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— Hotels —

Where to Stay in Chicago Now



Neil Burger/Courtesy The Peninsula Chicago

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A look at the exciting new properties and renovations that have debuted in the Windy City over the past year.

By Ted Loos on August 07, 2018

Look out: a fresh batch of hotel rooms has blown into the Windy City. The last year has seen a welcome uptick in upscale new properties in Chicago, as well as renovations to venerable luxury names.

It would be hard to imagine a better location—right on Michigan Avenue in the Loop, a few blocks north of the Art Institute—than the [St. Jane Hotel](#), which opened in early July. The property is located in a boffo piece of Art Deco architecture, built in 1929 as the Carbide and Carbon Building; its top is intended to resemble a Champagne bottle.



Courtesy St. Jane Chicago

The St. Jane—named after Chicago legend Jane Addams, who was the first woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize—has 365 rooms, 332 of which are online now. (Some 33 more extra-premium ones are slated to open soon on a dedicated series of upper floors.) The design is high-contrast, with black-and-white herringbone floors in the rooms set off by bronze and marble accents, and a lobby that is ensconced in black flocked wallpaper. The local Michelin-starred chef Aaron Lirette (ex-GreenRiver) has opened the on-property restaurant Free Rein, serving up seasonal fare like trout poached in a citrus beurre blanc.

May saw the opening of [Claridge House](#), on a tree-lined and quiet stretch of Dearborn Avenue, just to the north of the Gold Coast action—one of the rare upscale Chicago hotels that feels off the beaten path. Some \$9 million in renovations turned the 165-room property from the Hotel Indigo into its new incarnation. Its decor scheme, a low-key series of grays, creates the same effect as the hotel's calming location.



Christian Horan/Courtesy Viceroy Chicago

A few blocks to the south, the boutique [Viceroy Hotel](#) opened last summer with 180 rooms. The property has a dramatic double-height lobby with mirrored panels in its upper reaches—all the design choices create a significant impact in cozy spaces, and many elements are updated riffs on mid-century modern forms. The rooms have gold-colored, geometrically patterned headboards, and much of the lighting recalls the multi-pronged organic shapes pioneered by the artist [Lindsey Adelman](#) (but is now ubiquitous by other hands). The guests all look like they have given, or at least watched, a TED Talk.

The center of affluent Chicago is the Magnificent Mile, and some of the grand dame hotels have new features to boast about. At the [Four Seasons Chicago](#)—with its impressively rambling, blue-chip-art-filled lobby—all of the rooms, junior suites, and corridors were redone this spring, and the very subtle yet plush design is anchored by solid navy tones in the furniture, with wavy blue-and-gray rugs meant to evoke Lake Michigan. Next year, the fancier suites will get a refresh. (No matter what they renovate, though, the most popular features remain the martini cart for adults and the ice cream cart for kids, both of which can roll over to your room anytime.)



Courtesy The Ritz-Carlton, Chicago

Over at the [Ritz-Carlton Chicago](#), last summer saw the complete gutting and revamping of the lobby, turning a formerly cavernous space into a series of engaging areas separated by a set of tall walnut “fins”—think of half-height divider walls in two rows—all of it underneath a dramatic, multi-piece lighting sculpture made from hand-blown glass.

And at the [Peninsula Chicago](#), the big news was the June opening of a completely new venue, [Z Bar](#), which has brought some energy to the late-night scene in the area. On a recent Wednesday, for instance, things were bustling at 10 p.m., which is *not* always the case in Chicago. The outdoor space at Z Bar, complete with fire pit, looks right at the Hancock Tower; inside, the reliably chic [Yabu Pushelberg](#) design offers a curving bar underneath an amoeba-shaped skylight. The menu features creative Asian-inspired fare and cocktails (like the Shojo cocktail, which has shochu, sake, and sakura).