



Go behind the scenes  
Walk through Chicago's  
neighborhoods at  
[scandinaviantraveler.com](http://scandinaviantraveler.com)

# ETHNIC CHICAGO

Chicago is home to nearly four million people, but on a smaller scale, it is a city of distinct neighborhoods – small “villages” where the bartender and barista know your name. Pilsen, Argyl Street and Devon Avenue typify the cosmopolitan nature of the US’ third largest city.

By Lisa Lubin Photos by Nicklas Gustavsson







### Scandistyle in Andersonville

Explore Andersonville – the former Swedish enclave of Chicago at [scandinaviantraveler.com](http://scandinaviantraveler.com)

# Pilsen

With colorful murals and taquerias on the street corners, Pilsen almost feels like a part of Mexico. It also provides a perfect snapshot of multicultural life in Chicago.

**“W**e came here in January 1957 during a snowstorm and I said to my father, ‘where have you brought us?’”

When Carlos Tortolero was three years old, his parents moved to Chicago from Mexico to provide a better life for their children. Today, he is the president and founder of the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood.

“I like the fact that in Chicago I can eat 50 different types of food and hear all those languages,” he says. “That’s something to brag about.”

The former public school teacher was told he couldn’t open a museum in a working-class neighborhood. Now, it is at the center of one of Chicago’s most colorful immigrant areas, known for its rich Mexican culture.

The free museum has two permanent galleries plus annual rotating exhibits.

“I believe that the arts are for everybody,” he says. “That’s a radical concept and the art world doesn’t do much to change it. So we’re giving people a glimpse of another view of the US.”

“Pilsen is really the most Chicagoan of all Chicago neighborhoods,” says Tortolero. “Downtown is amazing. But you don’t get to know the real Chicago by going downtown. If you really want to know this city walk around Pilsen.”

Pilsen is just a 15-minute train ride from the city center, but it feels like a trip to Mexico with its colorful murals (many concentrated on 16th Street), signs in Spanish and multitude of taquerias and restaurants. It’s also one of Chicago’s



many gentrifying neighborhoods. For better or worse, art galleries and trendy restaurants have moved into the eastern side along Halsted Street. But all along 18th Street, you can still find the real thriving Pilsen.

Just around the corner from the museum is 5 Rabinitos, opened by a Mexican chef who has worked under one of Chicago’s top chefs. The traditional and very affordable menu includes tacos, tortas and entrées served in a brightly colored room. Meanwhile, for an authentic, no-frills lunch, Los Camales has been feeding locals satisfying tacos al pastor for nearly half a century.

Originally, Pilsen was home to German, Irish and Czech immigrants who gave it its Bohemian name. Later, during the labor shortages of the 20th century, Mexicans began settling and working here, keeping this a working-class area.

**T**he vibrant Café Jumping Bean is one of the oldest and coolest coffee shops along 18th Street.

For more than 20 years, it has been a haven for artists who sip mochas while lingering over their sketch pads or laptops at its colorful, hand-painted tables.

Tortolero says, “If you are in New York and someone asks ‘what does your father do?’ They say, ‘Oh, my father is a doctor or a lawyer’, or they whisper, ‘he works in a factory.’ Here in Chicago people say loudly, ‘my father worked in the steel mills!’ There is this great work ethic and a pride about being blue collar. I like that about Chicago.”

Tortolero adds, “If you want to understand why the immigrant experience is a healthy one, come to Pilsen.”



Enjoy art in the streets or at the National Museum of Mexican Art.

‘You don’t get to know the real Chicago by going downtown’

### National Museum of Mexican Art

1852 W. 19th St  
[nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org](http://nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org)

### 5 Rabinitos

→ Translates as “five radishes.” Traditional Mexican food, famed for tacos.

1768 W 18th St  
[5rabinitosdotcom.wordpress.com](http://5rabinitosdotcom.wordpress.com)

### Los Comales

→ Mexican taqueria. Fine gorditas, fajitas and, of course, tacos.

1544 W 18th St  
[loscomales.com](http://loscomales.com)





Devon Avenue brims with Indian and Pakistani culture.

