



Memorial Day weekend in Chicago: "Leathermen, adult stars and bears, oh my!"

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CHICAGO, IL -- Over this Memorial Day Weekend suburban families will break out the barbeques and gather around their pools to beat the forecasted temperatures in the 80s and 90s. Here in gay Chicago, however, things are only getting hotter and with leathermen and kink enthusiasts from around the world as well as some of the biggest names in gay porn descending on the Windy City this weekend, it's going to be a scorcher.

While the protestors made downtown a ghost town last weekend, The International Mr. Leather Contest, which last year drew over 15,000 attendees to Chicago, will fill its streets men clad in harnesses, jockstraps and their other favorite fetish wear. They can often be seen parading to and from the [Hyatt Regency Chicago](#) at 151 E. Wacker Drive which hosts the event. The competition itself takes place at 6 p.m. on Sunday in the Grand Ballroom of the Hyatt where more than 50 contestants will compete for the title of International Mr. Leather 2012. After the contest comes the IML Victory Party, held at the [House of Blues](#) at 329 N. Dearborn where New York City DJ Eddie Martinez will make his Chicago debut.

[\(Read the Profile on DJ Eddie Martinez\)](#)

Curious Chicagoans can also check out the infamous Leather Market, where they will find 120 vendors from across the country, and one from Quebec, with booths boasting a wide assortment of fetish gear, kink accessories, photography and more. Held at the [Hyatt Regency Chicago](#), the Leather Market is a great place to people watch and is open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday and opens at 11 a.m. again on Sunday and Monday, closing at 5 p.m. and 4 p.m. respectively.

The Crowne Plaza Chicago Metro hotel, located at 733 W. Madison in the West Loop will also be playing host this weekend to Bear Pride 2012. Bearpawcalypse Chicago brings the bear community together for a weekend of meet-and-greets, parties and fraternity, including a Boxer Party held in the hotel ballroom on Saturday.

Once again Chi Chi LaRue and Honey West are hosting [Grab Magazine's](#) annual gay porn award show, the Grabbys, this Saturday at 7 p.m. at the Park West theatre at 322 W. Armitage. A chance for fans to rub elbows with their favorite porn stars and meet new ones, the night highlights the top talent and performances in the gay porn industry. After receiving their awards, the porn stars and Ms. LaRue will flock to the Official 2012 Grabbys Afterparty at Boystown's dance club Spin. For those out dancing all night, there is [North End's](#) popular Post Grabby Recovery Party starting at 11 a.m. on Sunday, hosted by Shane Frost and Calvin Knight.

A number of gay bars and clubs throughout Chicago are hosting parties drawing on the excitement of IML, the Grabbys and Bear Pride over the weekend. Far north bar Touche is holding a bondage night Friday and a gear night Saturday and Lakeview's [Cell Block](#) is opening at noon on Sunday for their All Day Bear Event. Friday night [Hydrate](#) welcomes IML and Grabby participants to Confined with DJ Joe Gauthreaux. On Sunday night adult film legends Ricky Sinz and Michael Brandon are hosting a TPAN fundraiser at [@mosphere](#) in Andersonville, while down in Boystown [Hydrate](#) is tempting residents away from the IML Victory Party by featuring one of last year's headliners, Neil Macleod, at their Sunday T-Dance.

[\(Check CalendarQ for a complete list of weekend events\)](#)

The queer women of Chicago needn't fear being left out of all the good, sexy fun. [The L Stop](#), a website that caters to Chicago's lesbian community, is celebrating their one year anniversary by throwing a birthday party on Saturday at O'Malley's Liquor Club, located at 3551 N. Sheffield in Wrigleyville. General admission and VIP tickets are available allowing access to an open bar for three hours starting at 9:30 p.m. According to the invitation, the evening promises scintillating performances, music and dancing,

a fashion show, a cake-eating contest and women covered in frosting.

([Read More](#) about [The L Stop's first year](#))

Just down the street, the Belmont/Sheffield Music Festival will be kicking off Chicago's summer of block parties and street fairs on Saturday and Sunday. This Boystown-adjacent festuival will feature regional tribute bands, food and drink vendors, shopping opportunities and more.

On Sunday the [Center on Halsted](#) is hosting Queer is Community, which seeks to bring together performers, activists, students, nonprofits and folks from across Chicago to dialogue about community building. The event will start with a rally outside the Center at 6 p.m. and continue inside with an hour of performances and speakers hosted by Adam Guerino. This will be followed by an hour-long panel discussion about building communities that are welcoming to and inclusive of intersecting identities.

If the thunderstorms hold off, Memorial Day itself will no doubt include a beach parade of epic proportions as Chicagoans and vistors mingle on Kathy Osterman Beach, more commonly known as Hollywood Beach, located in Edgewater at the 5800 block of Lake Shore Drive. The last event of the weekend is the Black and Blue Ball, IML's popular closing party held Monday at 8 p.m. at Exaclibur Nightclub, 632 N. Dearborn. By then many of the out-of-towners will be on flights back to their home states and Chicagoans who fled the city to spend the long weekend communing with nature will be back.

If returning to the daily grind on Tuesday proves difficult, gay Chicagoans, just remember that the end of Memorial Day Weekend means the beginning of a whole nother season. June is only a few days away, bringing with it Pride Month, Andersonville's Midsommarfest, Milwaukee's Pridefest and Chicago's own Gay Pride. Summertime is the time of year that Chicago really shines and this weekend is the perfect kickoff to the perfect summer. For more detailed information about the goings-on in Chicago this weekend, please visit chicago.gopride.com/calendar.

Related: [View Photos](#) from the 2011 Grabby Awards