

# illinois

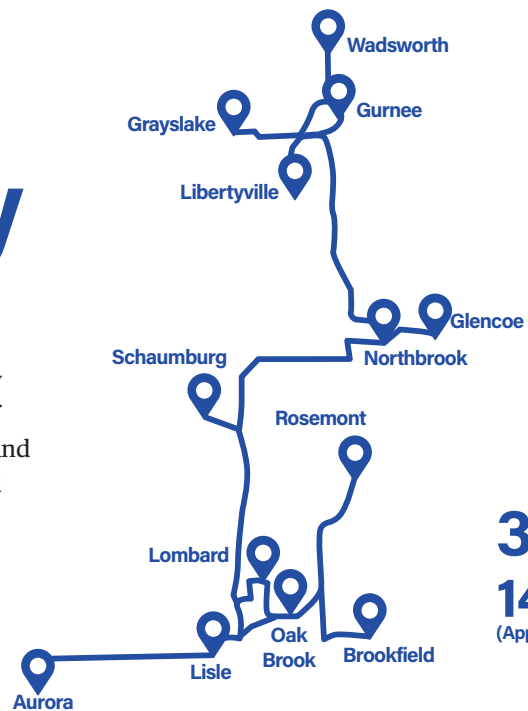
Winter in the  
Chicagoland Suburbs



## bright lights near the big city

Full of good cheer in Chicago's suburbs

There's a reason the Chicagoland suburbs are the setting for so many classic holiday movies. Just outside the city limits, the bright lights of the skyline give way to spectacular light displays at botanic gardens and arboretums, festive amusement parks, cheerful holiday festivals, and plenty of places to shop for everyone on your nice list.



**3 days**  
**140mi**  
(Approx)

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## Winter in the Chicagoland Suburbs

### 📍 Day 1 Libertyville, Gurnee, Wadsworth, Grayslake, Glencoe, and Northbrook

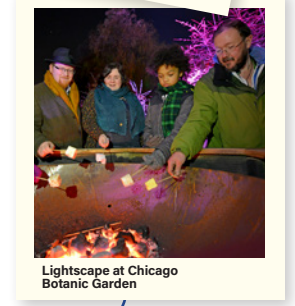
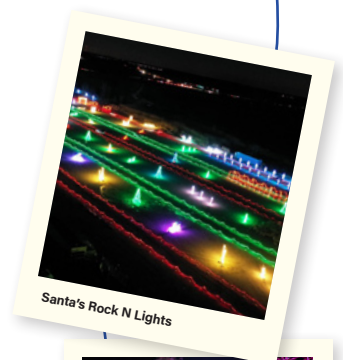
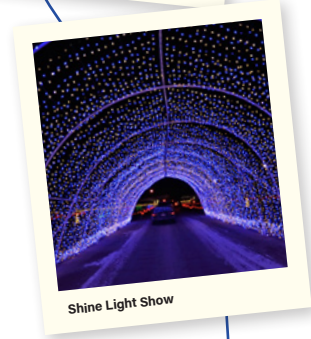
Start your day with some winter shopping. And don't worry, we've got all weather conditions covered.

**MainStreet Libertyville** is packed with historic charm and independent local boutiques, and community events are frequent occurrences. Shops stay open late on the first Friday of every month – keep an eye out for special holiday activities during this time.

Prefer an indoor shopping experience? Head north to **Gurnee Mills**. You'll have your choice of more than 160 stores, plus retail outlets offering big discounts. Take a break from your shopping spree with a trip to the indoor Rink Side Sports and Entertainment Center to blow off some steam ice skating.

If you're craving a slice or two at lunchtime, don't settle for less than the best pizza in Gurnee. Stop at **Kaiser's Pizza and Pub** for a specialty thin crust pie made with real Wisconsin cheese, or opt for one of their popular gourmet sandwiches. For a uniquely Illinois experience, you can instead make the quick drive up to **The Shanty** in Wadsworth. Featured on multiple TV shows, it's been a gathering place for locals to drink and dine for over 100 years.

When you're brainstorming winter activities around Chicagoland, water parks don't normally make the list. But the indoor waterpark at Gurnee's **Great Wolf Lodge** is always 84 degrees! Check into the hotel, then follow the laughter and shouts until you discover the expansive waterpark. Once you've had your fun splashing down the waterslides, the whole family can test their skills at bowling, arcade games or indoor mini golf.



If you'd prefer to experience holiday cheer from the comfort of your car, head to Grayslake for **Santa's Rock N Lights**. Make sure to purchase a ticket beforehand, and once you're in, tune your car radio to the designated channel and drive through a labyrinth of dancing light tunnels to a merry soundtrack.

You're in for a double whammy of lights festivals – head down to **Lightscape at Chicago Botanic Garden** in Glencoe (advance purchase highly recommended as the event sells out). Once inside, wander through the illuminated, musical garden walkways and admire the mesmerizing combination of colors and sounds.

Those who prefer in-car entertainment should check out the **Shine Light Show** in Northbrook instead. By now, you know the drill – adjust your radio to fire up the tunes, and prepare for an unforgettable show. If you're not shopped out for the day, stop at the nearby **Northbrook Court** to peruse the shops and restaurants if time allows.

