China is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Historical achievements of Ancient China include papermaking and printing, the compass, gunpowder, and the Great Wall of China. Representing 20% of the world’s population, China is the most populous country in the world.

The first Emperor of China of the Qin Dynasty was responsible for standardizing the Chinese language. Modern China speaks over 400 dialects including Mandarin (also known as Putonghua) and Cantonese. Regardless of dialect, its written form remains the same. With over 45,000 Chinese “characters,” full literacy in the language requires knowledge of at least 3,000 characters. As multiple tones are used in the spoken language, some words may be interpreted as unlucky, such as the character for the number four, when pronounced, sounds similar to death.

The spiritual beliefs of Chinese people evolved from a combination of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, ancestral worship, and superstition. Good fortune and auspicious thought are interwoven into Chinese culture, with the Han Dynasty playing a pivotal role in creating a lasting cultural identity. For example, the number nine, bamboo, cranes, and ginseng all represent longevity; vases, paper door decorations, Chinese dragons and lions, and the colors red and yellow symbolize luck; and the number eight, fish, tangerines, the color green, and the beckoning cat at business entrances identify with wealth. The double happiness characters also feature prominently in Chinese culture, with the phoenix, chestnuts, and lotus, as symbols of this.

Balance and symmetry also plays an important role, specifically in Chinese architecture, based upon the principles of Yin-Yang and feng shui, which literally means “wind-water.” The position of a structure, object, or color can determine the flow of positive and negative energy. For example, curved roofs, the colors and tiers of the eaves, and roof top decorations are believed to help ward off evil spirits and bring good fortune and luck.

With a civilization that boasts over 4,000 continuous years, Chinese culture is complex, rich, vibrant, and has withstood the test of time, as seen in its people today.
Chicago’s Chinatown is considered as one of the largest and most vibrant ethnic communities in North America. The densely populated 30-block commercial area of Chinatown, centering at Wentworth and Cermak, is home to over 10,000 residents and approximately 400 businesses and community institutions. In the broader Chinatown community, there resides an estimated 27,000 Chinese Americans in the near-south neighborhoods. Set amongst the backdrop of cultural landmarks and popular sights such as the Nine Dragon Wall, Chinatown Gate, and Ping Tom Memorial Park, Chinatown offers a glimpse into the customs, traditions, and rich culture of one of the oldest civilizations in the world.
HOW TO GET TO
CHINATOWN

Chinatown is located just south of the downtown area, also known as the “Chicago Loop.” There are several ways to get to Chinatown including by bus, train, or “L,” water taxi, or car.

CAR
North: Kennedy Expressway (I-90/94) and exit at 18th St. Turn left (east) on 18th St. to Canal St. and turn right (south) to Cermak Rd., travel a few blocks to the Chinatown Gate.

West: Eisenhower Expressway (I-290) to I-90/94 east to 18th St. and turn left (east) to Canal St., turn right (south) to Cermak Rd. The Chinatown Gate is just a few blocks ahead.

South: Dan Ryan Expressway (I-90/94) to the 22nd St. exit. The Chinatown Gate is just a block west on Cermak Rd.

Southwest: Stevenson Expressway (I-55) to the Cermak Rd. exit. Turn west (left) on Cermak Rd. to the Chinatown Gate.

East: Lake Shore Drive to I-55 South, exiting at State St. (south) on State St., right (west) on 26th St., then right (north) on Wentworth Ave.

Parking is abundant and convenient. Community lots located on the northwest corner of Cermak Rd. and Wentworth Ave. (See main Chinatown Map pg 6-7) and another lot at Archer Ave. and Wentworth Ave. welcome all visitors. Most nearby restaurants and shops will validate your ticket.

CTA “L” Train: Red Line
Cermak-Chinatown Stop
As an excellent alternative to driving to Chinatown, Chicago’s elevated train system has a Red Line stop located in Chinatown. Board the Red Line bound for 95/Dan Ryan at any of the downtown Red Line train stations for a quick ride to Chinatown. Depart the station from the north entrance on Archer Ave. for Chinatown Square or the southern Cermak Rd. entrance for the Wentworth Ave. strip.

CTA BUSES
Lines: 21, 24, 62
There are several bus lines that pass through Chinatown including the #21 Cermak bus, the #24 Wentworth bus, and the #62 Archer bus. The #24 and #62 buses both pass through downtown on State St. and Clark St., respectively. Look for the blue and white CTA bus stop signs complete with route numbers and miniature maps.

