

# CHINATOWN



**SHARYNE  
MOY TU**

*Born and raised on the south side of Chicago, my parents, immigrants from China, visited Chinatown each Sunday with my sister and me, buying traditional groceries and introducing us to our Chinese culture.*

*Later in life, I served as Executive Director of the Chicago Chinatown Chamber of Commerce which enabled me to reconnect with my heritage and work with local organizations and businesses to further develop the community and promote this important and exciting part of Chicago to the world.*

Chicago's Chinatown serves as an essential neighborhood for visitors and locals to purchase traditional grocery items, dine at restaurants and cafes representing various regions of China and learn about Chinese culture by visiting the public library, museums and parks. Chinatown is close to downtown and is easily accessible via public transit buses and trains, Divvy bikes, rideshares and when in operation, the Chicago Water Taxi, which is my favorite way to get to Chinatown and see the city via the Chicago River.

## SUGGESTED ITINERARY ★

Whichever way you get to Chinatown, a great place to start your day off is at the **intersection of Cermak Road and Wentworth Avenue**.

### 1 CERMAK RD

There are many displays of public art in Chinatown. The first one to see is **The Nine-Dragon Wall** on Cermak Road next to the Red Line station.

This is one of only three replicas outside of China of the original wall displayed in BeiHai Park, Beijing built in 1402. In ancient Chinese culture, the dragon symbolizes power and strength, while the number 9 symbolizes luck. You can find nine large dragons and more than 500 smaller dragons depicted on the wall.

### 2 CERMAK RD AND WENTWORTH

If you turn around and look across Cermak Road at Wentworth, you'll see the **Chinatown Gate**, which marks the entrance to Chicago's second Chinatown, built at this location in 1912.

The original Chinatown was located downtown around Clark and Van Buren. Chicago's Chinatown has since expanded in all directions due to its popularity.

### 3 2216 S. WENTWORTH

Cross the street and walk under the Chinatown Gate. Peruse the gift shops, grocery stores and bakeries along Wentworth as you pass buildings of architectural importance including the **Pui Tak Center** (formerly On Leong Merchants Association).

This building, designated as a Chicago landmark, was once used as an immigrant assistance center and is informally referred to as Chinatown's "city hall"... *CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE.*





CHINATOWN GATE



CHINATOWN SQUARE

Today, the Center serves the community by providing programs in adult education and training and youth resources. **Chiu Quon Bakery**, 2253 S. Wentworth Avenue, is a must-see stop for a large variety of Chinese buns, cakes and pastries.

#### 4 238 23<sup>RD</sup> ST

After you have purchased your bakery items, walk a short distance to 23rd Street and turn right.

The **Chinese American Museum of Chicago**, provides a glimpse into the lives and history of Chinese immigration to Chicago. Current exhibitions include My Chinatown: Stories from Within (including a 16-minute video that highlights stories of the people of Chinatown), Attic Treasures II, and Great Wall to Great Lakes: Chinese Immigration to the Midwest.

#### 5 CERMAK RD AND WENTWORTH

Return to Wentworth Avenue, walking back towards Cermak Road. At the intersection, cross Cermak Road to the other side of Wentworth Avenue where you'll find the **Chinatown Fire Department Engine 8 Station** on your left which was featured in the popular 1991 film Backdraft.

#### 6 WENTWORTH

Continuing north on Wentworth, the Chinatown Branch of the **Chicago Public Library** comes into view.

This award-winning structure, created by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and opened in 2015, serves as a civic, educational and social hub for the Chinese community.

The interior and exterior designs represent traditional Chinese style using principles of feng shui. The triangular shape plan aligns the building with the street grid and the gently curving perimeter wall, made entirely of glass, provides an abundant amount of light for the atrium. You can find bilingual books and magazines to read or check out.



## 7 1700 S. WENTWORTH

Continue walking north on Wentworth, and cross Archer Avenue to **Ping Tom Memorial Park**.

You'll pass an outdoor mall, which you'll visit later, and residential homes on the left. Turn left at 19th Street to enter the park, which is located on the south bank of the Chicago River. This 17.24-acre park features a pagoda style pavilion, fieldhouse, boat house, and when operational, is served by the Chicago Water Taxi with stops from downtown.

The annual **Chicago Dragon Boat Race for Literacy** takes place in June on the Chicago River, attracting thousands of visitors to the event and Chinatown. Take a stroll through the expansive park viewing its gardens, beautiful murals and an amazing view of the city skyline.

## 8 WENTWORTH

After your long walk through Chinatown and Ping Tom Memorial Park, it's time for you to enjoy a delicious meal. Walk back to Wentworth, returning to the outdoor mall called **Chinatown Square**.

This two-story outdoor mall, designed to resemble a traditional Chinese Imperial courtyard, houses restaurants, bakeries, grocery and retail stores, banks, beauty salons and more. If you haven't tried Chinese dim sum (similar to tapas small plates), then you need to! Several restaurants in Chinatown serve these delicacies. In Chinatown Square, you can dine indoors or outdoors on the patio at **MingHin Cuisine**, 2168 S. Archer Avenue, and choose from a variety of dim sum or other traditional dishes.

Either before or after your meal, be sure to visit the center courtyard in Chinatown Square, which features statues representing the twelve Chinese zodiac animals. There is also a large tile mosaic mural which faces Archer Avenue depicting the history and accomplishments of Chinese in America. And, if you want a special treat before heading home, stop by **Joy Yee's**, 2139 S. China Place, for a delicious bubble tea. With so many flavors to choose from, it will be hard to decide!



PING TOM MEMORIAL PARK



DIM SUM IN CHINATOWN