HISTORY

Uptown’s cultural history is unique. The neighborhood was a booming nightlife district in the 1920s and 1930s, with a thriving jazz scene that took off during Prohibition. The area’s renaissance has seen a number of its old-school movie houses and Art Deco buildings restored to their former glory. Undoubtedly, you have to stop for a drink at the storied Green Mill, this 100-year-old jazz club still has the same sultry feel of its Prohibition heyday. Grab a seat in the booth at the end of the bar — it was the regular spot for famous gangster Al Capone.

In its early days, German and Swedish farmers populated the area. It soon attracted developers who created some of the neighborhood’s historic architecture that is still preserved today, like those homes found on Hutchinson Street. For another look at the neighborhood’s historic architecture, visit the scenic Graceland Cemetery, a Victorian oasis of art, architecture, and landscape design that is one of the city’s hidden gems. Since then, there has been an influx of new neighbors from many different cultures over the years. Today, Uptown remains one of the city’s most ethnically diverse neighborhoods, welcoming immigrants and refugees from across the globe.

CULTURE

The community area of Uptown is home to several districts—each with its own history, flavor, and character. Added together, they make Uptown a “city within a city.”

On Argyle Street and the surrounding blocks, you’ll find a treasure trove of Southeast Asian eateries, with restaurants serving up sushi, dim sum, banh mi, pho, and more. One local favorite is James Beard Award-winning Sun Wah BBQ, where the Beijing duck dinner is an off-menu hit.

Facing Lake Michigan, this area is home to Montrose Beach, which features an accessible beach walk for dog owners and bird watchers. The beach also has kayak and volleyball rentals, and a bar restaurant that has live performances on weekends.

Uptown contains a portion of the Andersonville business district on Clark Street south of Foster Avenue, including several LGBTQ+ bars and the Chicago Magic Lounge. The East Ravenswood portion of Uptown extends west to the Metra, making the neighborhood even more accessible for visitors from all over the globe.

WHAT TO DO?

- Take your pick from indie rock, salsa concerts, drag shows, and more across Uptown’s exciting clubs and theaters. You’ll find two of the city’s most popular concert venues just a few steps away from each other — The Riviera and the historic Aragon Ballroom both offer a packed calendar of music and events all year long. Down the street, The Baton Show Lounge has been an iconic drag venue in Chicago for over 50 years. You’ll find live shows there every night of the week. Or check out Carol’s Pub, a laidback spot for live country and western music that was founded by Appalachian migrants.
- Discover authentic African dishes through traditional recipes at the many restaurants featuring cuisine from the East and West sides of the continent, like Demera Ethiopian Restaurant or Iyanze Bar & Cafe.
- Spend a day in the sun at Montrose Beach, featuring a waterfront restaurant and bar, Montrose Point Bird Sanctuary, and dog beach.
- Visit one of Argyle’s can’t miss spots for foodies including traditional Vietnamese dishes at Pho Viet and flavorful Thai in a cozy atmosphere at Immn Rice & Beyond.
- Catch a show at the Black Ensemble Theater!

GETTING THERE

- BY TRAIN
  Uptown can be reached by three CTA lines: the Brown, Red, and Purple Lines. Confirm routes and schedules at transitchicago.com. You can also visit via the Metra Electric line (UP-N) to the Ravenswood Station.
  Please confirm routes and schedules at www.metra.com.

- BY CAR
  Uptown is conveniently located off Jean Baptiste Point DuSable Lake Shore Drive on the lakefront. Travel north from the Loop to Montrose, Wilson, Lawrence, or Foster.

- BY BIKE
  The Lakefront Trail, which stretches to the Far North Side providing car-free biking across the length of the city, extends to Uptown. Take (U.S. Bicycle Route 37) to Wilson Ave.

- BY BUS
  Several CTA lines service the Uptown neighborhood: 9, 22, 36, 78, 81, 92, 135, 136, 146, 147, 148, 151.
  Please confirm routes and schedules at www.transitchicago.com.

INSIDER TIPS

On Thursday evenings in July and August, Argyle Night Market fills Argyle between Kenmore and Sheridan with vendors, live entertainment, and cultural performances. Slide into The Green Mill any Saturday year-round at 3:00 PM for The Paper Machete, a free 21+ comedic “live magazine” featuring a rotating cast sharing hot takes from that week’s news cycle.

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