For more information, visit the CTA website www.transitchicago.com

WATER TAXI
The Chicago Water Taxi is the newest and most scenic way to reach Chinatown. Catch the water taxi periodically throughout the day at one of three loop pick-up points along the river including Michigan Ave., LaSalle St./Clark St. or Madison St., and head south all the way to Ping Tom Memorial Park, 300 W 19th St., at the north edge of Chinatown.

For additional information on the Water Taxi, visit www.chicagowatertaxi.com
## HISTORICAL TIMELINE

### OF CHINATOWN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1851-52</td>
<td>Gold-rush era – U.S. begins to see its largest influx of Chinese immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Great Chicago Fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880’s</td>
<td>Beginnings of Chicago’s Chinese community forming in the downtown loop area (W Van Buren St &amp; S Clark St)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1880-90</td>
<td>Chicago’s population increases from over 500,000 to almost 1.1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Residential and business relocation begins to W Cermak Rd and S Wentworth Ave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920’s</td>
<td>Chinatown continues growing south along S Wentworth Ave and S Princeton Ave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960’s</td>
<td>One of Illinois’ busiest roads, the Dan Ryan Expressway is built east of S Wentworth Ave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Construction of the Stevenson Expressway south of W 24th Pl also begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970’s</td>
<td>Early signs of China opening its doors to the West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. President Richard Nixon engages in “Ping Pong Diplomacy” with China’s leading political figure, Deng Xiaoping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chinatown expands south of W 26th St, between S Wentworth Ave and S Archer Ave</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990’s</td>
<td>Chinatown grows north of S Archer Ave, developing into Chinatown Square, residential housing, and Ping Tom Memorial Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>China is the world’s most populous country with over 1.3 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>China’s economy is second largest in the world after the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Chinatown’s population doubles to over 27,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Chicago’s Chinatown celebrates Centennial Anniversary</td>
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</table>
Chinese cuisine can best be summarized into four styles: sugar is used generously in the East; Southern or Cantonese cuisine incorporate subtle sauces and cooking methods such as stir-frying, steaming and roasting; Szechuan in the West, utilizes a lot of spices; and finally, the cuisine of the Northern regions which includes China’s capital, Beijing, solid and nourishing foods are favorites here due to the freezing cold winters.

A popular style of Chinese cuisine that has crossed over into the Western world is *dim sum*, which literally means, “touch the heart.” *Dim sum* is served for breakfast, brunch, and lunch and consists of small dishes, predominately fried or steamed, and traditionally served in small steamer baskets. Nowadays, it is also commonplace to find Asian Fusion cuisine in Chinatown, blending the eclectic flavors of many other ethnic Asian communities.

Sesame oil, soy sauce, ginger and garlic form the basis of Chinese cooking with staple foods such as rice, noodles, wheat, vegetables, herbs and seasonings that also extend to other Asian cuisines. Tea and liquor such as black, green, chrysanthemum and jasmine tea; and rice and plum wine are also popular. These ingredients and foods are the staple of any Asian grocery store.

Meal times are a key part of Chinese culture as they are when families get together and reconnect. Oftentimes, when greeting someone, a popular question to ask, is if one has eaten yet. Certain dishes and foods are symbolic, such as noodles representing longevity, dumplings symbolizing wealth, and shrimp is regarded as lucky due to its close phonetic relationship to auspicious and pleasant words.

Foods and medicines both incorporate the principles of Yin-Yang and are often referred to as either “hot” (yang) or “cold” (yin), indicating the manner in which they could affect the body. Hot or cold restoratives are believed to be able to restore the body to balance, utilizing traditional Chinese medicine and medicinal herbs as remedies to almost any ailment.

Each dynastic era of arts, crafts, and fashion can be easily identified based upon their style, design and workmanship: from the Terracotta Army sculptures of the Qin Dynasty; to the intricate and detailed designs of bronze sculptures by the Shang Dynasty; and from the unique jade burial suits favored by the Han Dynasty; to the famous porcelain and ceramic vases of the Ming Dynasty.
CHINATOWN PAVILION

LOCATION: S WENTWORTH AVE & W CERMAK RD

This classic-style Chinese pavilion plays a significant historical role in the planned business and residential relocation of 1912, by Chinese immigrants originally located in the Clark Street/downtown loop area. West of the pavilion, are 19th century-era buildings on Cermak and Wentworth, home to some of Chinatown’s first businesses and enterprises. Today, the pavilion is at the epicenter of Chinatown, with major thoroughfare routes, Chinatown Square to its north, and the Wentworth strip to its south.

