

# A Guide to Using the Go Chicago Card

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## Introduction

Your visit to Chicago is scheduled, now you need to plan your itinerary to see the various sights in and around Chicago. If you intend to visit a number of the popular attractions and perhaps take a tour or two, you should consider purchasing an attractions discount card. It can save you time and money.

In this article, we will review one of the most popular attraction discount cards, the Go Chicago Card.

## 1) What is the Go Chicago Card?

The Go Chicago Card is a vacation that fits in your wallet. Included is admission to over 25 attractions, as well as discounts at famous Chicago shops and eateries. Keep in mind that you don't have to be inside touring museums day after day. You can take boat rides, bus rides and carnival rides. In five days using the Go Chicago Card all over Chicago, we learned all about the card including some tips and tricks that we will share with you.

Here's just a sample of what you get when you buy the Go Chicago Card:

- Free Ferris Wheel and Carousel rides at Navy Pier
- Free admission to the Art Institute and the Museum of Contemporary Art
- Free admission to both the Lincoln Park Zoo and Notebaert Nature Museum
- Free bus tours of both the North and South Sides of Chicago
- Free Architectural Cruise on the Chicago River
- Free Lake Michigan Skyline Cruise
- For a complete list of the attractions, discounts and tours included in this card, see the Go Chicago Card product page.

Cards come in 1-, 2-, 3-, 5- and 7-day options. Choose the card that compliments your planned stay in Chicago. (Note: These options apply to consecutive days of use.)

## 2) How does the Go Chicago Card work?

The Go Chicago Card looks and is read like a credit card. Present your card when you enter one of the participating locations. Your card is inserted into the Go Chicago Card reader, entitling you to free admission, coupon packets and discounted purchases. Your card is activated the first time you use it. If you have a 3-day card and you use it on Monday, then you have Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday to use it.

TIP: Get an early start to the day for your first use. Your first day will be counted as a full day no matter what time you get started.
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## 3) What are its benefits?

- It includes over \$365 in FREE general admissions.

- At select attractions, you won't have to stand in line, because Go Chicago Card holders have separate lines that get you to the front of the pack.
- It's flexible, allowing you to change your itinerary at any time.
- Save up to 20% on shopping, dining and services all over the city.
- One free Go Chicago Card Guidebook is included. This is a great resource for planning your itinerary.

#### 4) What is the Go Chicago Card Guidebook?

The official Go Chicago Card Guidebook is your ultimate Chicago touring manual. It has:

- Over 100 full-color pages
- Numerous pictures and maps
- A description, address, phone number, hours, bus route, driving directions, official web site, etc, of every included attraction, restaurant and store.
- The destinations in the guidebook are divided by neighborhood, so you can easily plan your days.

Big on information but small in size, the guidebook is your best resource and should be with you at all times.

Each FREE admission and special offer available with the Go Chicago Card has a dedicated page in the guidebook.

TIP: If you're ordering your Go Chicago Cards online, buy extra guidebooks. One is included per order. Additional books are free, but there is a \$2 shipping charge per book. A small fee for the convenience of everyone having their own book.

#### 5) Tips for using your Go Chicago Cards

Once you receive your Go Chicago Card, it's time to decide how best to use it. We've suggested several one-day itineraries to suit different interests and area preferences. Using the following options will help you maximize your Go Chicago Card, whether you have only one day or as many as seven days to enjoy Chicago.

**One-Day Area Choices:** Save time and money by not traveling too far between attractions. We've grouped together specific attractions that are near one another, and all these tours can easily be completed in one day. Pick your favorites from the following areas and you've created a great day of touring for your group.

- **Museum Campus/Lakefront:** Field Museum, Shedd Aquarium & the Adler Planetarium
- **Michigan Avenue:** Art Institute, Millennium Park, Hancock Observatory, Museum of Contemporary Art
- **North Side:** Notebaert Nature Museum, Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago History Museum

**One-Day Kids' Choices:** Try these winning combos for a whole day of fun for the kids. Plus the train and/or bus rides to and from will be almost as much fun as the attractions themselves. Pick a couple for the youngsters and let them run wild.

