. The most popular alcohol is probably vodka and cocktails based on it. There is also a great selection of local craft brews – there are more than 30 of them! Try McCarthy Red Ale or 5 Lizard.

**Legal Age**
The legal drinking age is 21. Last call is 2 a.m., with Saturday being an exception at 3 a.m. All bars, restaurants and clubs are smoke-free.

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**EVENTS DURING THE YEAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Chicago Winter Delights, Chicago Boat, RV &amp; Outdoors Show (<a href="http://www.chicagoboatshow.com">www.chicagoboatshow.com</a>), Winter Flower and Train Show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Chinese New Year Parade (<a href="http://www.chicagochinatown.com">www.chicagochinatown.com</a>), Chicago Auto Show (<a href="http://www.chicagoautoshow.com">www.chicagoautoshow.com</a>), Strictly Sail Chicago (<a href="http://www.strictlysailchicago.com">www.strictlysailchicago.com</a>), Coyote Winter Festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>St. Patrick's Day Parade (<a href="http://www.chicagostpatsparade.com">www.chicagostpatsparade.com</a>), Chicago Flower and Garden Show (<a href="http://www.chicagoflower.com">www.chicagoflower.com</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Chicago Improv Festival (<a href="http://www.chicagoimprovfestival.org">www.chicagoimprovfestival.org</a>), Major League Baseball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Art Chicago (<a href="http://www.artchicago.com">www.artchicago.com</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>Chicago Air and Water Show (<a href="http://www.chicagoairshow.com">www.chicagoairshow.com</a>), Gold Coast Art Fair, Latin Music Festival, Underground Film Festival (cuff.org)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Chicago Jazz Festival (jazzinchicago.org), Chicago Museum Week (chicagomuseumweek.com)</td>
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**National Football League**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>October</th>
<th>Events</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Chicagooween, National Hockey League, Chicago International Film Festival (<a href="http://www.chicagofilmfestival.com">www.chicagofilmfestival.com</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Magnificent Mile Lights Festival (<a href="http://www.magnificentmilenightsfestival.com">www.magnificentmilenightsfestival.com</a>), Chicago Humanities Festival (<a href="http://www.chicagohumanities.org">www.chicagohumanities.org</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Christkindlmarket (<a href="http://www.christkindlmarket.com">www.christkindlmarket.com</a>), WinterWonderfest (<a href="http://www.winterwonderfest.com">www.winterwonderfest.com</a>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Free Things To Do

- Museum of Contemporary Art – no entrance fee on Thursdays
- Art Institute of Chicago – free on Thursday evenings
- Skokie Northshore Sculpture Park
- City Gallery in the Historic Water Tower
- Buckingham Fountain Show
- National Museum of Mexican Art
- Museum of Contemporary Photography
- Lincoln Park Zoo
- Millennium Park
- Oriental Institute Museum
- Chicago History Museum – free Mondays
- Archicenter
- Chicago Children's Museum – no admission on Thursday evenings
- Chicago Botanic Garden
- Osaka Japanese Gardens

Shopping
Chicago is the shopping city. Wander along The Magnificent Mile to buy clothes, accessories and designer goods. You can also visit Lincoln Square and the Wicker Park area for music gifts. The most popular souvenirs from Chicago are Frango Mints, traditional chocolate sweets and blues or jazz CDs (Chicago is a city of music after all). A little tacky, but still beautiful, are snowglobes with Chicago’s distinctive skyline.

DO
- DO dedicate some time to Chicago architecture – there are many real gems.
- DO visit a professional baseball, basketball, hockey or football game.
- DO visit also some lesser-known museums – there are plenty of interesting ones.
- DO enjoy the lake during the summer – Chicago has beautiful beaches.
- DO NOT waste your time on Navy Pier if you want to get to know the real city.
- DO NOT buy souvenirs in Chinatown – the prices are outrageous.

DOS AND DO NOTS

DO NOT buy souvenirs in Chinatown – the prices are outrageous.

Safety
Your safety in Chicago heavily depends on which neighbourhood you find yourself in. There are many run-down streets and districts in central Chicago, some practically a few steps from the major sights.

At night, be cautious in the Loop – after regular working hours, this area is more or less abandoned. It might be also best to avoid certain neighborhoods on the South and West Sides, particularly the areas around Washington Park, Englewood, Fuller Park and Garfield Park, where the crime rates are highest.

In general, avoid badly lit or abandoned streets and always use your common sense. Always keep an eye on your belongings, especially in crowded areas and when traveling on public transportation.

