



Chuan Spa at the Langham

HERE TO STAY

THREE WAYS TO UNWIND THIS WINTER — WITHOUT LEAVING THE CITY

BY AMBER GIBSON

Still traumatized by last winter? Us, too. But instead of running for the hills (or, more accurately, the beaches) this year, we've decided to give Chicago a second chance and treat ourselves to a staycation in the city. So forget the long road trips and even longer flights — no matter your budget, we've broken down three short-but-sweet ways to celebrate Chicago's considerable cold-weather charm.

8 a.m.: Don't even try to resist the scent of baking croissants from Hendrickx Belgian Bread Crafter (100 E. Walton; hendrickxbakery.com) — head straight here for coffee or tea and pastries (\$2.85 and up). The Esmeralda and the Ruby croissants are specialties, but anything fresh from the oven is delicious.

9 a.m.: Arrive at Chicago's most luxurious new hotel, the Langham (330 N. Wabash; chicago.langhamhotels.com), where an office-building exterior belies an elegant lobby and guestrooms within. If your classic river view suite (\$1,200 per night) isn't quite ready, spend a few hours at the Chuan Spa for massages, facials and body treatments rooted in traditional Chinese medicine (services start at \$175). You'll need at least an hour beforehand to enjoy the full Chuan bathing ritual, including an aromatherapy shower and chamomile steam room.

Noon: Time for lunch at Chicago's newest Italian restaurant, Acanto (18 S. Michigan; acantochicago.com). We recommend sporting something stretchy — the sumptuous duck-egg spaghetti with creamy pork sugo (\$17) and veal parmigiano (\$26) will make a



"light lunch" difficult.

2 p.m.: Summer may be a distant memory, but you can still relish George Gershwin's famous aria at a Lyric Opera matinee of the summertime-set "Porgy and Bess," the first great American opera (\$20-\$229, 20 N. Upper Wacker; lyricopera.org).

7 p.m.: It's hard to decide if the view or the food is better at Sixteen (401 N. Wabash; sixteenchicago.com). The autumn menu, which runs through Dec. 31, pays homage to the restaurant's crew — there's a palm-butter-stewed goat arancini inspired by a Liberian steward and a sturgeon and caviar three ways, prepared by chef **Thomas Lents** and his two sous chefs (\$185 tasting menu, \$125 wine pairings).

10 p.m.: Cap off the evening at the Pavilion at the Langham, polishing off the boozy, \$1,000 Victoria sundae (you get to keep the Wedgewood crystal bowl). Upon returning to the hotel, ask your personal butler to draw you a bath — then sink into a tub scattered with rose petals while sipping rosé.



Acanto



Sixteen



Victoria sundae at the Langham

9 a.m.: Stop by Gaslight Coffee Roasters (2385 N. Milwaukee; gaslightcoffee.com) in Logan Square for one of the best cups of java in town — and to snag one of new chef **Jeremy Leven's** duck-egg breakfast sandwiches (\$7).

10 a.m.: Check into the InterContinental (\$229 for a standard room, 505 N. Michigan; icchicago.com). In the lobby, you might catch a glimpse of chef **Randy Reed** putting the finishing touches on a giant gingerbread replica of Dr. Seuss' Whoville from *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*.

11 a.m.: There's no better way to get a taste of the city than through a food tour by Tastebud Tours (\$44, 864 N. State; tastebudtours.com). Your tastebuds will get a history lesson as you sample an array of Chicago flavors, from Pizano's deep-dish pizza to Chicago-style hot dogs with all the fixins' at Downtown Dogs and the famous Billy Goat Tavern Cheezborger.

3 p.m.: With full bellies, cross Michigan Avenue to see why everyone's raving about the David Bowie exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art (\$25, 220 E. Chicago; mcachicago.org). Take a peek behind the glamorous rock star and style icon's public persona with a display of costumes, artwork, photography and handwritten lyrics.

