

AMY BIZZARRI

111
PLACES IN
CHICAGO

THAT YOU
MUST NOT
MISS

Photographs by Susie Inverso

emons:

20 Calumet Water Reclamation Plant

Looking beyond the (toilet) bowl

One hundred and fifty years ago, city sewage dumped into the Chicago River or Lake Michigan, threatening the drinking water and the health of early Chicagoans. Thanks to the ingenuity of engineers, our city was saved from a swampy, unsanitary fate. On a Calumet Water Retention Plant tour, you can see firsthand how Chicago revolutionized the water treatment arena, as you witness where everyone's poop travels beyond the bowl and what happens to the water that flows down your home's drains.

Organized as the Sanitary District of Chicago in 1889 under an act of the Illinois General Assembly District, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District is credited with reversing the flow of the Chicago and Calumet River Systems. Today the district continues to protect Lake Michigan, the city's water source, and to guard businesses and homes against flood damage as it manages humanity's vital resource: water.

The District's seven modern water reclamation plants treat residential and industrial wastewater, while also guarding our lakes and rivers against hazardous substances and toxic chemicals. Each day, these hardworking plants clean and recover resources from wastewater as they pump more than 480 million gallons a day of raw sewage.

The plant tour shows you all the action and the magnificent machinery, from the mechanical screens lifting rags and rocks from raw sewage, to the huge circular vats that separate sludge from liquid. You might pick up a few interesting scents along the tour, but this busy plant keeps Chicago safe and healthy while also blazing a new trail in the field of resource recovery. The plant is on the path to become energy neutral by 2023, while also recovering water, biosolids compost, algae for bioplastics, and phosphorus to be sold as fertilizer.



Address 400 E 130th Street, Chicago, IL 60628, +1 (312) 751-6635, www.mwrd.org |
Getting there Subway to 95th/Dan Ryan (Red Line) then CTA bus 34 to 130th Street & Daniel Drive | **Hours** Tours Mon–Fri 9am–1pm. Allow approximately two hours per tour. |
Tip You'll need to call +1 (312) 751-6633 or email tours@mwrd.org to reserve your plant tour. Anyone over 18 years of age must provide a scan or photocopy of their state ID or passport for a security check, and present it on the day of tour. For safety, wear long pants and sturdy shoes.

