

URBAN OASES

Got visitors? Put them up in one of these neighborhood hotels for a taste or real city life.

Staying at the city's large downtown hotels may leave the curious traveler impressed but still curious. Given that Chicago blankets 225 square miles, we sought out accommodations around the city for visitors seeking a different slice of Chicago—one more closely resembling everyday life here. We came up with five good places to stay—two small-scale hotels and three charming bed-and-breakfasts—all located in residential neighborhoods within striking distance of downtown and close to public transportation.

CITY SUITES HOTEL

933 W. Belmont Ave.; 800-248-9108, cityinns.com

Forty-five rooms, from standard queen to executive suites. Weekday rates from \$249 to \$319; weekend rates from \$309 to \$409. Nearby garage parking, \$22 per day with in-and-out privileges.

Just a couple of doors from a stop on the main north-south el train line, City Suites provides a good home base for Cubs fans or travelers with a taste for real urban living. The hotel faces Belmont Avenue, one of the busier streets in Boystown, which has gentrified into a funky retail area that's still gritty but no longer seedy. Wrigley Field and its attendant slew of sports bars are on train stop—or a five-block walk—away, while downtown is a 20-minute ride in the other direction. The rooms at City Suites are small and basic; suites have separate sleeping areas, though not actual doors.

UPSIDE, DOWNSIDE To minimize noise from the elevated train station, request a room on the east side of the hotel. On the plus side, your walk to 24-hour public transportation is less than half a block. And taxis and buses are so plentiful you may not need a car.

