GETTING TO THE CHICAGO RIVER, PP. 3-5

GETTING READY, PP. 6-7
These pages will let you express your creativity and knowledge. They will include activities that can be done at home and will prepare you for your adventures to come.

RIVER ADVENTURES, PP. 8-14
These pages will get you up and out to a neighborhood park, forest preserve, or (hopefully) to the Chicago River. They include outdoor games, scavenger hunts and other challenging activities.

REFLECTION & ACTION, PP. 14-20
These pages will let you reflect upon what you’ve learned and suggest ways to help improve local habitats in the Chicago River watershed. They will link you with more fun activities and ways of getting involved.

MORE INFORMATION, PP. 21-22

WELCOME TO YOUR CHICAGO RIVER
Dear students, parents and teachers,

In Chicago, when you want to have fun on the water, you probably go to Lake Michigan. But did you know there is just as much to do along the Chicago River?

The Chicago River system is 156 miles long. At many places such as city parks and county forest preserves, it’s free and open to the public all year round. There are natural areas with trails where you can hike and watch wildlife. There are paved paths where you can bike or push a stroller. There are shallow areas where you can wade. There are places where you can rent a canoe.

Like Lake Michigan, the Chicago River is much cleaner than it used to be. But unlike the lake, it isn’t clean enough to swim in yet. If you want to wade in the water, wear boots or hip-waders. Be sure to wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after touching river water.

If you see any animals, do not touch or feed them. Be careful of poison ivy. Poison ivy can be difficult to identify. For pictures of poison ivy in different seasons, see www.poison-ivy.org. Please do not pick anything or take anything from the river home with you. Remember to dispose of litter properly.

You might want to bring a snack, water or other beverages, hand sanitizer, a first aid kit, a bird or other wildlife guide, paper, pencils, crayons or colored pencils, and a camera to capture how much fun you had.

GETTING TO THE CHICAGO RIVER
VISIT THE RIVER BY TRAIN OR BUS
The easiest part of the river to visit by public transportation is downtown. You can visit Wolf Point, rest at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Plaza, walk across the many bridges, stroll along the riverwalk, take a water taxi, or explore the Bridgehouse Museum (see page 22). Other locations accessible by public transportation are listed on these pages with an •.

TRAILS TO HIKE, BIKE, AND EXPLORE

NORTH BRANCH BIKE TRAIL • WILMETTE TO CHICAGO
A 4.4-mile paved black trail loop between Dundee Rd. and Tower Rd. circles the Skokie Lagoons. The red trail continues 13.0 miles south to Devon Ave. and the Edgebrook Metra station, if you’re looking for a longer trip.

NORTH SHORE CHANNEL TRAIL • EVANSTON TO CHICAGO
An 7.0-mile paved trail from Green Bay Rd. south to Lawrence Ave. The south end is just 2½ blocks north of the Francisco stop on the CTA Brown Line.

JOHN HUSAR I&M CANAL TRAIL • WILLOW SPRINGS
The parking lot for this looped trail is next to the Willow Springs Metra station near the intersection of Willow Springs Rd. and Archer Ave. (171). The 8.9-mile paved bicycle trail consists of two 3.3-mile loops and a 2.3-mile connection.

MAJOR TAYLOR TRAIL • CHICAGO
This 6.0-mile paved path is one of the few trails over the Cal-Sag Channel on the south side of Chicago. The path begins in Whistler Woods.

SAUK TRAIL WOODS • SOUTH CHICAGO HEIGHTS
Located at 260 S. and Ashland Ave., this 3.5-mile paved loop is part of the Thorn Creek trail.

For more ideas on getting to the Chicago River, visit www.chicagoriver.org/programs.
NATURAL AREAS TO EXPLORE

**MIDDLEFORK SAVANNA LAKE FOREST**
The entrance and parking area are located on Middlefork Dr., west of
Waukegan Rd. (43), between Route 60 and Route 176. Once part of
a large glacial lake, this forest preserve is home to endangered plant
and wildlife species. There are bridges and a 3.5-mile unpaved trail which
links to other trails in Lake County.

**SOMME AND CHIPPILLY WOODS NORTHBOURNE**
The parking lot for this forest preserve is located north of Dundee Rd.
just east of Waukegan Rd. It has 3.7 miles of unpaved trails, most
right next to the Middle Fork of the North Branch. The green trail is
2.1 miles (looped)., and the light blue is 1.6 miles and has a very good
wading spot under the railroad tracks.

**IRENE HERNANDEZ FAMILY PICNIC AREA CHICAGO**
This forest preserve is located on the north side of W. Foster Ave. at
Kilbourn Ave., just east of Cicero Ave. (and east of the railroad tracks).
This is a nice open picnic area and is great for wading into the North
Branch of the Chicago River.

