



# What to know if you're going to the Big Ten tournament at the United Center

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**C**hicago will be swarming with Wolverines and Spartans and Badgers and probably even some Hoosiers this week for the Big Ten men's basketball tournament at the United Center.

It's the 10th time Chicago has hosted and the first since 2015. A lot has changed in the building and neighborhood since then, so here's our United Center guide for Big Ten basketball fans.

## How can I get tickets?

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le Friday. You can get them at the United Center  
. There's an eight-ticket limit per order.

You can also buy “all-session tickets” that will get you into all games. They’re in the 300 (uppermost) level and cost either \$210 or \$290. Those tickets are available through [ticketmaster.com](http://ticketmaster.com).

Another option is the secondary market. [Vividseats.com](http://Vividseats.com) is the official Big Ten resale site, but tickets are also available at [stubhub.com](http://stubhub.com), [seatgeek.com](http://seatgeek.com) and others. As teams lose, tickets purchased by their fans should hit the market, so check early and often.

### **Do tickets for each day cover all of that day’s games?**

No. The tournament is divided into sessions. Wednesday’s two games are one session. Thursday’s first two games are one session and the second two games are a separate session. Same with Friday’s four games. The United Center will be cleared between sessions. Saturday’s semifinals are one session. And Sunday is the championship game. Here’s the [link to the full tournament schedule](#).

### **So if I’m going to all the games Thursday or Friday, where should I go between sessions?**

The United Center atrium will be accessible even if you don’t have a ticket. Head to Gate 4 to get to Queenie’s, a Midwest-style supper club that will open throughout the event. The balcony of the restaurant overlooks the atrium, and the back of Queenie’s has direct access to the suites. You can also get to the 200 level from there.

### **Where are the best and worst seats?**

At the United Center, you get what you pay for.

Seats in the 300 level are great for hockey (watching plays develop) but not quite as good for basketball. Not surprisingly, the closer you get to the court, the better. The best lower-level seats are those closest to midcourt.

### **Can I drive there?**

Sure, if you don’t mind sitting in traffic. Sometimes you can avoid highway congestion and backups near the stadium by altering your route a little. Coming from O’Hare Airport, consider taking I-294 (a toll road), which tends to be a little less stressful and a little faster than I-90, to get to I-290.

Off I-290, try to avoid the backups that tend to happen around Western, Damen or Ashland avenues by taking an earlier exit and then making your way down a less traveled road such as Warren Boulevard from the west or Washington Boulevard from the east.

Also, Ogden Avenue cuts diagonally through town from the northeast.

### **Where can I park?**

usually ranging from \$24 to \$40. All of the lots will

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And sorry, college fans, no tailgating.

There also are private lots in the area, which you can find on your own or use Spot Hero or other parking apps.

Be careful about parking on the street in the surrounding neighborhood. If you haven't been there in a while, be aware that the city greatly expanded the restricted parking zone near the United Center two years ago.

### **Is public transportation an option?**

It sure is, and one that not enough fans take advantage of.

Via CTA train, the Blue Line is the easiest way to get to the United Center, and it's an easy route to access if you're anywhere near the Loop. Exit at the Damen stop via the west side and take Damen north to the arena.

The Green Line is another option. Get off at Ashland, walk south on Ashland and then go west to the United Center.

Or you can take a bus. The Nos. 19 and 20 buses run east-west on Madison from downtown to the arena.

### **Is there an Uber/Lyft lot?**

Yes. The east third of Lot A, which is a block north of the United Center, between Wolcott and Wood.

### **Where did the Michael Jordan statue go?**

The Jordan statue came in out of the cold — or to be exact, into the atrium — when an addition was built to the east of the stadium. The sculpture was moved inside, close to its original spot. Now it's neighbors with a box office, Gate 4 access to Queenie's, a small walk-up bar and a Bulls and Blackhawks merchandise store.

The last time the Big Ten tournament was at the United Center in 2015, the statue was outside on the east side of the building. It moved in March 2017 to the atrium of the 190,000-square-foot addition. The atrium has secure entrances on its north and south doors and is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on non-event days and from 10 a.m. to one hour after events, including Bulls and Hawks games and concerts.

### **Aren't there other statues?**

Sure are. Statues of Blackhawks greats Bobby Hull and Stan Mikita, made at the same studio as the Jordan one, are just outside the arena's northeast corner. There's a bronze bust of Bulls Hall of Famer Scottie Pippen inside the United Center at Gate 7. And there's a Johnny "Red" Kerr statue near Sections 101-02. The former NBA star was the Bulls' first head coach and a longtime Bulls broadcaster before his death in 2009.

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We asked Phil Vettel, who is not only the Tribune's restaurant critic, but also an astute sports fan. Here are his recommendations.

Eden Chicago, 1748 W. Lake. (This is the only one within walking distance.)

A Tavola, 2148 W. Chicago.

Monteverde, 1020 W. Madison.

Tufano's Vernon Park Tap (warning: cash only), 1073 W. Vernon Park.

El Che Steakhouse & Bar, 845 W. Washington.

Lena Brava, 900 W. Randolph.

The Loyalist, 177 N. Ada.

Mad Social, 1140 W. Madison.

### **What are the food options at the United Center?**

If you're coming from out of town and you want to sample some of the local fare, a lot of the brands with Chicago roots are on the 100 level: Gibson's Steakhouse, Sweet Baby Ray's, Vienna Beef hot dogs, Giordano's (Chicago-style deep-dish pizza), Mindy's Hot Chocolate and Honey Butter Fried Chicken. The latter three are new to the United Center.

Other notables are Big Star, Leghorn Chicken, Lillie's Q, Sportsman's Club, Moneygun and Longman & Eagle. Last year the United Center opened counter service at Mad West, a coffee and sandwich shop, as well as sit-down restaurant Queenie's Supper Club. Queenie's is a public restaurant, accessible via the atrium, and will be open during the tournament, but United Center officials recommend making reservations.

### **Can I bring in my own food?**

You're not supposed to, but as long as it's not wrapped in aluminum foil (metal detectors) and if you're discreet, it's not a bad idea. Speaking of what you can't bring in: no backpacks, hard-sided bags, air horns, banners or flags. There are water fountains on every level next to the washrooms.

### **How big is the United Center?**

The United Center, with a seating capacity of 20,917, opened on Aug. 18, 1994. It is home to the Bulls and Blackhawks and has hosted the 1996 Democratic National Convention, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey tball tournament and concerts by the Rolling more. Mumford and Sons will be there March 29.

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## **The Blackhawks play there Monday night, so how long will it take to convert the arena for basketball?**

Back in 2013, the Hawks played at home March 1 and the Bulls were home the next night. Tribune photographer E. Jason Wambsgans documented the ice-to-hardwood conversion using time-lapse photos. [Check it out here.](#) So there's plenty of time to get ready this week.

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