Visit  
CHICAGO

## 3 CHICAGO HOTELS

### Chicago Athletic Association Hotel

→ This iconic hotel recently opened downtown inside the Venetian Gothic, a landmark building of a former social and sports club. It has been restored to its original 1890s grandeur complete with a popular rooftop restaurant and breathtaking, panoramic views overlooking Millennium Park, the Art Institute of Chicago, and Lake Michigan.

12 S Michigan Ave  
[chicagoathletichotel.com](http://chicagoathletichotel.com)

### Robey Hotel

→ The newly opened Robey Hotel in the trendy Wicker Park neighborhood is another fashionable hotel that was built inside a historic building. The boutique hotel offers industrial-chic rooms, a clubby second-floor lounge plus a rooftop cocktail bar with stunning views of the skyline and lake.

2018 W North Ave  
[therobey.com](http://therobey.com)

### Freehand

→ This is a hotel-hostel hybrid where about half the rooms are private while the rest are shared dorms. There's a chic, mid-century vibe in the rooms that carries over to the bar, the Broken Shaker.

19 E Ohio St  
[freehandhotels.com/chicago](http://freehandhotels.com/chicago)

### Hema's Kitchen

→ Indian cuisine. One of Hema Potla's two popular places.

2439 W Devon Ave  
[hemaskitchenchicago.com](http://hemaskitchenchicago.com)

### Udupi Palace

→ Southern Indian cuisine, popular for its lunch buffet.

2543 W Devon Ave  
[udupipalacechicagoil.com](http://udupipalacechicagoil.com)

### Kamdar Plaza

→ Grocery store. If you fancy cooking Indian dishes yourself, this is where to start.

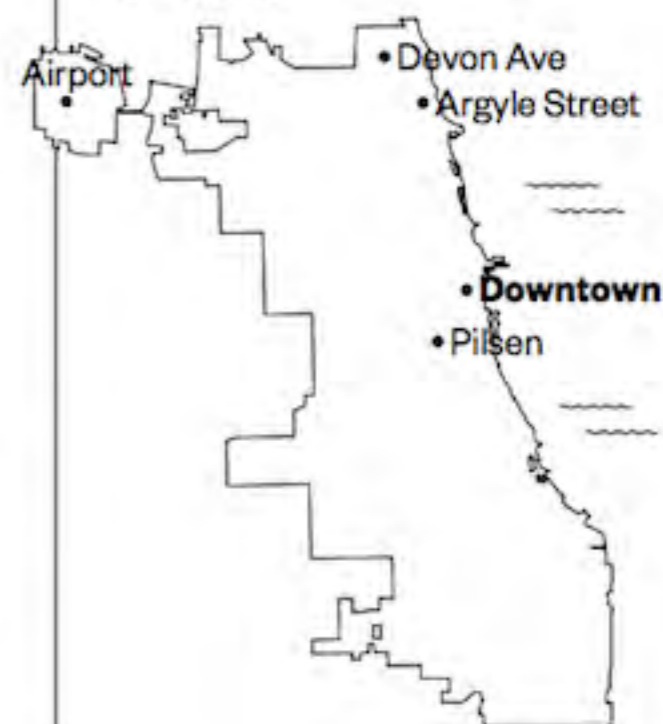
2646 W Devon Ave  
[kamdarplaza.com](http://kamdarplaza.com)

### Khan BBQ

→ Pakistani food. Goat is a specialty here.

2401 W Devon Ave  
[khanbbq.net](http://khanbbq.net)

### CHICAGO



# Devon Ave

Sometimes dubbed “Little India,” the area around Devon Avenue could almost be a backdrop for a Bollywood film. Brimming with life and aromas imported from the East, it’s a world away from the skyscrapers downtown.

**M**annequins draped in colorful saris fill window displays, neon signs jostle for your attention, posters announce the latest Bollywood blockbusters and the smells of curry and spices hang in the air on Chicago’s far north side.

Devon Avenue is a multi-ethnic corridor in the West Ridge neighborhood brimming with Indian and Pakistani culture.

Hema Potla moved here from India about 30 years ago to open a textile shop. When that didn’t work out, she start-

ed picking up jobs in restaurant kitchens and worked her way up, finally opening two very successful restaurants of her own.

