

BACH HOUSE FACT SHEET

Overview of Mechanics

This tour can be split into four major stops or areas. Under normal circumstances, interpreters will escort guests through each stop, progressing through the house. For special events with high volume, these can be turned into stations with interpreters assigned to a single station as guests progress from one area to the next.

- Stop 1: Outside in front
- Stop 2: First Floor
- Stop 3: Second Floor
- Stop 4: Porch and/or tea house

-For each of these stops, the core tour includes all the basic information that should be presented at that stop.

-Guests expect a 45 minute tour, and following the mechanics of this tour will allow you to move your groups efficiently through the building to ensure satisfaction, safety, security, and efficient logistics. Please try to keep the timing to 10-10-10-10.

-Keep the tour group together. Give firm, but appropriate, verbal directions as necessary to achieve this important objective.

-Be guided by specific directions from Guest Relations staff regarding exceptions to this standard tour to meet immediate needs.

-Please become familiar with the following basic terms:

- **Preservation:** protecting and maintaining something by not allowing it to be changed or destroyed.
- **Restoration:** making something look exactly as it did when it was first created. The original is left in place, modern changes are removed, and details may be repaired or replaced.
- **Reconstruction/Re-creation:** rebuilding something that has been lost or destroyed and making it like the original.
- **Reproduction:** an exact or close imitation of something.
- **Adaptive use:** fitting the space for a new use. An example at Bach House is the maid's bedroom that was turned into a second bathroom.

Rules for Bach House will be given by Guest Relations at the start of the tour

- No food, drink, or gum on the tour.
- Please silence your cell phones.
- Stay with your group.
- Photography permitted for personal use only.

Guests will obtain their tickets in the first floor porch at the rear of the house. When the tour is ready to begin, the GR staff member will gather ticket holders on the rear patio just outside the porch and give the rules. The interpreter will then escort them out to the front of the house to begin the tour.

Bach House Core Tour Stop 1:

Welcome to the Emil Bach House.

Background:

- Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in early 1915
- Construction was completed in the fall of 1915
- Commissioned by Emil Bach, one of six brothers who owned and operated the Bach Brick Company.
- Two-story, single-family residence with a basement
- Rectangular footprint measures 41 x 52 feet
- Design predicated on earlier Wright projects: Fireproof House of 1906 and Small Suburban House of 1911

Description:

- First floor heavy and cubic
- Closed corners protect the major rooms of the house from their urban surroundings
- Living room projects beyond the core of the cube
- First-floor windows are small, single-pane casements
 - Deep-set between columns
 - Concealed under broad projecting overhangs
- Sited almost at north lot line
- A more traditional house sat directly to the south until the 1960s
- Path of discovery leads down south walkway to a set of stairs

Second story:

- Because of sight lines, more privacy from the street
- Form of cross
- Each bedroom cantilevered out, windows on three sides
- East side is open sun porch, originally with a clear view of the lake

Materials:

- Tawny Brick on the first floor
- Cream-colored stucco and contrasting dark brown wooden trim across the second floor
- Dark trim divides the light-colored panes into geometrical relationships

General points:

- Flat slab roof rather than the Prairie style hip roof
- Contributes to the compact and solid feel of the exterior
- House is basically a vertically-oriented cube
- House moves from being heavy and close on the bottom to light and airy above
- Rhythm of solids and voids
- Wright was able to preserve a sense of the horizontal by the use of projecting trellises and the mortar lines

The Bach House is a transitional design that unites Wright's Oak Park Prairie style period and his expressionistic Japanese and California periods. It was designated a Chicago landmark in 1977 and entered into the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

[Interpreter leads group to main entrance]

Bach House Core Tour Stop 1.5: A Pause at the Front Door

General points:

- Pathway of discovery: sidewalk makes several 90-degree turns in order to get to the front door
- "Front" door actually faces the backyard
- Brick wall with fence composed of square openings; picture frame effect looking at backyard and lake
- Over the last century, massive changes were made to the building by the houses various owners. Virtually all of the original woodwork, built-in furniture, art glass, and wall surfaces were removed or disfigured.
- In 2013, Harboe Architects completed a restoration, returning it to its original appearance.

[Interpreter leads them in the front door, and ushers them into the living room. Gather near the fireplace to start.]

