

CHICAGO SKYLINE FLIGHT

MEMORABLE VIEWS OF AN ICONIC CITY

WHEN YOU VISIT CHICAGO, OR IF YOU WANT TO FLY BETWEEN WISCONSIN AND

Indiana without flying west of the city, consider a Chicago skyline flight. Chicago's skyline comprises four of the nation's 12 tallest buildings (the other eight are in New York City), the view of the city from above is breathtaking, and the route relatively easy to navigate. Here's how.

kollin.stagnito@aopa.org

- 2** If you are flying north to south, start by aiming for a VFR checkpoint on the chart called the **Baha'i Temple**. It's on the edge of Lake Michigan near Northwestern University, and resembles a white acorn capping a nine-sided base. Fly about a half mile offshore, turn south, and prepare to be amazed.
- 3** Remaining below the Class B shelf, which begins at 3,000 feet, will keep you well clear of the O'Hare traffic. Commit to altitudes you'll stick to at certain points of the flight in advance. The TAC recommends 2,500 feet here and 2,000 feet south of Navy Pier.
- 4** To your right are the high-rise condos on Chicago's Gold Coast. Soon you'll see everyone's favorite attraction: **Wrigley Field**—home of the Chicago Cubs baseball team. Try to avoid becoming too engrossed by the amazing views of the city. There will be traffic along this lakeshore route—sometimes a lot.

1 The **Chicago VFR Terminal Area Chart (TAC)** provides the most detailed view of the lakeshore and depicts the suggested VFR flyway. Flying the Chicago skyline is not like flying the special flight rules areas (SFRA) through Los Angeles or New York City—there are no mandatory routes or reporting points. You can request flight following from Chicago Approach on 120.55, but it is not required. Be cautious on windy or low visibility days. The skyscrapers can create turbulence, and the horizon over the lake tends to blend into the sky on hazy days.



5 The **John Hancock Center** (1,499 feet tall including antennas) towers over The Magnificent Mile on Michigan Avenue. Next, **Trump International Hotel and Tower** rises 1,388 feet above the city. As you approach **Navy Pier**, jutting 3,000 feet in the lake, your eyes are drawn to the 200-foot tall **Centennial Wheel**. 1,189-foot tall **Aon Center** marks the northern edge of Millennium Park.

6 At or above your altitude and dominating the skyline is the **Willis Tower** (formerly Sears Tower), which at 1,729 feet to the tip of its antennas, is still the third tallest skyscraper in America. **Soldier Field**, home of the Chicago Bears, sits across the harbor from Northerly Island—once home to the iconic and beloved downtown GA airport Meigs Field. **Guaranteed Rate Field**, home field for the Chicago White Sox baseball team, anchors the southern extent of the unforgettable views afforded on this skyline tour. Be on the lookout for stadium TFRs. If the Bears, Cubs, or Sox are playing, you'll need to stay well clear.

7 Aim toward **Gary/Chicago International Airport (GYI)**, where you can once again feel the comfort of ground under your wings. If you are flying the skyline from south to north, you can call Chicago Approach on 128.2 for flight following.