She says ‘it’s everything’ to be a successful woman business owner on Devon. “I worked hard,” she says. “When the dishwashing guy didn’t come, I washed the dishes too. I’ve done everything.”

At Hema’s Kitchen, every dish is made to order from scratch. When she first opened, she did it all. “I took

the orders, I cooked the food and I served the food.”

Sometimes dubbed Little India, this is the place to come and eat a meal then wander in and out of the shops selling aromatic spices and sparkly gold trinkets. For quick snacks and a great vegetarian street food counter, duck into Kamdar Plaza.

Potla says it’s the personal touch that makes her business a success. “My guests are like friends and family. A lot of owners cannot say that.” ◊





Photo by JBL

# Argyle Street

For a taste of Southeast Asia in Chicago, there's nowhere better to head to than Argyle Street, which has been home to a large predominantly Vietnamese community for decades.

**G**et off the Red Line at the pagoda-styled Argyle stop and you enter a world of Southeast Asian sights, smells and flavors. This small section of Chicago's Uptown neighborhood has been home to mostly Vietnamese, but also Chinese, Cambodian, Laotian and Thai, immigrants for more than fifty years.

A recent streetscape project beautified the three-block area of Argyle turning it into a plaza-like street where cars share the space with pedestrians.

Peter Yuen's family moved here from Hong Kong when he was a boy. He worked alongside his father at the family bakery, which was downstairs from their apartment. Yuen's seen the block grow into what it is today.

"It has changed a lot," he says. "We are hoping that the beautification of the neighbor-

hood will draw more people here."

Peter graduated from Chicago's French Pastry School and became a pastry chef at the Four Seasons Hotel in the city. In 2004, he took over the family business and rebranded it as La Patisserie P. "The P stands for passion for pastry," Yuen explains, "not for my name, as many think. I am obsessed with good French pastry."

You can get everything from Asian classics like pork buns, melon cake and sesame balls to French pastries like croissants and tarts. Today, Peter teaches pastry courses all over the world, but still likes the simple joy of making his customers happy.

"I love the instant gratification," he explains. "To see the face of a child light up and they say 'oh, it's so good.' That brings me joy." ◻

## This way to Chicago

SAS flies direct to Chicago from Copenhagen and Stockholm and offers connecting flights from other cities in Scandinavia.

### Earn points

→ As a EuroBonus member, you earn points when you fly on SAS, Star Alliance and partners. A return to Chicago will earn you at least **3,750 points**.

### Use points

→ A round trip from Scandinavia to Chicago will cost you from **60,000 points**. Taxes and fees apply from €38.

### Cash in points

→ Make a better start to your trip by upgrading via SAS Upgrade. Read more at [flysas.com](http://flysas.com)

Book your flight at [flysas.com](http://flysas.com)



Noodles – a Vietnamese staple and never hard to find in the Argyle Street district.

'We are hoping that the beautification of the neighborhood will draw more people here'

### Miss Saigon

→ Newly-opened restaurant with a modern style and deliberately slimmed down menu.

[1129 W Argyle St](http://1129WArgyleSt.com)

### La Patisserie P

→ Artisan bread and French pastries made by classically trained baker Peter Yuen.

[1060-52 W Argyle St](http://1060-52WArgyleSt.com)  
[lapatisseriepbakery.com](http://lapatisseriepbakery.com)

### Ba Le

→ Vietnamese-French fusion famed for its *banh mi* sandwiches.

[5014 North Broadway](http://5014NorthBroadway.com)  
[balesandwich.com](http://balesandwich.com)

### Argyle Night Market

→ Bustling mainly Southeast Asian market.

[N. Sheridan Rd. and W. Argyle St](http://N.SheridanRd.andW.ArgyleSt)  
[facebook.com/ArgyleNightMarket](https://facebook.com/ArgyleNightMarket)

### Pho 777

→ Renowned for its speciality, *pho*. Bring your own drink.

[1065 W Argyle St](http://1065WArgyleSt.com)

### Tank Noodle

→ Voted one of the top three Vietnamese restaurants in Chicago for its traditional, well-priced menu.

[4963-55 North Broadway](http://4963-55NorthBroadway.com)  
[tank-noodle.com](http://tank-noodle.com)