

# IT REALLY IS HIP TO BE SQUARE

The Godfrey Hotel in Chicago a state-of-the art cubist tower

**ROCHELLE LASH**  
SPECIAL TO THE MONTREAL GAZETTE

The new Godfrey Hotel Chicago is a shining example of the boutique hotel of today.

The first of its brand is making its mark through eye-catching architecture, striking interiors and trendy new-age essentials such as a hot rooftop scene, creative mixology and high-tech features. It also is luxurious, but with a fresh, casual-chic style, not a stuffy, traditional air.

The Godfrey is an unusual cubist tower of staggered blocks rising 16 storeys above a vintage neighbourhood, a standout building even in architecturally rich Chicago.

Its interior is a contrast to its stark exterior. The lobby is all about sensual curves, with an elliptical shape, circular sofas, a stunning spiral light fixture and a large rounded wall of glass. Detailed mosaics on white stone walls and honey-coloured wood floors complete the ultracontemporary scene.

The hotel has a boutique look and feel, but is home to a substantial 221 rooms, a small spa and one of Chicago's hottest lounge scenes. There are three levels of rooms and suites, all decked out in whites and neutrals with accents of dark wood, caramel leather benches and pops of purple sofas. Each room is well-equipped with a wet bar, a sitting area and a work station, plus posh l'Occitane toiletries from France, a 46-inch TV and an iHome docking station.

One of The Godfrey's high-tech angles is a touch-control system in the guest rooms for temperature and lighting. As well, The Godfrey's lobby is equipped with digital concierge boards allowing patrons to access online data about flights, weather and local events. You can access find tourism information on your guest-room television.

The Godfrey is situated in the heart of revitalized River North, a former industrial area and red-light district now repurposed into a cultural agora of trendy lofts and galleries. River North also is a foodie-feast of high-profile restaurants such as Tavernita, Kinmont, GT Fish & Oyster, The Boarding House, MK and Slurping Turtle. In the populist category, also within blocks of The Godfrey is the world's largest McDonald's. And it's only six blocks to Michigan Avenue's Magnificent Mile of shopping and another two to the John Hancock Centre, Chicago's towering black metal and glass landmark.

The Godfrey has an art-intensive visitors' package that features a 90-minute tour of galleries on Saturdays led by the Chicago Gallery News, plus tickets to the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA) for the important

**IF YOU GO**

Air Canada flies non-stop to Chicago from Montreal and Toronto (aircanada.com). Porter flies from Montreal to Chicago with a change at Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport. Prices start at \$208 one-way, at certain times (flyporter.com).

**The Godfrey Hotel Chicago:** 312-649-2000, godfreyhotelchicago.com; 127 W. Huron at LaSalle St., Chicago; rooms start at \$209 US per night, including Wi-Fi, daily USA Today, fitness centre.

**The IO Urban Rooftop:** daily breakfast, lunch, dinner, late bites and brunch on Sat.-Sun.

**Tourism info:** Chicago tourism: choosechicago.com; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, mcachicago.org.

# 'Eat your way through the city,' in U.S. towns

Pizza tours offer visitors a thick slice of the local culture

**CARYN ROUSSEAU**  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO In a city famous for its deep-dish pizza, tourists wouldn't know the locals prefer a thinner-crust, tavern-style pie topped with homemade Italian sausage and cut into squares, not slices — unless they went on a pizza tour.

Chicago is one of a handful of cities across the U.S., including Boston, Milwaukee and New York, with companies that offer tours of the local pizza scene. Chicago Pizza Tours owner Jonathan Porter takes his customers on a bus ride around the city that includes four stops over 3½ hours to sample deep-dish, the tavern-style popular in Chicago neighbourhoods and other eclectic pizza variations.

"It's just a different way to see the city," Porter said. "Eat your way through the city. It was always designed to get people off the beaten path."

Bonnie Burchett, 64, of Winston-Salem, N.C., was on a recent weekend vacation to Chicago with her husband when they took the pizza tour.

"I like that sausage," she said after taking a bite at Pizano's, a downtown pizzeria with a buttery crust deep-dish pizza and tavern-style that was the first stop on the tour.

Elizabeth Goodwin, 33, of Columbus, Ohio, was also on a weekend trip with her husband. They



A slice of pizza from Pequod's in Chicago. **CARYN ROUSSEAU/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

were able to try Pizano's, thin crust at Coalfire west of downtown, tavern-style with sauerkraut at Flo and Santos on the city's South Side, and Pequod's deep-dish on the North Side.

"I've always wanted to try Chicago deep-dish pizza, it's famous," Goodwin said. The couple took the tour, she said, because "otherwise we wouldn't know where to go."

There are 2,200 pizza restaurants in Chicago. Thin crust outsells deep-dish in Chicago even though deep-dish was invented in Chicago in the 1940s.

Miriam Weiskind, a tour guide with Scott's Pizza Tours in New York, happened to be on the recent Chicago tour, wearing a T-shirt with a picture of a slice of pizza.

She said she tries to focus on a particular pizza's ingredients and explain to people on her tours "what goes into it so at the end they understand why they like it."



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retrospective, David Bowie Is. The Bowie show's only U.S. stop is Chicago (it runs until Jan. 4) and features a multimedia display of the pop star's accomplishments in fashion, art, music, theatre and film. The only other North American venue was in Toronto in 2013.

Roof-top scenes are the new social centres and The Godfrey is home to arguably the largest in

town. The IO Urban Rooftop (IO stands for indoor-outdoor) transitions from light-filled lunch and brunch to a sexy cocktail hour and small-plate dinners, all with the Chicago skyline as a back-drop.

Food and beverage director Matthew McCahill has gone trendy and tasty with choices such as brunch poutine with an egg atop, pitchers of white sangria or lemonade-vodka

punch, truffle fries with Parmesan, waygu steak sliders or a salad of avocado and prawns. The prix-fixe supper menu has several courses including smoked-salmon flatbread, lamb, hanger steak and braised pork belly.

IO also takes its Champagne seriously, with Laurent-Perrier by the glass, Krug by the bottle, magnums of Perrier-Jouet or Dom Pérignon, and Veuve Clicquot by the jeroboam.

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