**ELIZABETH CONKEY WOODS MIDLOTHIAN**
The most convenient parking lot is located on the west side of Central
Ave., north of 135th St. From the parking lot walk along the edge of
woods until you can come to path leading back to Tinley Creek. This is a
good wading spot.

**SWEET AND JÜRGENSEN WOODS GLENWOOD**
This unpaved trail snakes back and forth through wooded areas along
North Creek, a tributary of Thorn Creek. The black trail is 1.4 miles and
takes you near the confluence. The yellow trail is 3.5 miles and goes east
to Torrence Ave.

---

GETTING TO THE CHICAGO RIVER

**SOME OTHER GREAT SITES IN CHICAGO**

**CLARK PARK** 3400 N. Rockwell St., Chicago.
**ERIE PARK** 630 N. Kingsbury St., Chicago (between Erie & Ontario).
**PING TOM PARK** 300 W. 19th St., Chicago.
**CANAL ORIGIN PARK** 2900 S. Ashland Ave., Chicago.

**CANOE THE CHICAGO RIVER**
You’ve seen Chicago by car, bus, and train. But you can get a completely
new view of the city by canoe.

From June through October, Friends of the Chicago River offers
guided canoe trips. Tours include downtown Chicago, Goose
Island, the North Branch, the Bahá’í Temple, and Skokie Lagoons.
Most trips are six hours long and cost around $40.
For more information, visit www.chicagoriver.org.
Friends also offers shorter canoe trips through the
Chicago Park District (www.chicagoparkdistrict.com).
Chicago River Canoe and Kayak
(www.chicagoriverpaddle.com)
also rents canoes and kayaks by the hour.

---

GETTING READY

**WHAT IS YOUR WATERSHED ADDRESS?**

There are many types of maps. A political map shows features like
national borders and cities. A physical map shows geographical
features like mountains or rivers. Some maps include both political
and physical information.

Download a copy of the Illinois Watersheds Map from the University
of Illinois website (www.sws.uiuc.edu/hilites/map.asp). Compare the
watershed map with a road map.

Can you figure out which watershed you live in?

Trace where the water goes when it leaves your watershed.
Water in the Chicago River and Cal-Sag Channel flows into
the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal, then into the Des Plaines River,
Illinois River, Mississippi River, and eventually to the Gulf of Mexico.

Which other watersheds does Chicago water pass through
before it flows out of state?

How long do you think it takes Chicago water to get to the
Gulf of Mexico?

For answers, visit www.chicagoriver.org/programs.

---

GETTING READY

**FLORA AND FAUNA RESEARCH**

Before you go to the river, research a list of the most common plants and
animals in the Chicago River watershed.

The scientific term for plants that live in a
certain area is *flora*; for animals, it’s *fauna*.
(Hint: some common animals are listed
on pp. 19-20 of this guide).

How many of these species are non-native
or invasive? Have a look at the list of non-native
plants and animals that are found in Illinois and
that pose a threat to native ecosystems.
(www.invasive.org/illinois/SpeciesofConcern.html)
Alternatively, you could research a list of native species
that are threatened or endangered. A useful website is
the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board
(www.dnr.state.illinois.gov/espb).
RIVER ADVENTURE
FAUNA SEARCH

Find a quiet place to sit along the Chicago River. Stay as still as you can. How many animals can you see or hear? The scientific term for animals that live in a particular region is fauna.

Birds may be the easiest to find, especially ducks and grebes. If you're lucky, you might see a frog, a turtle or a white-tailed deer. You might even see a raccoon, river otter, muskrat, coyote or red fox.

To find more creatures, lift up a rock or two. Do you see any insects? How about snakes? Remember not to touch any animals.

RIVER ADVENTURE
HOW FAST DOES THE RIVER FLOW?

To find out, you will need a measuring tape, a stopwatch (or watch with a second hand), two flags or other markers, and some sticks.

1 Measure 100 feet along the riverbank. (Measuring tapes are usually shorter than 100 feet, so measure the distance 20 or 25 feet at a time.) Push a flag into the ground at each end.
2 Toss a stick in the river at the upstream end and time it to the downstream end. How many seconds did it take to flow 100 feet? Try it again. If you run along the river bank, can you keep up?
3 To get the river flow rate in miles per hour (mph), plug your result into the formula below. How does it compare with traffic speeds on nearby roads? Remember, flow rates can change from day to day.

\[
\text{River flow rate (mph)} = \frac{100 \text{ feet} \times \frac{1 \text{ mile}}{5280 \text{ feet}} \times \frac{3600 \text{ seconds}}{1 \text{ hour}}}{\text{Your result in seconds}}
\]

RIVER ADVENTURE
HOW TALL IS THAT TREE?

You could climb all the way to the top of the tree holding a measuring tape. But why?

