

Chicago Tribune

Roll Over, Sunbathers

*There are too many other ways--with or without a crowbar--to have fun outdoors
Go for maximum lake effect*

Amy Koch

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The ice floes have melted, the parks have bloomed and the bevy of lakeside activities beckons. From nature-steeped canoe trips to Crunch Beachfront Gym's Sensual Moves class, the array of recreational sports programs on or near Lake Michigan will boggle the mind and body.

Bulldog Boot Camp: Bulldog's military style "basic training" is for the supermotivated who want to get fit in record time. This outdoor class meets five days a week for four weeks and uses military-style circuit workouts, sand workouts, hill workouts and strength workouts. Classes are held in Lincoln Park from 5-6 a.m. and 6-7 a.m. and in Grant Park from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Start dates are June 9, July 7, Aug. 4 and Sept. 1 and cost \$295. 773-529-6024.

Canoe trips on the Des Plaines River: Whether you're looking for a mellow five-mile day trip or an overnight camping experience, Will- U-Canoe offers the quintessential outdoor experience down the Des Plaines River within an untapped natural preserve filled with beaver, deer and rare species of birds. Pricing for a five-mile trip starts at \$17.50 per person. 708-839-2311.

Chicago River Canoe & Kayak: For two years, Ryan Chew and his gang have been leading unique paddle fests on the Chicago River. One can opt for an independent paddle sans reservation or take part in an organized tour. The crown jewel of canoe/kayak offerings is the Pub Yaw (kayak \$20/tandem canoe \$30), a canoe/kayak version of a pub crawl. Rentals available 9 a.m. until sunset Thursdays through Sundays. Clark Park, 3400 N. Rockwell St., 773-325-2925.

Bike rental/tours: Bike & Roll not only will rent you a bike but also will spirit you down the lakefront trail to tour cool city sites such as Lincoln Park, Chinatown and Hyde Park. Tours leave daily at 1:30 p.m. from Navy Pier and North Avenue Beach and run about 2 1/2 hours. The bike tours are free. There is a 15-person maximum per tour (which always fills up) so call early to make a reservation. Bike rentals cost \$8.75 per hour and include a lock and helmet. North Avenue Beach: 773-327-2706; Navy Pier: 312-595-9600.

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Southshore Cultural Center & Park: This lakeside park boasts a nature area with migratory birds, golf, hiking trails and council rings for meditation. Golf can be booked at www.cpdgolf.com. The center and park are at 7059 South Shore Drive.

Lakeside Yoga: Tap into 80-year-old instructor Rose Holt's karma as she hosts sunrise yoga each Sunday at the 63rd Street Beach. Holt has 30 years of experience teaching classes, organizing yoga weekends and producing her own yoga videos. Class starts at 6:30 a.m. and begin June 8; 773-488-3820.

Soccer, kayaking or softball anyone? The Chicago Sports and Social Club organizes 13 coed sports clubs for sports aficionados, ranging from recreational to competitive. After being placed on a team, members essentially meet and compete once a week for seven weeks. The club provides equipment, playing fields and referees. Membership starts at \$75. Check out www.chicagosocial.com for schedules and membership or call 312-335-9596.

Running groups: Jogging honchos Vertels and Fleet Feet offer early evening co-ed and ladies-only "fun runs," which depart from their respective shops and head to the lake. Vertels' is at 24 S. Michigan Ave. (312-683-9600). Fleet Feet offers runs from both of its Chicago shops, 210 W. North Ave. (312-587-3338) and 4555 N. Lincoln Ave. (773-271-3338). For scheduling see www.vertels.com and www.fleetfeet.com.

Crunch Beachfront Gym: Members enjoy a range of cardio/strength training and an impressive array of classes, including Sensual Moves, Rave Ride, Revolution and the Ironman Workout. The \$199 membership fee will have you pumping iron lakeside from Memorial Day until the gym closes on Sept. 2. Crunch Beachfront Gym is at North Avenue Beach. Class schedules and membership information are at www.crunch.com.

Wilson Avenue Skate Park: At 4600 N. Lake Shore Drive, this lakeside skate park is a new facility designed for aggressive in-line skaters and adventurous skateboarders. The park is free; bring your own equipment.

Sailing classes: Head to Burnham Harbor Sailing Center and learn how to be the master of your own Colgate 26-foot keel boat. Classes, organized by the Chicago Park District/Westrec Marinas, consist of three sessions of three hours each held over three consecutive weeks. The three-class series costs \$200. 312-745-1700. (The district also has sailing programs for kids and sailors with disabilities. Call 312-747-7684.)