

Life in Chicago

Climate

Chicago is characterized by four distinct seasons. The flat terrain of the Midwest combined with Lake Michigan make Chicago's weather unpredictable and frequently extreme. Summer is very warm and often humid. The hottest temperatures occur throughout July and August and can reach a high of 95 – 100 degrees Fahrenheit (35 – 37 Celcius). The coldest days are usually in January and February when the temperature can drop below 0 degrees Fahrenheit (-20 degrees Celcius). Snow and strong winds characterize a Chicago winter. Fall and Spring weather can be rainy and changeable but typically include many sunny and moderate days. You will need appropriate clothes for these distinct seasons (i.e. coats, boots, hats, gloves, etc.).

Chicago Winter Survival Guide:

read below for winter tips and fun suggestions

Clothing:

Typical winter clothes include: a heavy winter jacket/coat, gloves/mittens, a scarf, a hat or earmuffs, thick socks (typically wool), long underwear, and snow boots. Temperature varies in Chicago on a day by day basis. The best advice is to check weather conditions and be prepared.

Public Transportation:

Public transportation can be slower in the winter months due to snow, ice, or sleet. Be aware of this if you are taking public transportation so you can plan accordingly. You can check the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) bus schedule anytime of the year on the CTA's website: <http://www.ctabustracker.com/bustime/home.jsp>.

Driving:

Driving can be challenging during the winter months. Always keep an ice scraper and brush in your car during the winter months. Jumper cables are another essential item (at any time of the year) to have with you at all times in your car.

Biking:

If you plan on biking during the winter months, we recommend checking weather conditions before doing so. It can be very challenging to bike during

the winter months in Chicago because of the very cold temperatures, as well as ice and snow on the ground. Be careful.

Ice:

Be careful of ice! There is something called black ice which is not actually black, but transparent. It is very difficult to see because it takes on the color of the surface beneath it. The most common places to find black ice are asphalt and concrete.

Things to do in Chicago during the winter:

- Ice Skate in Millennium Park
- Walk around the Christkindlmarket.
- Take a walk on a snowy day in a Chicago Park

Of course, you can always head inside to stay warm. Chicago has plenty of museums that have free or discounted days. You can check each museum's website to see hours of operation, special exhibits, and discount days. Here are a few Chicago has to offer:

- The Adler Planetarium
- The Field Museum
- Museum of Science & Industry
- Chicago History Museum
- National Museum of Mexican Art
- Glessner House Museum
- Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum
- Dusable Museum of African American History
- The Art Institute of Chicago
- Museum of Contemporary Art

Cultural Adjustment

Although being in a new country with new opportunities can be very exciting, at times it will be hard to adjust to a completely foreign culture, language, and lifestyle.

The adjustment cycle is continuous. You may move from one stage to another and then back again – this is normal. We have identified some ways in which you can help to cope with homesickness and make your experience the best that it can be!

Stages of Cultural Adjustment

Honeymoon Stage: The first stage is marked by exhilaration, anticipation and excitement. You are beginning your dream of working or studying in the U.S. and feel cooperative, quick to please, and take an active interest in the lives of others. Because you are eager to please, misunderstandings may occur when you want to understand but do not. When the frustration of misunderstandings start to add up, you may move to the next stage...

Hostility Stage: The next stage is distinguished by irritation, anger, anxiety, and sometimes depression, loss of appetite, disruptive sleep patterns or indigestion. You may feel frustrated because you have studied English, but you cannot seem to understand people. You may become hostile towards your environment and U.S. culture in general. You may get highly irritated over minor frustrations, become very untrusting and even fearful of Americans. It is here that academic problems arise along with a lack of motivation, and at worst, complete isolation.

Humor Stage: The third stage takes place when you notice yourself relaxing into new situations and laughing at misunderstandings which, in the hostility stage, would have caused major frustration. At this point you will have learned how to manage the ins and outs of the University system and will have made friend and acquaintances.

Home Stage: The final stage occurs when you not only feel a sense of unity with your home culture, but also “feel at home” here in the U.S. It is time to congratulate yourself, as you have successfully adjusted to life at a University and have discovered how to live successfully in two cultures! **Stages of cultural adjustment identified by Gregory Trifonovitch.*

Food

There are many grocery stores through the Chicago-land area, reflecting the truly diverse communities that make up the city. Two major grocery stores are Jewel and Dominick's. Both stores have a preferred card plan for regular customers, providing them with discounts on certain items. Treasure Island Foods, Whole Foods, Trader Joe's and Wild Oats offer more organic products.

You should be able to meet all of your dietary needs in Chicago's diverse city. You do not need to bring special food items from Indonesia. Chicago is a city of ethnic neighbourhoods and you can find grocery stores for African, Chinese, Caribbean, European, Greek, Indian, Italian, Korean, Latin American, Mexican, Middle Eastern, Russian, Thai, Vietnamese, and of course, Indonesian products.

Religion

The United States has a long tradition of religious and spiritual tolerance. Because so many ethnic groups have passed through, over time Chicago has accumulated a rich diversity of religions. Please visit www.yelp.com to find your preferred place of worship.