

CHICAGO > HOLIDAYS

YOUR GUIDE TO THE 2017 MCDONALD'S THANKSGIVING PARADE

written by *Rhett Ahlander* November 17, 2017

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Thanksgiving brings family and friends together, more than almost any other holiday during the year. People around the world gather for food and memories. In Chicago, hours before dinner, millions of people look forward to the McDonald's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

The Chicago Thanksgiving Day Parade has a fantastic cast, including a 50-foot turkey balloon, Ronald McDonald and other well-known characters. Back in the 1930s, the parade was called the "Christmas Caravan." Just coming off the Great Depression, the parade was created to boost the suffering economy and uplift broken spirits.

This year nearly 5,000 participants are expected to help out during the parade. Below are some first-timer tips to make the in-person experience easy and enjoyable.

When and Where is the Parade?

The Chicago Thanksgiving Day Parade will go from 8–11 AM on November 23, 2017. The parade is held on State Street and progresses from Congress to Randolph.

Chicago Thanksgiving Day Parade Route



You can expect as many as 400,000 people contending for space on the sidewalks during the parade. The most devoted parade attendees show up before 6 AM.

Best Places to Watch

Avoid the crowds. Anywhere along State Street provides a great view, but if you want a less-crowded area, try State and Adams. Remember, the farther north you go along the parade route, the busier it'll be.

Book parking near State and Adams

Parade formation. Floats, assemble! If you want to see the starting point and the parade formation, head to the east side of State Street, between Congress and Harrison.

Book parking near Congress Plaza

See the balloon dances. If you're interested in seeing the parade balloon dances, go to any corner of State and Van Buren.

Book parking near State and Van Buren

Who Will Be Featured in the Chicago Thanksgiving Day Parade?

You'll hear music from multiple local high school bands. There will be packs of horses, thanks to several equestrian units. The list of honored guests includes the Christkind from [Christkindlmarket](#), [Graham Elliot](#), [the Harlem Globetrotters](#), Miss Illinois, Miss Illinois Teen and Twista. Many local businesses and organizations will also make appearances during the parade. Are you going to the parade? Who with? Tell us all about it in the comments below.

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