Pilsen is one of Chicago’s oldest neighborhoods, and a large portion of the neighborhood was designated as an official historic district in 2006. In the early 20th century, Pilsen was predominantly Czech and Slovak. Pilsen even acquired its name from the Bohemians, who named it after one of the largest cities in their home country, Plzeň. Pilsen later became a magnet for immigrants from a number of Eastern European countries including Poland, Yugoslavia, and Soviet Lithuania.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the neighborhood’s cultural tapestry became increasingly Mexican. Today, Pilsen is a predominantly Hispanic community, and for many Mexican immigrants, it continues to be a vibrant home-away-from-home that is only three miles from downtown Chicago. Pilsen’s history of having a strong cultural identity continues and the neighborhood is home to a variety of independent galleries, youth arts programs, local businesses, and community gardens.

WHAT TO DO?

• Sip margaritas on the lively patio at La Vaca, then satisfy your sweet tooth with gorditas dulces at Panaderia Nuevo Leon.
• Spend an evening exploring open studios and galleries in Pilsen’s arts district during free Second Fridays events.
• Stop for tacos at some of Pilsen’s staple carnitas joints like Carnitas Don Pedro and Carnitas Uruapan.
• Celebrate Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) in Pilsen, when Harrison Park is filled with colorful ofrendas, live music, and family-friendly activities.

GETTING THERE

BY TRAIN
Visit Pilsen by taking the CTA or Metra. Take the Pink line to 18th or the BNSF Metra Electric line to Halsted Street.

Please confirm routes and schedules at www.transitchicago.com and www.metra.com

BY BIKE
From Michigan Avenue, head to E Van Buren St and turn left onto State St. Turn right onto W 18th St and bike ahead into Pilsen.

BY BUS
Several CTA lines service the Pilsen neighborhood: 42, 21, 62.

Please confirm routes and schedules at www.transitchicago.com

Pilsen is a haven for offbeat boutiques, hip eateries, and cool music venues standing alongside bodegas, panaderías, and family-owned restaurants serving authentic Mexican cuisine. The neighborhood’s thriving arts scene has become known as the Chicago Arts District. This seven-block stretch is filled with artists lofts, studios, retail spaces, galleries, and more. Another must for art lovers is Pilsen Arts and Community House, a local gallery focused on community and accessibility.

CULTURE

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FUN FACT
Pilsen is home to a variety of lively community events. Savor a variety of regional and specialty mole dishes at the Mole De Mayo Festival in May or enjoy live entertainment at the Midwest’s largest Latino festival, Fiesta del Sol, happening every July.

You can’t leave the neighborhood without exploring one of the city’s most beloved music venues, Thalia Hall, where you can catch indie rockers, famed comedians, and live DJs in a striking space modeled after the Prague Opera House. The venue shares a historic building with Dusek’s Board & Beer (award-winning tavern fare), Punch House (’70s vibes and large-format drinks), and Tack Room (live piano music in the building’s former carriage house).

INSIDER TIP
Don’t miss the National Museum of Mexican Art while you’re in the neighborhood. This free museum immerses visitors in Mexican culture through a stunning collection of textiles, folk art, prints, photos, and more.

PILSEN
Rich in Mexican culture, Pilsen is a neighborhood that is filled with music, art, culinary tradition, and nightlife. It’s home to award-winning restaurants, iconic music venues, and sensational murals as far as the eye can see—just a few reasons it was named one of the coolest neighborhoods around the world by Forbes. Pilsen’s 18th Street is a bustling commercial district with endless options for shopping and dining. As you walk down 18th Street, you’ll be able to choose from enjoying authentic Mexican cuisine, stopping in at a bookstore or record shop, or even visiting a tortilla factory.