CHINATOWN GATE

LOCATION: S WENTWORTH AVE & W CERMAK RD

As one of Chinatown’s most identifiable and memorable landmarks, the Chinatown Gate was built in 1975 and was considered as the original entryway into Chinatown. Reading from right to left, the characters on the gate read, Tian Xia, Wei Gong, which literally means, “Everything Under The Heaven, For The People,” which was the motto of a key figure in modern Chinese history, Dr. Sun Yat-sen. Its design also lends from the basic principles of feng shui.

249 W CERMAK RD

LOCATION: W CERMAK RD

Stretching almost half a block from 219-249 W. Cermak, this unassuming building served as the first home to one of the founding organizations of Chinatown, the On Leong Merchants Association in 1912. Its seemingly plain exterior is adorned with recently restored, white tile trimmings of iconic Chinese motifs.

DRAGON COLUMN MONUMENTS

LOCATION: 263 W CERMAK RD

At the end of each of the major thoroughfares in Chinatown, at Wentworth and 24th Pl., and W. Cermak, are twin column monuments cast with noble dragon motifs. Designed concurrently with Ping Tom Memorial Park that resides on the south branch of the Chicago River, northwest of Chinatown, the columns were part of the renewal and beautification of Chinatown in the early 1990’s.
6. Chinese Veterans Memorial

**LOCATION:** S Princeton Ave, W Cermak Rd & S Archer Ave

At this busy intersection, stands the Chinese Veterans Memorial. It commemorates and honors the service and dedication of the thousands of Chinese Americans in the United States military.

7. Chinese Community Center & Confucius Statue

**LOCATION:** 250 W 22nd Pl

Also known as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) building, this organization provides social and family support services in the community. A statue of the ancient Chinese philosopher, Confucius (551 BC – 479 BC) also resides here. Respect for elders and ancestors, otherwise known as filial piety, originates from Confucianism.

8. St. Therese Chinese Catholic School

**LOCATION:** 247 W 23rd St

Originally located at the On Leong Building, this local private catholic school moved to its current location in 1962. Although its design is less elaborate in its incorporation of mythical creatures and icons, it still embraces the symmetrical theories of feng shui and the symbolism of color.
CHINESE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF CHICAGO
LOCATION: 238 W 23RD ST

Also referred to as the Chinatown Museum, this was formerly a Chinese store and warehouse built in 1896. Founded in 2005, the museum documents the experiences of Chinese Americans in the Midwest, and its most recent exhibit, “From the Great Wall to the Great Lakes,” includes in its collection, an authentic brick from the Great Wall of China. In 2008, a devastating fire almost ravished priceless and historical artifacts. Its restoration was finally completed in the Fall of 2010.

SUN YAT-SEN PARK
LOCATION: S PRINCETON AVE & W 24TH PL

This quaint little park located in the urban bustle of Chinatown is frequented by local residents playing Chinese chess and practicing the ancient Chinese art of qigong and tai chi. Dr. Sun Yat-sen was a prominent figure in China’s history as the first president of the Chinese Republic.

CHINESE CHRISTIAN UNION CHURCH
LOCATION: 2301 S WESTWORTH AVE

CCUC is one of three places of worship or veneration in Chinatown. Founded in 1915 as the Chinese Evangelical Church, it was originally located at 223 W. Cermak and moved to its present location in 1927. Interdenominational services are held in different Chinese dialects in the adjoining chapel. The church is affiliated with the agency and elementary school that resides in the Pui Tak Center.

ALLEN LEE SQUARE
LOCATION: S WENTWORTH AVE & W 23RD ST

Adjacent to the Chinese Christian Union Church is the Allen Lee Square. Located in the heart of Wentworth, the square is named after a prominent civic leader. Often used as a place for a restful interlude or to simply watch and observe everyday Chinatown life unfold.
SUN YAT-SEN MUSEUM
LOCATION: 2245 S WENTWORTH AVE

Located on the 2nd floor, the museum pays homage to the founding father of the Chinese Republic. The museum chronicles his time as a youth in Hawaii; his writings and teachings during the Chinese revolution in 1911, where the Imperial government was overthrown; and to his death in 1925.

BUDDHIST TEMPLE
LOCATION: 2249 S WENTWORTH AVE

Originally located in Chicago’s Northside, the Buddhist temple moved to its present storefront location in 2003. Buddhism was brought to China from India around 200 AD and began to flourish due to the decline of the Han Dynasty and its strict Confucian beliefs. The basis of Buddhism preaches that suffering is inherent in life and one can only be liberated from it by mental and moral self-purification.

