

## 10 Great Winter Activities for Kids in Chicago



Looking for great winter activities for kids in Chicago this year? Our local editor has rounded up some real crowd pleasers!

**1. Lincoln Park Zoo**'s Zoolights feature luminous displays and holiday-season activities throughout the zoo grounds. Heat up the holidays by posing for photos with Santa (through December 23), or just revel in holiday crafts, animal encounters, live ice carving every night, rides on the AT&T Endangered Species Carousel and the new Lionel Train Adventure, and ice Skating at the Farm-in-the-Zoo. The first 1,000 guests each night snag cool holiday specs that make the lights dazzle.

2. **Millennium Park**'s McCormick Ice Rink is open, so get your skate on with free skating lessons on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, one hour before the rink opens. Lessons are also offered an hour before opening each day of Chicago Public School Winter Break. Little ones can stop by and commune with Santa at his Chicago headquarters on Daley Plaza through December 23.



3. Cook up a storm at **The Kids' Table**. Holiday classes include delicious dabbling in the art of gingerbread and candy cane cookies – or sign the kids up for school break camp sessions. Life skills never tasted so good.



4. **The Chicago Children's Museum**'s annual *Snow Much Fun* extravaganza brings winter indoors. Little ones experience all the joys of winter — with none of the cold (no need to struggle with snowsuits and mittens)! The extravaganzistic experience includes an indoor “ice” rink kids can conquer in their socks, 1000 snowballs ready to mix it up in an epic battle (think enormous, fluffy cotton balls), and life-sized “snow” people just begging to be decorated.



5. While you're in the neighborhood, **Navy Pier**'s *Winter Wonderfest* will probably prove irresistible. Give in and enjoy it! Chicago's biggest indoor winter playground features more than 25 rides and activities, including Chicago Blackhawks indoor ice skating, a 15-foot-high “snow” tubing hill, an inflatable slide, a snowman bouncer, and more.

6. Commune with nature at **Northerly Island**, or visit during *Polar Adventure Days* (Jan 24 or Feb 21), when live birds of prey, huskies, and wolves await meet-and-greet time with kids, and families can learn the science behind snow formations, discover native Illinois animals, create winter themed art, and enjoy music from a local band. The first 500 guests of the day also score free hot chocolate!

7. **The Museum of Science and Industry**'s 73rd annual *Christmas Around the World* and *Holidays of Light* features more than 50 trees and displays, beautifully decorated by volunteers from Chicago's ethnic communities to reflect their diverse culture and holiday traditions. Guests can stroll through the dazzling forest of trees, revel in falling “snow” every half hour, and catch various dance and choral group performances on the Holiday Stage. Disney fans can see costumes from Disney films such as *The Santa Clause* and *Maleficent*, and learn about the making of the animated film *Frozen*.



8. **Ballet Chicago**'s sublime *Nutcracker*, at the Athenaeum, is a holiday

tradition. Performances run through December 21. Or catch the [Joffrey Ballet's](#) version, running through December 28.

**9. Chicago Botanic Gardens' *Wonderland Express*** appeals to everyone: kids love the trains (and the indoor snow), adults love the city sites and sights (and the indoor snow), and everybody loves the lights. As you enter the main exhibition, trains pass high and low. Thomas the Tank Engine garners the most recognition from kids, and the display includes only-shown-at-Wonderland Express cars and engines from the garden's 300-to-400-strong train car collection. Weekend family classes this winter include Joyful Gingerbread (learn all the different plants and plant parts needed to make gingerbread, take home a future ginger plant, decorate cookies, and mix up a batch of gingerbread to bake at home) and Hot Chocolate (examine parts of the cacao tree, learn how bitter beans make delicious desserts, and mix up several different kinds of historic chocolate drinks, even an ancient Aztec version).



**10. Feeling (cabin) feverish?** Sign the kids up for classes or winter break camp at [MSA & Circus Arts](#) and give them wings to fly. Founder Nourbol Meirmanov is a graduate of the world famous Moscow State Circus School, and has been a leading Sports Acrobatics & Circus Arts trainer throughout the Chicago area. Evanston families can get their circus on at [The Actors Gymnasium](#), which offers classes for kids ages 2 and up, and a winter break camp for kids ages 9-14.



**Did we leave out one of your favorites? Share it in the comments section, below, and check out all the great Chicago programs on [KidNimble.com](#)!**



