

THE
PUBLICAN



THE
MAGNIFICENT
MILE

MICHAEL KORS

THE WINDY CITY IS FILLED WITH HOT SPOTS TAILOR-MADE FOR FASHION LOVERS

SHOP Chicago may be known as Oprahville or former Obama-central, but it also happens to be one of the best places to indulge in retail therapy. As soon as you land, spend a full day scoping the label mecca known as The Magnificent Mile. In the springtime, its meticulously groomed street gardens grow alongside high fashion stops, including Michael Kors and Gucci. Also on the stretch? **Filene's Basement** (830 N. Michigan Ave.)—a past-season paradise with discounted Valentino and Dolce & Gabbana.

If you're looking for local designer talent, head over to side-by-side hoods Wicker Park and Bucktown. The area's main street, N. Damen Avenue, hosts an arsenal of hip boutiques such as **p.45** (1643 N. Damen Ave.) and **Roslyn** (2035 N. Damen Ave.), where you'll spot feminine and flirty creations by local design hero Elise Bergman. There's also the must-visit one-of-a-kind emporium **Stitch** (1723 N. Damen Ave.), with its superior collection of designer watches, bags, sunglasses and necklaces. Sprinkled among the luxe boutiques are also a few hidden vintage gems—a favourite for '50s and '60s jewellery is **Silver Moon** (1721 W. North Ave.).

EAT The competition for cuisine is fierce in Chi-Town. The chickest meals in the city can be had at **Blackbird**, **the Publican** or **Avec**—all menus are blessed by gourmet god Paul Kahan, winner of the 2004 James Beard award (the Oscar of the food world) for Best Chef: Midwest. But dinner options in the Windy City are endless, from inexpensive, delectable Pan-Asian eats at **Pingpong** (3322 N. Broadway St.) to upscale multi-course meals at **Charlie Trotter's** (816 W. Armitage Ave.). Of course there's also the whole deep-dish pizza craze, the best of which can be found in Little Italy. Chicago's great secret, however, is in its brunch options. Our two picks are **Orange** (738 N. Clark St.) for its build-your-own scrambled eggs and **Erwin** (2925 N. Halsted St.) for its lake trout breakfast.

PLAY Visit the legendary Art Institute of Chicago museum and libraries as well as the **Museum of Contemporary Art**, which hosts a tour-de-force public cocktail party the first Friday of every month. Off-the-beaten-path culturistas should trek over to the **Tony Wight Gallery** and neighbouring **Western Exhibitions** to see works by the new generation of game changers, including Robyn O'Neil and Terence Hannum. Don't forget to swing by **Millennium Park**—Frank Gehry is just one of the many geniuses who helped create the space. When it comes to nightlife, make your way to **Green Dolphin Street** (2200 N. Ashland Ave.) for its Boom Boom Room night, where DJs spin glorious Chicago house music. The Signature Lounge on the 96th floor of the **John Hancock Center** (875 N. Michigan Ave.) is also worth a visit; the city views here make the overpriced drinks well worth it.

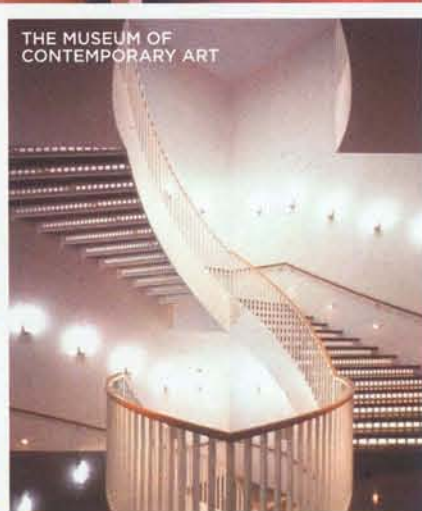
STAY: The best places to roost are **The Peninsula** (108 E. Superior St.) for a modern vibe and **The Palmer House Hilton** (17 E. Monroe St.) for something classic. For views of Lake Michigan, request a corner room at **The Drake** (140 E. Walton Pl.)—one of Chicago's most historic hotels. —*Elio Iannacci*



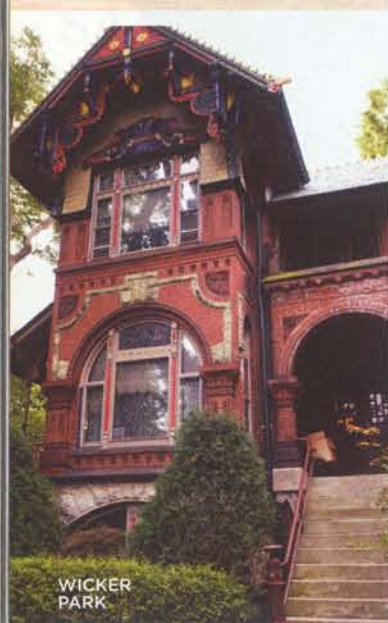
BLACKBIRD



MILLENNIUM
PARK



THE MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY ART



WICKER
PARK



ROSLYN
BOUTIQUE