2238 S WENTWORTH AVE
LOCATION: S WENTWORTH AVE & W ALEXANDER ST

Across from the Buddhist Temple, is an example of a family association building. These, and regional associations form the fabric of Chinatown social life as they provide support, services, and networking opportunities to new immigrants. Family associations are formed based upon the family name, whilst regional associations are from the same locale in China or elsewhere. From the spiraling dragon pillars to the curved roof tops, the building’s elaborate exterior further iterates the common themes found in Chinese architecture.
PLACES TO SEE
IN CHINATOWN

圣德力教堂 16
ST. THERESE CHURCH
LOCATION: 218 W ALEXANDER ST

Located off the main Wentworth strip, is a Roman catholic church. Refurbished in 2011, the church reflects the neighborhood’s dynamic heritage: first Italian, then Croatian and finally Chinese. Masses are also held here in different languages throughout the week. Its interior retains much of the beauty seen by earlier parishioners, and most notably, the large crucifix at the side altar donated by the mother of renowned Chicago mobster, Al Capone. The exterior showcases its later Chinese legacy with the auspicious pair of Chinese lion statues.

培德中心 17
PUI TAK CENTER
LOCATION: 2216 S WENTWORTH AVE

This grandiose and ornate building was once home to the On Leong Merchants Association, the leading business league that led the move from the downtown loop area to today’s Chinatown. The building has served as a courtroom to settle disputes between local merchants; an elementary school; a recreation center; and most recently, home to the Pui Tak Center, a social service agency. Its architecture epitomizes the customs and traditions dominant in Chinese culture. Also, by the same architects, is the 2237 S. Wentworth building, home to Chicago’s second oldest Chinese restaurant. Less lavish, it continues many of the design elements of the Pui Tak Center.

九龍壁 18
NINE DRAGON WALL
LOCATION: S WENTWORTH AVE & W CERMAK RD

One of only three outside of Beijing’s, Bai Hai Park, an Imperial garden northwest of the Forbidden City, this replica was sculpted in pieces for shipment and reassembly in Chicago. There are over 500 small dragons that accompany 9 larger, brightly-painted dragons. In addition to the number and color symbolism, this benevolent and mystical creature is greatly revered as it symbolizes protection, fortune, and a potent emblem for imperial power.
Chinatown Square is comprised of an outdoor shopping mall that includes restaurants, bakeries, gift and bookstores, and grocery stores; the Pan Asian Cultural Center, which is enclosed by statues of the 12 Chinese zodiac animals and where various concerts and festivals are held; and a 320 sq. ft. mural, constructed of 100,000 individually cut and hand-painted, glass tiles that details the history of Chinese immigrants to the U.S. during the Gold Rush. The square was formerly the site of the Santa Fe Railroad Yard.

THE KAM L. LIU BUILDING
CHINESE AMERICAN SERVICE LEAGUE
LOCATION: 2141 S TAN CT

On the corner of Princeton and S. Tan Ct., resides the Chinese American Service League (CASL), the largest and most comprehensive social service agency in the Midwest. The building was designed by Jeanne Gang and uses titanium shingles to resemble the scales of a dragon. It earned the 2005 Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Award for Architectural Excellence.

PING TOM MEMORIAL PARK
LOCATION: 300 W 19TH ST

Situated next to the south branch of the Chicago River on the north end of Chinatown, this picturesque 12-acre park, with its Chinese-inspired design is a popular backdrop for residents practicing yoga, *tai chi* and *qigong*, or simply seeking a moment of respite and solace. A riverwalk extends north toward the athletic field and field house. During the summer months, a water taxi operates between downtown and in July, the park plays host to an annual Dragon Boat Race Festival where a fast-paced boat tournament, with authentic Chinese-style rowing boats, compete and celebrate this ancient Chinese tradition.
CHINATOWN TOURS

Experience and learn more about Chinatown on a one-hour, chaperoned, walking tour sponsored by the Chinatown Chamber of Commerce. For more details and to reserve your tour, visit www.chicagochinatown.org or call 312-326-5320.

ANNUAL EVENTS

JAN / FEB
Lunar New Year Parade

MAY
Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

JUL
Chinatown Summer Fair

JUL
Chicago Dragon Boat Race

OCT
Chicago Marathon

Meet our Miss Friendship Ambassadors of Chinatown at any one of the many events throughout the year in Chinatown!

Open all-year round, Chinatown boasts a vibrant and eclectic selection of restaurants, bakeries, gift and bookstores, arts and craft stores, and much more! Businesses typically open at approximately 9 AM, with some restaurants closing past midnight.