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McDonald's Fun Chicago Roots, Sears Tower and Rides at Navy Pier Headline Day 30 of PapiBlogger Family Road Trip

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Our family loved the glass enclosed balconies that were recently added to the 103-story Skydeck of the Sears Tower.

On the 30th Day of the PapiBlogger Family Road Trip, the Ruiz clan visited Chicago's fun McDonald's roots, ascended the Sears Tower and rode the rides of Navy Pier.

ROCK N ROLLING IN MCDONALD'S

Our family's first stop of the day was at Chicago's world famous Rock N Roll McDonald's which is where we hosted a McTweet Up. The **Rock N Roll McDonald's** is a flagship restaurant/museum that has a Rock & Roll exhibit in a building adjacent to the restaurant and a small upstairs McDonald's museum display. The building features the first two-lane McDonald's drive-through, a gelato station in the second floor, luxurious decor, a café and plasma display flat screen televisions.

While at McDonald's we treated the Bakers family of Indiana to breakfast and asked them to share their recipes for successful family road trips. The accompanying YouTube video features their tips.



BEFORE: This 1955 Des Plaines McDonald's is the one McDonald's visionary Ray Kroc established to grow the franchise.



AFTER: The ultra sleek Rock N Roll McDonald's restaurant is one of the company's flagship ones.

INSIDER'S LOOK AT HISTORIC MCDONALD'S

Following our breakfast of McDonald's Smoothies and Frappes we took a short drive to an exclusive, insiders tour of the first McDonald's franchise in nearby Des Plaines that was launched in 1955 with the company's archivist/historian Michael Bullington (see our behind the scenes interview with Mr. Bullington below).

As we inspected the original franchise restaurant, my two older kids, especially Jonathan, peppered Mr. Bullington with questions:

- *What was the first item added to the menu?* Fillet O'Fish in 1965. The Big Mac was added in 1968 and even has it's own museum in Pittsburgh.

- Where was the first McDonald's restaurant outside the United States located? Canada

- *Who was the first Ronald McDonald?* Famous ex-Today Show weatherman Willard Scott played the role of Ronald for the first several years of his existence.

- *What was the first breakfast item added to the menu?* The Egg McMuffin in 1975.



The first hamburgers (left) and cheeseburgers (right) had the iconic Speedy character on them. Speedy was replaced by Ronald McDonald in the early 60's.

Other tidbits I found interesting:

- On it's first day in business in Chicago, the first McDonald's outside California generated $316.12. The average burger cost $0.15 then.

- In 1955 a hamburger, French fries and Coke meal cost $0.45. The cost of a burger was $0.15 and did not increase to $0.18 until 1968.

- In the old days, McDonald's restaurants did not have tables so people would walk up to the counter window, place their order and then eat either in their car or outside in an area that had a thin red and white bench that lined the restaurant. The first McDonald's to

MORE THAN A COOL VIEW AT SEARS TOWER

Even though it's been years since the Sears Tower (now called The Wills Tower) was eclipsed as the world's tallest building, visiting this 108-story, 1,451-foot skyscraper is a must for any family. Currently, Wills Tower is the tallest building in the United States and the fifth-tallest freestanding structure in the world as well as the fifth tallest building in the world to the roof.

If you've been there anytime in the past three years, things have changed for the better. The Sears Tower, which is what most people still prefer to call it, now has a fully revamped, extremely worthwhile exhibition entrance that will give your family get a strong perspective on the building's size, history and significance like never before. The exhibition at the bottom adds to what you will see at the observation deck above so don't skip it.

The view from "upstairs", the so-called Skydeck, of course, is fantastic. On a clear day you can see far over the plains of Illinois and across Lake Michigan to Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin. If it wasn't enough that this skyscraper is the America's tallest, management added four full glass enclosed balconies on one side of the so-called Skydeck that allows you to virtually hang from one side of the building at 103 stories high.

When you go, get your kids to lie down on the floor of these glass balconies and take their photos or video as they pretend to fall.

NAVIGATING NAVY PIER'S PIER PARK

Virtually every major city in the U.S. with any seaside or port to talk about has a version of Chicago's Navy Pier, one of the earliest ones in existence. In Chicago, as in most cities, these waterside malls are almost universally tailored to tourists with a broad range of stores, dining, tourist tour operators and street-side performers. In our limited time at the Navy Pier we skipped most of that to take advantage of the Navy Pier's Pier Park amusement park area.



Don't eat and ride this swing ride. Trust me.

If you go to the Pier Park amusement ride area, here are some tips:

- If you plan to have your kids ride more than one ride, you're best served buying the family plan for about $55. You may need to budget about two hours to complete the cycle of 20 rides.

- The really 150-foot Ferris Wheel moves in REALLY SLOW circles and is meant for you to take in a relaxing, seven minute view of the city.



The kids are pictured here riding the Navy Pier's Ferris Wheel. Chicago built the first Ferris Wheel, which debuted in their World's Fair of 1893 and no longer exists.

- The Wave Swinger swing ride is much faster than you may think so don't ride it if you've just eaten because you may be compelled to vomit. It nearly happened to me and I had eaten hours earlier.

WHAT WE DIDN'T DO

If you're planning to visit Chicago you simply cannot missed any of the city's museums like we did due to time constraints. Chicago has some of the nation's best art, natural history, architecture and technology museums. If we had done this trip again we would have scheduled one as one of the first things we did but hindsight is always 20/20. Terrific tourism related information about visiting Chicago and Illinois in general is available at To get more information in English through the Illinois Office of Tourism at www.enjoyillinois.com and in Spanish at www.disfrutaillinois.com.

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