1 Stand about a hundred feet away from a tall tree. Have a friend stand as close to the tree as they can. Find a straight stick and hold it vertically at arm's length. Place (aim) the top of the stick at the top of your friend's head, and place your thumb at their feet.
2 Move your hand and the stick up the tree (counting how many of your friends it would take to equal the tree's height). When you get to the top of the tree, multiply your friend's height by the number of times it took to get to the top of the tree.

RIVER ADVENTURE
HOW WIDE IS THE RIVER?

You could swim across the river holding a measuring tape. But why?

1 Stand close to the edge of the river (but not too close), facing across the river. Hold out your arm with your thumb sticking up. Sight the edge of the opposite bank at the tip of your thumb.
2 Now rotate your arm 90 degrees either left or right without moving it up or down. Sight along your side of the bank to a plant or rock. The distance from this object to where you're standing is equivalent to the river's width.

RIVER ADVENTURE
ROCK SKIPPING

To skip rocks, you need a lagoon or other still or slow-moving body of water. Fast-running water won't work as well.

1 Find a small rock that's flat and smooth. Hold the rock horizontally, flat side down, with your index finger curled around it.
2 Aim the rock at the water's surface. Throw it sidearm so that your hand travels past your waist. Your elbow should be next to your hip when the rock leaves your hand. As you release it, spin it with your index finger.
3 Don't give up if the rock splashes into the water without skipping. It takes practice! Just try another.

SKIPPING CHALLENGES

How many times can you skip your rock?
Can you skip it more times than someone else (a friend or family member)?
Can you skip it all the way across the river?
Can you guess (before you throw) how many times your rock will skip?
What makes the best skipping rock—rounded, sharp-edged, heavy or light?
RIVER ADVENTURE
DOWNTOWN LANDMARK HUNT

Find these five downtown landmarks on or around the Michigan Ave. Bridge. Write down a specific letter from each inscription. Titles are included as part of the letter count. Unscramble them to spell a secret word and *WIN A PRIZE.

1. Begin at the northeast bridgehouse of the Michigan Ave. Bridge. Find a small black plaque commemorating the reversal of the Chicago River. (19th letter) __________

2. Walk north and turn right (to 401 N. Michigan Ave.) and find the plaque designating Jean Baptiste Pont du Sable's home site a National Historic Landmark. (9th letter) __________

3. Cross to the west side of Michigan Ave., then walk back across towards the south side of the river. Find a bronze bas-relief sculpture of LaSalle and Tonti on the western railing of the Michigan Ave. Bridge. (7th letter) __________

4. Go to the corner of Michigan Ave. and Wacker Dr. Look down within the concrete to see the bronze markers for Fort Dearborn embedded in the sidewalk. (9th letter) __________

5. Turn back to the southwest bridgehouse of the Michigan Ave. Bridge. Find the concrete sculpture on the southwest pieron entitled DEFENSE. (13th letter) __________

Now unscramble the letters to spell the secret word.
For the answer, visit www.chicagoriver.org.

When you have it, walk down the stairs to the Bridgework Museum (see page 22 for free admission).
*GO TO THE FRONT DESK AND CLAIM YOUR PRIZE!

RIVER ADVENTURE AND REFLECTION
RIVER JOURNAL

Visit the same site along the river (or at a park or forest preserve) at least once a season for a year. You could explore, sit quietly, or both.

Write down your thoughts in a journal. How does the natural environment make you feel? What changes do you observe from season to season? You could illustrate your journal with drawings or watercolors if you like.

REFLECTION & ACTION
CALCULATE YOUR ECO-FOOTPRINT

Your ecological footprint is the amount of land and ocean needed to supply your consumption patterns and absorb your wastes. Put simply, it's a measure of how much "nature" your lifestyle requires.

Take the ecological footprint quiz at www.myfootprint.org. Then think about these simple ways to reduce your footprint.

• Water: Fix leaking taps and leaking toilets. Install a low-flow shower head. Don't overwater the lawn.

• Transportation: Try walking, cycling, public transportation, or ride sharing.

• Diet: Cut back on meat, which is much less efficient to produce than grains or vegetables. If you can afford it, buy organic or sustainably farmed produce.

• Waste: Don't buy products with lots of packaging to throw away. Recycle what you can. Compost your kitchen scraps.

For more information, visit the Chicago Home Composting site, www.urbanext.niu.edu/homecomposting/qanda.html.
REFLECTION & ACTION
WATCH WHAT YOU PUT DOWN THE DRAIN

Household chemicals like pesticides, paint stripper, or bleach are cheap and widely available. They’re also deadly to wildlife. And when you pour such hazardous chemicals down the drain, they could end up in the river.

Most wastewater treatment plants rely on bacteria or other organisms to break down waste. But some hazardous household waste passes through the system—and into the river—unchanged.

Pouring chemicals into a storm sewer or basement drain is even worse. These drains lead directly to waterways.

