

Navy Pier Chicago – by Beke Lorenzen

The Navy Pier is a 1km long pier on the shoreline of Lake Michigan in Chicago, Illinois. It encompasses over 20ha of parks, gardens, shops, restaurants and family attractions and is – with over 9 million visitors every year – one of the most visited attractions in the entire Midwest and Chicago's second-most visited tourist attraction.



On 15 July 1916, the Navy opened to the public. Its original name was Municipal Pier. The pier was built by Charles Sumner Frost and its original purpose was to serve as a dock for freights, passenger traffic and events like expositions and pageants were held there.

In mid-1918, the pier was also used as a jail for draft dodgers. In 1917, the pier was renamed Navy Pier to honour the naval veterans who served in the World War I. During the World War II in 1941, the pier became a training centre for the United States Navy, when over 10,000 people worked, trained and lived there during that time.

In 1946, the University of Illinois at Chicago held classes at the pier. But the school outgrew the pier so that the university relocated to Circle Campus in 1965. After the university had left, the Navy Pier became underutilized.

Later in 1995, Navy Pier was re-designed and introduced to the public as a mixed-use venue incorporating retail, dining, entertainment and cultural space.

Today there are many outdoor attractions at Navy Pier Park, such as a the Drop Tower, Remote Control Boats or a botanical garden. The Chicago Shakespeare Theatre and a Ferris wheel are also located on the pier.

While walking down Navy Pier to its tip you have a great view of the skyline of Chicago.