There are many beggars on the downtown streets, but they don’t pose any danger. There’s one common scam, though – they offer to polish your shoes but then claim an outrageously high price after they’re finished.

The tap water should be safe to drink but it may have an unusual odor. There have been some problems with its quality recently, though; it might not be a bad idea to buy bottled water.
John Hancock Observatory
Visiting this 91th floor viewing terrace is an absolute must see if you wish to overlook Chicago.
175 Delaware Pl, Chicago, IL 60611, USA
GPS: N41.89884, W87.62293
Opening hours:
Daily: 9 a.m. – 11 p.m.
Admission:
Adults (12+): $18
Youth (3-11): $12
Children (up to 3): free

Yolk
Popular breakfast place serving presumably the best pancakes and poached eggs in Chicago. Attentive staff is a matter of course.
747 N Wells St, Chicago, IL 60654, USA
GPS: N41.89623, W87.63406
Phone:
+1 312 7872277
Opening hours:
Mon – Fri: 6 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Sat, Sun, Holidays: 7 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Water Tower
Historical landmark dating back to 1869 is venerated as one of very few buildings that have survived the Great Chicago Fire.
801 N Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60611, USA
GPS: N41.89712, W87.62453
Opening hours:
Daily: 10 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.
Holidays: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Admission:
Admission to the tower is free.
**Magnificent Mile**
Prime shopping street boasts exclusive brand shops and pricey boutiques of world-renowned names. Includes also some international chains.

GPS: N41.89754, W87.62406

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**State Street**
Major shopping destination that offers something for everyone. The shops range from apparel chains to designer clothing.

GPS: N41.89207, W87.62810

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**Ohio Street Beach**
Fashionable beach and a place to be seen. Its generally shallow water makes for a safe place to train open water swimming.

GPS: N41.89337, W87.61287
Phone: +1 312 7425121

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**Amazing Chicago’s Funhouse Maze**
Dazzling maze complex that the whole family will enjoy. Myriad of attractions all interconnected in one labyrinth.

600 E Grand Ave, Chicago, IL 60611, USA
GPS: N41.89198, W87.60962
Phone: +1 888 8937300

**Opening hours:**
- Summer Hours (Memorial Day – Labour Day):
  - Mon – Thu, Sun: 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.
  - Fri & Sat: 10 a.m. – midnight
- Spring/Fall Hours (Apr – Memorial Day):
  - Mon – Thu, Sun: 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.
  - Fri & Sat: 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.
- Winter Hours (Nov – Mar):
  - Mon – Thu: 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.
  - Fri & Sat: 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.
  - Sun: 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.

**Admission:**
- General ticket: $9.99
- Children (under 4): free

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**Navy Pier**
The pier now serves as a public meeting place, cultural venue and amusement park. Loads of things to do for everyone!

GPS: N41.89166, W87.60484
Phone: +1 312 595 PIER

**Opening hours:**
- Sun – Thu: 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.
- Fri & Sat: 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.

Opening times vary according to season, so check the official website.

**Admission:**
Admission to the pier is free. Parking and other attractions require separate fees.
**Wrigley Building**
Iconic office complex dating back to 1920s is the dominant of Michigan Avenue. It is most spectacular at night when lightened up.

100-220 E North Water St, Chicago, IL 60611, USA
GPS: N41.88963, W87.62483

**Tribune Tower**
Majestic skyscraper built in a distinctive Neo-Gothic style characterised by fine embellishment. Well worth a detour.

435 N Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60611, USA
GPS: N41.89042, W87.62370

**Lake Point Tower**
A high-rise residential building located near the Navy Pier. It is the world’s highest apartment building and its architecture is stunning.

505 N. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60611, USA
GPS: N41.89153, W87.61234
Phone: +1 312 467 0505

**James R. Thompson Center** / James R. Thompson Center
A real architectural feat. Houses state offices, galleries, shops, cultural venues and much more. It’s an amazing vantage point, too.

100 W Randolph St, Chicago, IL 60601, USA
GPS: N41.88486, W87.63141

**Chicago Theater**
Probably the most photographed cultural venue in Chicago. It puts up various concerts, comedy shows and plays.

GPS: N41.88545, W87.62747
Phone: +1 212 465 6225
Opening hours: Box office:
Mon – Fri: noon – 6 p.m.
The tour schedule is season-dependent and can be found on the website.
Admission: Fees of $15 or more subject to $4.50 facility surcharge.
Tour ticket:
Adults: $12
Children (under 12): $10

**Carbide and Carbon Building**
Historical landmark, the first real skyscraper in Chicago built during 1920s in a distinctive Art Deco style.

