



Locals fondly refer to "Cloud Gate" in Millennium Park as "The Bean."

Chicago: We're not second!

BY TRACY E. HOPKINS
Special to amNewYork

Chicago may be nicknamed "Second City," but with trendy boutiques, hip eateries and thriving culture, the cosmopolitan city has plenty to brag about.



Dare we even say it rivals New York? "Chicago has all of the cultural opportunities as NYC," said Brooklyn transplant Brian Vines, 32, a senior producer at Brooklyn Independent Television. "[We] just go to bed a few hours earlier."



SHOPPING

New York: Fifth Avenue, SoHo. Chicago: Michigan Avenue, Bucktown.

Michigan Avenue's Magnificent Mile of designer shops has its own lure. The city's outer neighborhoods, such as the Bucktown/Wicker Park area, offer a hipper experience.

"Coupled with hip cafes and bars, you'll find unique fashion, shoes and accessories that you won't find in any other city," said Danielle Lutz, who operates ShopWalk, guided shopping tours in Chicago.

The picks

p.45 (1643 North Damen Ave., 773-862-4523) for up-and-coming designers; Mulberry and Me (2019 W. Division St., 773-952-7551), a "darling shop for feminine and sexy looks," said Lutz, named for the city's New Mulberry Street; and Michelle Tan (1872 North Damen Ave., 773-252-1888), a clothing and accessories designer.

NIGHTLIFE

New York: B.B. King Blues Club & Grill. Chicago: Buddy Guy's Legends, a blues staple named for, and owned by, the legendary Chicago blues singer and guitarist.

The picks

Writer Natasha Tarpley, 39, lived in Harlem for six years before mov-

ing back to Chicago in 2004. The children's book author, who loves to hear good music, recommends **The Velvet Lounge** (67 E. Cermak Rd.; 312-791-9050). Located near the original South Side site of the legendary Chess Records, the lounge showcases Chicago's experimental jazz musicians.