



CHICAGO  
**ARCHITECTURE**  
CENTER

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**Visuals:**

Photos/video available [here](#)

**Chicago Architecture Center River Cruise aboard Chicago's First Lady  
Set Sails Early for its 31<sup>st</sup> season beginning March 17**

*Tickets now on sale for the [#1 boat tour in the city](#), according to TripAdvisor users*

**CHICAGO** – Recognized three years in a row as one of the best boat tours in North America (*USA Today Readers' Choice 2023 Awards*) and the Best Tour in 2023 (Chicago Reader), the official [Chicago Architecture Center \(CAC\) River Cruise aboard Chicago's First Lady](#) kicks off its 2024 season on Sunday, March 17.

This year marks the 31<sup>st</sup> season of the tour, operated in partnership by Chicago's First Lady Cruises and the Chicago Architecture Center (CAC). The CAC River Cruise aboard Chicago's First Lady is the only cruise narrated by more than 150 CAC-certified volunteer docents who thrill guests with their personal stories and wealth of knowledge about Chicago's "canyon of architecture."

Lauded as a "must-do" activity by locals and tourists alike, the 90-minute CAC River Cruise aboard Chicago's First Lady glides down all three branches of the Chicago River, providing guests with an unobstructed, open-air, 360-degree view of the city's wide variety of architectural styles, including art deco, neoclassicism, mid-century modernism and postmodernism. Passengers will learn the fascinating stories of more than 50 buildings and 13 bascule bridges along the river, as well as the iconic figures who designed and built them. The tours, which are continuously updated to reflect the city's changing skyline, are led by CAC-certified volunteer docents, who undergo nearly 100 hours of training, plus



an additional 12 weeks of study about Chicago's architecture. No tour is alike, as each docent brings their unique background and focus to their tour narration.

The CAC River Cruise aboard Chicago's First Lady offers complimentary language translation services. Guests will have the opportunity to listen to a pre-recorded tour narration on their smartphone in four different languages, including Spanish, French, Japanese and Korean. The translation service is accessible by downloading a free app that connects directly to a special wi-fi network onboard. The narration is triggered based on the location of the vessel at that time in the tour's route, which will help ensure those who use the technology have a similar experience as others listening to live narration.

A portion of proceeds from each CAC River Cruise ticket supports the CAC's nonprofit educational mission. The purchase of two CAC River Cruise tickets helps fund sketching materials and drafting tools for a student.

The CAC produces programs for children, students, teens and families, including Girls Build!, Teen Fellows and the Newhouse Architecture + Design Competition in pursuit of CAC's mission to inspire people to discover why design matters. The CAC's field trips, award-winning publications and online tools expand the CAC's reach into communities across and beyond Chicagoland.

Chicago's First Lady Cruises is deeply committed to bettering the city and is excited to announce a new corporate social responsibility partner for 2024. CFL will be supporting Blessings in a Backpack with various initiatives and donations throughout the season. The organization strives to ensure children don't go hungry on the weekends. One in seven children in Chicagoland eat meals at school but don't have affordable, healthy food on the weekends. Blessings in a Backpack partners with corporations and communities to fill that need and provide bags of ready-to-eat food for school-aged children on the weekends.

As a fourth-generation family-owned and operated company, Chicago's First Lady Cruises celebrates other local businesses by offering guests the opportunity to purchase locally based food and drinks aboard its tours, from Open Water, Revolution Brewing, Garrett's Popcorn and Northman Cider.

## **Boarding and Ticket Information**

The CAC River Cruise aboard Chicago's First Lady departs from the Michigan Avenue Bridge at Wacker Drive on Chicago's Riverwalk just three blocks north of Millennium Park. Daily tours of the CAC River Cruise aboard Chicago's First Lady begin Sunday, March 17.

Tickets start at \$54 and can be purchased online or in person at the ticket booth located on the Riverwalk. Priority boarding tickets beginning at \$69 are also available and include an exclusive early boarding period, the option to skip the queue during general boarding, and CAC admission.

Passengers can take advantage of visiting the award-winning [Chicago Architecture Center](#) for an additional \$5 and have seven days to visit the Center after their cruise date.

The CAC is announcing two new exhibitions opening this spring, including *Highrises*, which opens March 15 and features drone photography by photography Chris Hytha, showcasing the magnificent detail at the tops of art deco buildings. The stunning views can't be seen from the ground and provide a fresh and beautiful perspective for art deco lovers.

For additional information on the 2024 season, tickets, boarding location, parking and other details, please visit [CruiseChicago.com](https://www.cruisechicago.com).

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### **About Chicago's First Lady Cruises**

*Located on Chicago's vibrant Riverwalk, Chicago's First Lady Cruises is a critically acclaimed experience that connects locals and visitors alike to the city's rich architectural history and breathtaking beauty through the official Chicago Architecture Center River Cruise and as a first-class venue for private events. The tour has been recognized three years in a row as one of the best boat tours in North America (USA Today Readers' Choice 2023 Awards) and the Best Boat Tour in 2023 (Chicago Reader). For 88 years, Chicago's First Lady Cruises and its sister company, Mercury, Chicago's Skyline Cruiseline, have been a cornerstone of Chicago's Riverwalk. Both cruiselines are fourth-generation family-owned and operated and committed to enviro-friendly practices for continued sustainability. Seven of Chicago's First Lady Cruises luxury yachts are available for private charter cruising and special events, complete with catering and beverage options for groups of two to 250 people. All vessels are operated by a U.S. Coast Guard-licensed captain and crew. For more information and for cruise schedules, visit [CruiseChicago.com](https://www.cruisechicago.com) or call 847-358-1330.*

### **About the Chicago Architecture Center**

*The Chicago Architecture Center (CAC) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1966, dedicated to inspiring people to discover why design matters. A national leader in architecture and design education, the CAC offers tours, programs, exhibitions, and more that are part of a dynamic journey of lifelong learning.*

*Opened to the public in 2018, its riverfront location is in the heart of the city, where Michigan Avenue meets the Chicago River, featuring nearly 10,000 square feet of exhibition space with views of a century of iconic skyscrapers.*

*Through partnerships with schools and youth-serving organizations, the CAC reaches approximately 5,000 K-12 students annually, while teacher workshops provide educators with tools and resources they need to advance STEM curricula in their classrooms. Committed to serving under-represented communities in construction, engineering, and design professions, the CAC offers many of its education programs—and all its programs for teens—at no cost to participants. CAC programs for adults and members include talks with acclaimed authors and practicing architects, in-depth presentations on issues and trends in urbanism, and classes unlocking subjects related to the built environment.*

*Proceeds from programs, tours, and the CAC Design Store, as well as from grants, sponsorships, and donations, support its educational mission. Visit [architecture.org](https://www.architecture.org) to learn more and follow @chiarchitecture and #chiarchitecture on social media.*