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InterContinental

6 p.m.: Grab a light pre-theater bite (trust us, you'll still be pretty full from the food tour) at Brazilian-inspired La Sirena Clandestina (954 W. Fulton; lasirenachicago.com). We love the spicy kale salad (\$8), head-on prawns with serrano salsa (\$16) and lobster and chicken xim-xim (\$28).

7:30 p.m.: "A Christmas Carol" is a holiday classic for good reason: Scrooge's transformation from "Bah, humbug!" to a beautiful Christmas morning will warm the coldest of hearts. Take a seat for the 37th season of the play, beginning Nov. 15 at Goodman Theatre (\$20-\$43, 170 N. Dearborn; goodmantheatre.org).

10 p.m.: To end the evening, it's back to the InterContinental and Eno Wine Room (505 N. Michigan; enowinerooms.com) for a wine and chocolate truffle flight/pairing (\$18 for wine, \$11 for truffles). Who else would pair a mustard and fig truffle with a big, bold red?



Left: A stop at the Billy Goat Tavern on the Tastebud Tour



Below: "A Christmas Carol" at the Goodman Theatre



Margarita European Inn



9 a.m.: Whether you live in the city or the burbs, hop on Lake Shore, the CTA or the Metra and head to Evanston, where you'll check into the newly remodeled 1920s Margarita European Inn (\$144 for a standard room, 1566 Oak, Evanston; margaritainn.com). You'll feel like nobility visiting your country home with this peaceful respite from city living.

10 a.m.: Grab breakfast in true Parisian style at the just-opened Patisserie Coralie (600 Davis, Evanston, 847-905-0491), stocked with croissants, macarons, and entremets (\$2-\$6.50). Leave the car behind and take the CTA or Metra back into the city to avoid parking and traf-

fic hassles.

11 a.m.: Travel from France to Sweden in less than an hour: Stop by the Swedish American Museum (\$4, 5211 N. Clark; swedishamericanmuseum.org), where you can learn about the Swedish immigrant experience in Chicago — kids can get in on the action by exploring the Brunk Children's Museum of Immigration.

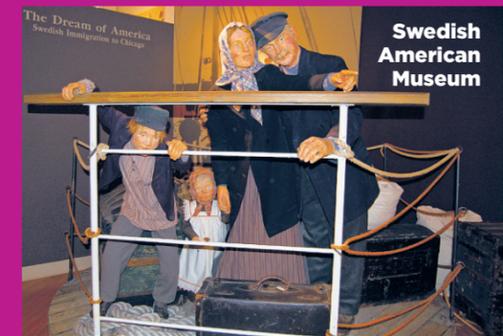
1 p.m.: Make your way across the world once more at Middle Eastern Bakery (1512 W. Foster; middleeastbakeryandgrocery.com). Try brick-oven baked pita chips with dozens of different housemade hummus flavors and dips (\$2.99), or bite into succulent eggplant and feta or lamb and potato hand pies (\$1.99).

2 p.m.: Andersonville is full of independent boutiques for Christmas shopping. At Andersonville Galleria (5247 N. Clark; andersonvillegalleria.com), browse one-of-a-kind gifts from fair-trade jewelry to posters and tees inspired by various Chicago neighborhoods.

5 p.m.: Through early January, bundle up and stroll through Lincoln Park Zoo (free, 2001 N. Clark; lpzoo.org), where lively Japanese snow monkeys will entertain you at the new Regenstien Macaque Forest. Starting Nov. 28, musical light shows, warm spiced wine and live ice carving will be part of ZooLights nightly holiday celebration.

7 p.m.: Fresh-baked Argentine empanadas await at 5411 Empanadas (\$2.50/each, 2850 N. Clark; 5411empanadas.com), a small BYOB storefront born from a food truck. Try one each of 11 flavors — Malbec beef and sweet corn are favorites — and don't forget the chimichurri sauce.

9 p.m.: Head back north to Andy's Frozen Custard (719 Church, Evanston; eatandys.com) for fresh-churned vanilla or chocolate custard with a cornucopia of toppings. Unwind before bed with a book in the intimate English library at the inn.



Swedish American Museum



Andersonville Galleria



5411 Empanadas