To dispose of these chemicals safely, take them to the new recycling facility operated by the city of Chicago and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. Located on Goose Island, it’s open Tuesday mornings, Thursday afternoons, and the first Saturday of the month.

For more information, call 311.

REFLECTION & ACTION
CHICAGO RIVER DAY

Each May, Friends of the Chicago River holds its annual cleanup and celebration of the Chicago River. Every year, nearly 4000 volunteers—from toddlers to senior citizens—help clean up over 100 miles along the Chicago River.

In the morning, workers help pick up garbage, sort out recyclables, remove invasive plants, plant native seedlings, and spruce up river trails. In the afternoon, volunteers are invited to enjoy the Chicago River Festival. There’s a free barbecue, live music, an environmental fair, and much more.

For more information on Chicago River Day and other cleanup days, visit www.chicagoriver.org/get-involved.

MORE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Forest Preserve District of Cook County
  www.npdcvolunteers.org or call (773) 631-1790 ext. 10
- North Branch Restoration Project
  www.northbranchrestoration.org/calendar
- Palos Restoration Project
  www.home.comcast.net/~palosrestor
- Lake County Forest Preserve District
  www.lcfpd.org/involved/index.cfm?fuseaction=volunteer.view
- Calumet Stewardship Initiative
  www.calumetstewardshipinitiative.org

REFLECTION & ACTION
DEMAND CLEAN WATER

Right now, you have a historic opportunity to help clean up the Chicago River.

For more than 100 years, the Chicago River was treated like a sewer. So when the Clean Water Act was passed in 1972, officials set incredibly low pollution standards for the river. They were convinced no one would ever want to fish or swim there.

Now those standards are under review. The new standards—if they are approved—would transform the river. For example, treated sewer water would have to be disinfected before it’s dumped into the river. Today it isn’t, so the bacteria in the river can make people sick.

You can help by writing a letter to the Illinois Pollution Control Board.
For more information and a sample letter, visit www.chicagoriver.org.

REFLECTION & ACTION
VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITE ANIMAL

All of these animals live near the Chicago River.
The animals with a star are the ones you are most likely to see.

Did you come across any of these animals on your visit?

- Red-tailed hawk
- Muskrat
- White-tailed deer*
- Red fox
- Blanding’s turtle
- Dragonfly*
- Fox snake
- Bullfrog*
- River otter
- Bluegill sunfish*
- Mallard duck*
- Monarch butterfly*
- Red-bellied flicker
- Painted turtle*
- Grasshopper
- Kingfisher
- Cardinal
- Cicada
MORE INFORMATION

BOOKS ABOUT RIVERS
Genzen, Jonathan. The Chicago River 2007. With brilliant photographs and illustrations, the full story of the Chicago River is told, chronicling its prosperity and disaster.


Stanton, Paul. Riverflows: Rethinking Urban Rivers. 2007. Urban rivers, like the Chicago River, that once functioned as open sewers are now seen as part of watershed ecosystems.

WEBSITES ON THE CHICAGO RIVER

www.chicagoriver.org and chicagoriver.org/think
bridgehousemuseum.org
chicagoriver.net
cityofchicago.org (bridge lift calendar)
historicbridges.org (bridges)
chicagorowing.org
chicagoriverpaddle.com
chicagopaddling.org
encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/chicago_river

WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CHICAGO RIVER?

Come to Chicago's most unusual museum—the McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum. The museum, operated by Friends of the Chicago River, celebrates Chicago’s river and world-famous movable bridges. The bridgehouse is built like a tower and has five small floors. On each floor, you will discover stories that unlock the secrets of the Chicago River.

For example, did you know that as late as the 1820s you had to walk over a floating log bridge or take a ferry to cross the river? Today, Chicago has 37 movable bridges—more than any other city in the world. At the museum, you can actually see the massive bridge gears that still open and close the Michigan Avenue Bridge.

The Bridgehouse Museum is located in the southwest tower of the Michigan Avenue Bridge at river level and is open spring through fall. Visit www.bridgehousemuseum.org for museum hours, directions and other information.

Show this booklet at the front desk of the Bridgehouse Museum and receive two free admissions, compliments of:

Friends of the Chicago River

Complete the activity on page 12 before your visit for a prize.

Valid until stamped.

THIS ACTION-ADVENTURE POCKET GUIDE WAS PRODUCED THROUGH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THE WRIGLEY COMPANY FOUNDATION

The Wrigley Company Foundation is proud to support the education of today's youth and the protection of our irreplaceable natural resources, including the Chicago River.

The mission of Friends of the Chicago River is to improve and protect the Chicago River system for people, plants, and animals.

Friends of the Chicago River

411 South Wells Street, Suite 800 • Chicago, Illinois 60607
tel 312.939.0490 • fax 312.939.0931 • www.chicagoriver.org