- **Navy Pier-Inside:** Chicago Children's Museum, IMAX Theater
- **Navy Pier-Outside:** Ferris Wheel, Miniature Golf and the Carousel
- **Museum Campus:** Shedd Aquarium, Field Museum
- **North Side:** Lincoln Park Zoo, Notebaert Nature Museum
- **Scenic Views:** Sears Tower or John Hancock Observatory

**One-Day Ultimate Chicago:** Take a day to explore Chicago's best historical & beautiful sights.

- **Architectural Cruise on the Chicago River:** See over 40 architectural works of art while cruising along the Chicago River.
- **Chicago Historical Society Walking Tour:** Stroll through Chicago's most celebrated neighborhoods on one of three 2-hour walking tours.
- **Gray Line: North Side/South Side Bus Tours:** See Chicago's North Side, South Side or both aboard a luxury coach bus.

Another way to make the most of your touring day is by taking direct routes on one of Chicago's three free Trolley services. Start out at one of the two main Metra stations (Union and Ogilvie) and end up at Navy Pier, Museum Campus or in the shopping district along Michigan Avenue and State Street. Check the Chicago Trolley website for the latest schedule.

**TIP:** Buy more days to save more money. Your cost-per-day for a 5-day card (\$28) is only half of the cost-per-day of a 1-day card (\$55). A 7-day card is even less per day.

## 6) How do I get my Go Chicago Card?

You have three options when it comes to getting your Go Chicago Card:

1. Purchase online and have delivered. Shipping costs \$8.00
2. Purchase online and pick up in the city at one of 3 locations:
  - Macy's (Marshall Field's) 7th Floor Visitor Center, 111 N. State St., 7<sup>th</sup> Floor
  - City of Chicago Store, 163 East Pearson (across from Water Tower)
  - Westfield North Bridge Mall, 520 N. Michigan Avenue
3. Purchase in Chicago at the following locations:
  - Shedd Aquarium, 1200 Lake Shore Drive (2 and 3-day cards only)
  - Segway Experience, 224 S. Michigan
  - City of Chicago Store, 163 East Pearson (across from Water Tower)
  - Shop at the Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington
  - Gray Line Chicago, 17 E. Monroe (inside Palmer House Hilton Hotel)

Our advice is to have your card(s) shipped to your home. Shipping does cost \$8, but the extra time you will have to study the included Go Chicago Card Guidebook will be very valuable in planning your Chicago visit.

## 7) How do I get around Chicago?

### Obtain City Maps

Free Maps are available at the Chicago Cultural Center (78 E. Washington) and the City of Chicago Store (163 E. Pearson). You can also call or email the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) and have them send maps to you before you arrive in Chicago. Visit the RTA website for more information: <http://www.transitchicago.com/welcome/brochures.html> .

The best way to map out your itinerary is by using RTA's Trip Planner. Visit their website and put this great tool to use for you: <http://tripsweb.rtachicago.com/> .

### Basics of Transportation in Chicago

Traveling efficiently between destinations will help you add time to your trip. The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) has two public transportation systems that cover virtually every square inch of the city.

- CTA Bus – The CTA bus line is the most versatile public transportation system in the city and can get you within walking distance of every downtown destination.
- CTA Train – Trains are great for longer trips (3 or more miles) and compared to buses, trains make fewer stops and don't get stuck in traffic.

**Facts about CTA Buses and CTA Trains**

- Train lines are named as colors (Red, Purple, Blue, Brown, Green, Orange, Pink, Yellow).
- The CTA has two kinds of trains: "L" trains and Subway trains. "L" trains (which is short for "elevated") travel above ground, while subways travel underground.
- Bus routes are numbered 1 through 204, and do not provide change. Carry singles.
- What is a "Transfer"? – A transfer means that you are using more than one bus or train within a two-hour period to reach your destination.

Instead of carrying extra cash, you can store your money on a CTA Transit Card. If you find you will be taking more than 2 bus/train rides a day, invest in a Visitor's Pass. Visit the CTA website for more information: <http://www.transitchicago.com/maps/fares.html#e>

**8) Summary**

You are now ready to take on the amazing city of Chicago. With so many sights to see, you'll never have time to see it all in one trip, but the Go Chicago Card will ensure you see the most in the time you have.

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This guide to using the Go Chicago Card was produced by Chicago Traveler. While we have used our best efforts to provide the most accurate information available as of the writing date, we make no guarantees regarding the accuracy of the information contained within this document. It is provided solely as an aid and those interested in purchasing a Go Chicago Card should refer to the official web site of Smart Destinations at [www.SmartDestinations.com](http://www.SmartDestinations.com) for the most current data.

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