230 N Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60601, USA
GPS: N41.88654, W87.62476

**Jay Pritzker Pavilion** / Jay Pritzker Pavilion
One of Frank Gehry’s masterpieces. The cultural venue is worth visiting for its amazing features as well as the events it hosts.

55 N Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60601, USA
GPS: N41.88311, W87.62184
Phone: +1 3127421168
Opening hours: Mon – Sun: 6 a.m. – 11 p.m.
**Crown Fountain**
Interactive mixed-media sculpture that gained notoriety for its controversial form, height and surveillance cameras instalment.
1-99 S Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60601, USA
GPS: N41.88148, W87.62422

**Opening hours:**
Mon – Sun: 6 a.m. – 11 p.m.

**Cloud Gate**
Landmark of the city and a prime example of innovative public art. Often nicknamed as 'The Bean'.
201 E Randolph St, Chicago, IL 60601, USA
GPS: N41.88268, W87.62328

**Opening hours:**
Daily: 6 a.m. – 11 p.m.

**Admission:**
Admission to the park is free.

**BP Bridge**
Walk through the pedestrian bridge to overlook the Pritzker pavilion. Controversially, oil company paid to name the bridge.
230 S Columbus Dr, Chicago, IL 60603, USA
GPS: N41.88260, W87.62013

**Opening hours:**
Mon – Sun: 6 a.m. – 11 p.m.

**Sears Tower (Willis Tower)**
The tallest building in America. Don't miss out its observation deck that provides America's undoubtedly best vantage point.
233 S Wacker Dr, Chicago, IL 60606, USA
GPS: N41.87886, W87.63584

**Phone:**
+1 312 8759447

**Opening hours:**
Apr – Sep: 9 a.m. – 10 p.m.
Oct – Mar: 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Last entry 30 minutes prior to close.

**Admission:**
Adults: $18
Youth (3-11): $12

**Art Institute of Chicago**
This museum boasts the most extensive collections of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art. A must see for any art connoisseur.
111 S Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60603, USA
GPS: N41.87958, W87.62371

**Phone:**
+1 312 4433600

**Opening hours:**
Daily: 10:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. (– 8 p.m. on Thu)

**Admission:**
Adults: $23
Students, Seniors: $17
Children (up to 14): free
Grant Park
Carefully outlined lakeside park and also the largest one in downtown Chicago. Ideal as a getaway from busy streets.
GPS: N41.87776, W87.61925
Opening hours:
Daily: 6 a.m. – 11 p.m.
Admission:
Admission to the park is free.

Dearborn Station
Neo-Romanesque train station that served as a point of arrival for great numbers of immigrants. Landmark of long past railway era.
11210 Timberview Ln, Chicago, IL 60605, USA
GPS: N41.87211, W87.62842

Buckingham Fountain
One of the world’s largest fountains, built in a showy Rococo-like style. It gets covered in lights during winter.
506 S Lake Shore Dr, Chicago, IL 60605, USA
GPS: N41.87576, W87.61896
Opening hours:
Mon – Sun: 6 a.m. – 11 p.m.

Field Museum
Renowned museum displaying more than 20 million specimens. Dinosaur and Native American collections are its main highlight.
1400 S Lake Shore Dr, Chicago, IL 60605, USA
GPS: N41.86592, W87.61773
Phone:
+1 312 9229410
Opening hours:
Mon – Sun: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Closed on Christmas Day.
Last admission one hour before closing.
Admission:
General admission (does not include special exhibits):
Adults: $15
Children: $10
Seniors & Students: $12

Shedd Aquarium
Its aquariums are a real treat for everyone at least a little into underwater life. Most visited aquarium in the US.
1200 S Lake Shore Dr, Chicago, IL 60605, USA
GPS: N41.86757, W87.61398
Phone:
+1 312 9392438
Opening hours:
Fall/winter hours:
Mon – Fri: 9 a.m – 5 p.m.
Sat – Sun, holidays: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Summer hours:
Mon – Sun: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Admission:
Adults: $8
Children: $6
Additional experiences need to be purchased separately – see the overview on the official website.
Adler Planetarium and Astronomy Museum
Museum with a long tradition and innovative approach to exhibiting and educating. Features two planetarium theatres and various programmes.

1300 S Lake Shore Dr, Chicago, IL 60605, USA
GPS: N41.86635, W87.60671
Phone: +1 312 9227827

Opening hours:
Mon – Fri: 9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Sat – Sun: 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Opening hours vary according to season – check the official website.

Admission:
Adults: $12
Seniors, Students: $10
Children (3-11): $8