

## Chicago Feeds Students' Appetites For Meals & Entertainment

Exploring Chicago's eateries provides more than just an experience in food, student group travelers also learn about Chicago history and culture. There's nothing like a sample of Windy City cuisine to spice up any educational travel program.

While the deluxe hot dogs and kitchen sink nachos are a student favorite, it's not the food that makes Ed Debevic's unique. The real showstopper is the service. Ed's servers have been well-trained in mock-rudeness – an act which sometimes seems to border on truth. Informed customers join in the fun, taking the insults as comedy. It's not unusual to be reprimanded (rudely) for not moving quickly enough to your booth or for taking too long to order. But everything's done in good humor. The '50s-themed restaurant extends to the décor and waiters' dress. Adding to the mayhem are the frequent outbursts performed by the staff. Other Ed menu favorites include the Route 66 burger, Ed's Mom's Meatloaf, and thick milkshakes. The restaurant is located in downtown Chicago on North Wells Avenue.

Thank goodness two taxi drivers and a friend got frustrated with Chicago rush hour traffic back in 1966. The result? They decided to open a pizzeria just off Michigan Avenue and Superior in Chicago called Gino's East. Using a secret recipe for golden crust, vine-ripened tomatoes, and loads of fresh ingredients, Gino's East became an instant legend with Chicagoans, celebrities, and visitors from around the world. The enormous deep-dish pizzas are made by hand and brought to the table steaming hot. In addition to the show-stopping pizza, student tours have fun leaving their mark on the graffiti-covered booths, which were original to the restaurant's first location. A true Chicago landmark, Gino's East is as much a historic piece of Chicago as it is one of its finest eateries. The restaurant has two locations in downtown Chicago, on North Wells Street, across from Ed Debevic's, and on Superior Street.

For 21 years, Hard Rock Café has celebrated everything rock n' roll in the heart of Chicago's River North neighborhood. Located just five blocks from Michigan Avenue, eating a meal at the Hard Rock Cafe is like eating in a rock and roll museum. Student tours enjoy the classic American menu served up in an atmosphere focused on the world of rock and roll. Since its opening in London, 103 additional restaurants have opened in 36 different countries. Students can view outrageous costumes and outfits worn by various musicians, famous instruments donated by rock stars, and autographed photos of celebrities while munching on hickory-smoked pulled-pork sandwich or legendary 10-ounce burger. Popular memorabilia, such as city-specific t-shirts and collectibles are available for purchase in the Hard Rock gift shop.

Combining great food with environmental education, the Rainforest Cafe is a solid choice for any student tour interested in the sciences and environment. Dedicated to the preservation of the rainforest, the restaurant chain utilizes elaborate interior design to introduce students to the wonder and beauty of this region of the world. Student tours dine amongst lush foliage, wild animals, cascading waterfalls, and exotic fish. Jungle animals, such as elephants and gorillas come to life and thunderstorms boom in the distance. An on-site tour leads students through the cafe, which focuses on endangered species and saltwater fish life. Chicago's Rainforest Cafe is located in downtown Chicago on Clark Street, near some of Chicago's famous landmarks.

Live theater and great food meet at the Drury Lane Theatre and Conference Center in Oakbrook Terrace, the western suburbs of Chicago. The theater's famous Dinner/Theater Package features a sumptuous pre-show dinner, followed by a live performance. Student tours dine on chef-prepared soups, salads, and main entrees, including roast sirloin, chicken fettuccini alfredo, or roast turkey. Desserts such as turtle sundae, cheesecake, and tiramisu tempt taste buds afterward. Matinee and evening performances include Broadway classics, top-rated musicals, and hilarious comedies such as Sweet Charity, The Buddy Holly Story, and The Goodbye Girl.

Located just minutes from Chicago's O'Hare Airport, the Medieval Times Dinner & Tournament in Schaumburg is the largest of all the castles at 85,000 square feet. It's also within short driving distance of Woodfield Mall, one of the largest malls in the United States. Specialized matinee and educational programs are offered at the Schaumburg location, ideal for student tours. Students become more familiar with the history and names of the knights represented at Medieval Times, as well as Moorish culture. The fun begins as students receive a colored crown corresponding to the knight they will cheer throughout the show. To the delight of most kids, a meal is served "medieval style" – without silverware. As they enjoy the meal, student tours take in all the lance-splintering action and glorious pageantry. Afterward, students can meet with Knights and Royalty for autographs and pictures.

## About the Author

[travel adventures](#) Travel Adventures is a student tour provider staffed by educators who understand the needs of teachers. It has served over one half million students since 1987 and its mission is to “empower teachers to create change by expanding the classroom to the world.”

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