What a day! For a delicious dinner of steak or seafood, unwind at **Ruth's Chris Steakhouse**. Each prime cut is broiled to perfection, and sipping one of their tasty, handcrafted cocktails is a relaxing way to end a busy day. If you feel like heading back toward Libertyville, the classic burgers, buffalo wings and handcrafted beer at **Mickey Finn's** (Illinois' first brewery) will definitely hit the spot on a chilly night.

Return to Great Wolf Lodge when you're ready, and rest up for a festivity-filled day two.

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### 📍 Day 2 Schaumburg, Lisle, and Brookfield

Grab some breakfast at the hotel or a local cafe before starting this action-packed day.

With over 300 stores, there is something for everyone at **Woodfield Mall** – including special holiday events and plenty of opportunities for photos with Santa. Take your time strolling through Illinois' largest shopping center, then make the short journey to **The Streets of Woodfield** for more retail options. This vibrant lifestyle center also includes LEGOLAND Discovery Center, Laugh Out Loud Improv Theater, and some of the area's top restaurants.

No need to pause your adventure for lunch – keep it going at **Medieval Times**, where you can cheer for your favorite jousting knight as you banquet over a four-course meal fit for royalty. Dinner performances are offered as well, if you'd rather return later in the day.

For those who prefer something less hands-on, the incredibly popular **Wildfire Schaumburg** has an inviting open-kitchen design, which allows you to watch the chefs as they prepare steak, chops and seafood over a blazing wood fire. Another excellent choice is **Pilot Pete's** – Chicagoland's aviation themed eatery. You may have seen them on WGN's Chicago's Best, which showcased their highly regarded lobster nachos.

One advantage of shorter winter days – more time to enjoy night lights. **Illumination at The Morton Arboretum** in Lisle is back for another spectacular year. Walk through the park, pausing to roast marshmallows and create s'mores as the sun begins to set, and enjoy the spectacle of stunning light and color amid glowing trees and sculptures.

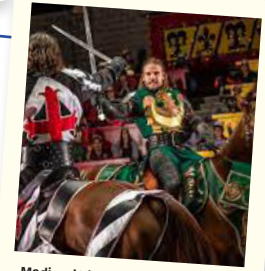
Darkness now surrounds us, but we're going to follow the light. Now in its 40th year, Holiday Magic at **Brookfield Zoo** is Chicagoland's longest-running lights festival. You'll explore two million lights spread over two miles, including a 600-foot tunnel and illuminated animal sculptures, all synchronized to music. Be sure to reserve your ticket beforehand.

Shake off the chill off with some hearty comfort food at the nearby **Irish Times Pub**. Settle into the warm, old-school atmosphere and enjoy a mix of classic American fare and traditional Irish dishes like Shepherd's Pie or Guinness Beef Stew.

When drowsiness begins to set in, don't fight it – retreat to one of the area's top hotels. The recently remodeled **Hyatt Regency Schaumburg** includes an on-site bar if you'd like a nightcap, or you can check into the **Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel**, a sleek, modern hotel attached to the convention center.



Woodfield Mall



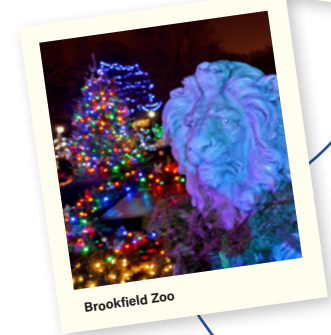
Medieval Times



Pilot Pete's



Illumination at The Morton Arboretum



Brookfield Zoo



Irish Times Pub

drive on

The journey continues on the next page



## Winter in the Chicagoland Suburbs

### **Day 3** Rosemont, Oak Brook, Lombard, and Aurora

Another morning of holiday shopping? Okay, twist our arms.

But first: breakfast. If you're looking to explore the Rosemont-Lombard-Oak Brook area, swing by **First Watch**, where you can fuel up on the mouthwatering Million Dollar Breakfast Sandwich (all-natural pork sausage, over-easy egg, smoked Wisconsin Gouda, fresh arugula and hot honey drizzled on a griddled English muffin). Or opt for **Maxfield's** in Schaumburg to satisfy your savory cravings with a delicious – and Instagrammable – plate of french toast, pancakes or fluffy waffles.

Just west of the city, you'll have a true smorgasbord of shopping options. The only two-level indoor outlet shopping experience in the Midwest, Rosemont's **Fashion Outlets of Chicago** offers 130 designer outlets, including Bloomingdale's, Saks Fifth Avenue OFF 5TH, Nordstrom Rack and many more.

In addition to the premium retail stores you know and love, **Oakbrook Center** also has an escape room, a bowling alley, an indoor miniature golf course, and the luxurious **Restoration Hardware** rooftop restaurant (complete with a garden and trickling fountains). If you need a few items to top off the gift bag, you should try **Yorktown Center in Lombard**, where you'll find classic tried-and-true brands and nearly 150 specialty shops.

If you'd rather experience the bustling Aurora area, forgo the options listed above and start out with an early lunch at **Everdine's Handcrafted Grilled Cheese Co.** With a range of gooey cheeses and tasty fillings to choose from, they've transformed the humble sandwich into an art form.

Bargain hunters rejoice! You'll find plentiful choices and unbeatable savings at **Chicago Premium Outlets**, one of the country's largest outdoor shopping centers. Seek out exclusive deals on designer names and top-of-the-line brands, and grab a snack from one of the on-site food vendors if you get hungry.



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