



A tour of the Robie House leads visitors through the children's playroom, entry hall, living room, dining room, guest room, master bedroom, butler's pantry and kitchen.

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## *Just Wright*

Architecture fans, rejoice. When it comes to Frank Lloyd Wright, Chicago's got you covered.

BY KIT BERNARDI

The open floor plan flooded with natural light; the centerpiece fireplace; the built-in storage and furniture — you could move right in. While this home looks made for today's market, it's not for sale. In fact, it's a National Historic Landmark called Robie House, built more than 100 years ago by architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

"Often, when visiting historic buildings, it feels like you're frozen in time. But with Wright sites, you easily see how his architectural ideas strongly influence the spaces we live in today," says David Bagnall, curator and director of interpretation at Chicago's Frank Lloyd Wright Trust.

Indeed, one of America's favorite architects has left his mark on contemporary design. And at these Chicago-area sites, representing more than 60 years of his career, you can experience the timeless quality of his work and learn more about the man behind it.

### ◀ ROBIE HOUSE

On the University of Chicago campus in Hyde Park, this historic home (completed in 1910) is considered by many to be Wright's prairie-style masterpiece, and an inspiration for American 20th-century design. With steel-beam construction, Wright built a cantilevered roof stretching 17.5 feet beyond the walls. Inside is a sprawling, free-flowing space, enhanced visually with a neutral palette and wood molding on the ceiling. An abundance of art-glass windows — 175 of them — welcome in natural light while shielding street views. The UNESCO World Heritage List-nominated site, Chicago's first, is open during ongoing restoration. 5757 S. Woodlawn Ave.; 312-994-4000; [flwright.org/visit/robiehouse](http://flwright.org/visit/robiehouse) »



Set in the heart of Chicago's financial district, The Rookery has one of Wright's most dramatic interior compositions.

## JOIN A TOUR

If you're not up for planning your own itinerary, why not join a guided tour through these amazing sites? There are a few options in the Chicago area.

► **The Frank Lloyd Wright Trust** conducts guided tours of the Oak Park Home and Studio, Robie House, Emil Bach House and The Rookery light court, as well as self-guided audio walks of Oak Park's Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District.  
209 S. LaSalle St.;  
312-994-4000; [flwright.org](http://flwright.org)

► Guided tours of the **Laurent House** in Rockford, Ill., are held May through December on the first and third weekends of the month.  
815-877-2952;  
[laurethouse.com](http://laurethouse.com)

► **Chicago Architecture Foundation** offers an abundance of Wright-centric tours year-round.  
224 S. Michigan Ave.;  
312-922-3432;  
[architecture.org](http://architecture.org)

### ◀ CHICAGO LOOP

Catch a glimpse of Wright's work in the grandiose lobby of a commercial building in downtown Chicago. The Rookery, built in 1888 by local architectural firm Burnham and Root, was updated by Wright in 1905. He renovated the impressive central light court and lobbies — lit by a glass roof — of the 11-story building, briefly the world's tallest skyscraper when it was completed. 209 S. LaSalle St.; 312-553-6100; [therookerybuilding.com](http://therookerybuilding.com) »

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PHOTO CREDIT



### ▲ THE EMIL BACH HOUSE

This vacation rental in the Rogers Park neighborhood on Lake Michigan condenses sprawling late-prairie-style elements while anticipating Wright's more compact, affordable designs that were to come in the mid-century. Wright later called the style Usonian architecture. Constructed in 1915 on a small urban lot, this compact home's built-in dining table, seating, bookcases, storage, planters and ubiquitous geometric art glass windows make it feel larger than its 2,700 square feet. 7415 N. Sheridan Rd.; 773-654-3959; [emilbachhouse.com](http://emilbachhouse.com)

### OAK PARK HOME AND STUDIO

The oldest Wright site open to the public, it anchors the Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District in the suburb of Oak Park, 11 miles west of the downtown Loop. The neighborhood is home to the world's largest concentration of Wright-designed buildings that are still standing — 25 in all. Working here during the first 20 years of his career, from 1889 to 1909, Wright created the distinguishing features of prairie-style

architecture: inglenook recessed fireplaces, open spaces with low horizontal lines, overhanging eaves, low-pitched roofs and geometric leaded and stained glass. 951 Chicago Ave., Oak Park, Ill.; [flwright.org/visit/homeandstudio](http://flwright.org/visit/homeandstudio)

### LAURENT HOUSE

Ninety-one miles northwest of Chicago in Rockford, the Laurent House is the only solar hemicycle home in Illinois and one of only a few worldwide. The crescent-shaped single-story house, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was built in 1952 for wheelchair-bound Kenneth Laurent. Ahead of its time, the structure is largely compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act passed decades later in 1990, says Jerry Heinzeroth, president of the Laurent House Foundation.

Original to the modest six-room home, designed by an 83-year-old Wright, are the hassocks tucked neatly under geometric-shaped tables, banquettes, radiant-heated, poured concrete floors, the carport, fish pond and 50-foot curved window wall framing woodland views. ●

## MAKE A WEEKEND OF IT

Let your interests in architecture guide you when choosing places to bunk down and fuel up.



**Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel:** The 334 contemporary hotel guest rooms occupy the first 18 floors of the LEED-certified Aqua condominium skyscraper, designed by award-winning Chicago architect Jeanne Gang. The wavy, 81-story exterior and chic, steely, gray-blue interiors reflect the scenic surroundings, where the Chicago River meets Lake Michigan. 221 N. Columbus Dr.; 312-565-5258; [radissonbluaqua.com](http://radissonbluaqua.com)

**Palmer House:** Operating continuously for 142 years in the Loop's financial and theater district, this landmark hotel has housed celebrities (bon vivant and author Oscar Wilde, French silent-movie actress Sarah Bernhardt) and presidents (Ulysses S. Grant, James Garfield), welcoming all into its opulent, fresco-ceiling lobby. 17 E. Monroe St.; 312-726-7500; [palmerhouse.hilton.com](http://palmerhouse.hilton.com)

**Lang House:** The luxury bed and breakfast — in a restored 1919 prairie-style mansion next door to the Wright-designed Emil Bach House in Rogers Park — has five finely appointed rooms with en suites, a sauna, massage room and library. Continental breakfast served. 7421 N. Sheridan Rd.; 773-764-9851; [langhousechicago.com](http://langhousechicago.com)



**North Pond:** Guests savor farm-to-table cuisine at this Michelin Star pond-side restaurant in a restored 1912 arts and crafts building in Lincoln Park. Owner and award-winning chef Bruce Sherman creates seasonal tasting menus for dinners served Wednesday through Sunday and Sunday brunch. 2610 N. Cannon Dr.; 773-477-5845; [northpondrestaurant.com](http://northpondrestaurant.com)

**The Gage:** This gastro pub — located in a group of buildings of the same name and designed by turn-of-the-century architectural firm Holabird & Root — dishes out robust American fare bolstered by international specialties and craft beers. The Irish-style dining room boasts sink-into leather booths flanking a stalwart bar. Outdoor seating faces leafy Millennium Park. 24 S. Michigan Ave.; 312-372-4243; [thegagechicago.com](http://thegagechicago.com)

**The Signature Room at the 95th:** Atop the John Hancock Center, Chicago's fourth-tallest building, the fine-dining restaurant promises sky-high city and Lake Michigan views during lunch, à la carte dinner and weekend buffet brunch hours. Sip cocktails at sunset in the 96th floor lounge. 875 N. Michigan Ave.; 312-787-9596; [signatureroom.com](http://signatureroom.com)