Bach House Core Tour Stop 2: First Floor

[Interpreter urges group to move through the space during interpretation.]

Floorplan design:

- Rotational movement pattern in the space
- Set into motion by the design of the fireplace
- Built-in bench and bookshelf on the right

- Lintel extended to the left
- Dining table and cabinets project behind the fireplace
- Z pattern draws you from the living room around to your right into the dining room and then further to your right into the kitchen

Interior details:

- Brick “carpet” in front of the fireplace and the built-ins on either side create an inglenook
- Built-in dining table – Wright’s first use of a design element that he didn’t use again until the Usonian Houses more than 20 years later
- Kitchen renovated after 2005 – new cabinetry and appliances fitting the style and character of the house
- Birch flooring
- Trim is unstained black walnut throughout the house
- Strong geometric lines of the trim complement the exterior design
- Walls are a pebble-and-sand plaster painted in a creamy yellow that Wright originally custom mixed and called “Sunshine”

Kitchen:

- The kitchen was modernized during the restoration, but special attention was paid to keep a period feel in the space
- Cabinet doors were redone based on Wright’s drawings of the original cabinets and on the cabinet door uncovered in the dining room.
- Farmhouse sink and retro-style stove feel appropriate for this space
- The refrigerator & dishwasher are “hidden,” their exteriors have been covered with false cabinet doors to blend in with the space

Although we will not visit it, the Bach House has a full basement with mechanical equipment and laundry and storage rooms.

[After a few more minutes of looking around, the Interpreter will usher the group upstairs.]

Bach House Core Tour Station 3: Second Floor

Bedrooms:

- Leaded glass windows on three sides, maximizing the natural light
- Windows with colored glass are reproductions of the original design (one original window is on view at the Art Institute of Chicago in the collection for architectural artifacts on the main staircase. It was donated by one of the home’s later owners.)
- Built-in furniture is reproduced to Wright’s original design specifications

- Design themes of birch flooring, walnut trim, and “Sunshine” paint color continue on this level

The bathrooms on this floor were renovated sometime after 2005. The bathroom with the shower was originally the maid’s bedroom.

[If weather permits, bring them out onto the sun porch, where they also have a good view of the rear of the Lang House.]

Sun Porch:

- Originally had clear view to lake
- Closed in and re-opened in restoration

Lang House:

- Now known as Lang House Bed & Breakfast
- Built as a private home in 1919 as a country getaway
- Birchwood Beach Estates
- Designed by Edgar M. Newman in the American Four Square style with distinct Prairie style elements
 - Wide overhangs
 - Asymmetrical façade
 - Banded casement windows on the first floor
 - Limestone coursing delineating the space
- Two other Wright homes located in Birchwood Beach, from 1908 and 1909
- Both have been demolished
- One of the – Steffens House – for a time was owned by Emil Bach’s brother Otto
- Inspired Emil to hire Wright

[Lead group downstairs. If space permits, bring them onto the first floor porch to conclude for Stop 4, and optionally move over to the tea house. If the group is too large or there’s already a crowd on the porch, go straight to the tea house for Stop Four.]

Bach House Core Tour Stop 4: Porch/Tea House

Porch:

- This porch was originally open to the elements. Subsequent owners fully enclosed it to make it into an additional room. It’s now screened in, and we use it for our welcome center
- *[Gather them around the poster boards]* Here you can see some historic photos of the Bach House, and the progress of its restoration.

- Bach House was updated and altered many times between when it was built and when restoration began in 2005. Many of its features fell into disrepair. The previous owner started renovations in 2005 and restored many interior elements. The current owners bought the property in 2011 and completed the restoration, interior and exterior.
- Here you can see how the sun porch was enclosed and turned into an additional room
- The kitchen was very different in the 1970s/80s, a big contrast to the renovated kitchen today.
- During the restoration, a geothermal heating/cooling system was installed. The system uses the steady temperatures deep underground to regulate temperatures inside the house. The system has a high upfront cost, but is very efficient once installed.

Tea House:

- The tea house in the backyard was built by the previous owner to match and compliment Bach House. Originally, it housed a small lap pool.
- Today, it makes for a pleasant seating area on a hot day. If you rent Bach House for an event, you can open the tea house up to host a party.

This ends the formal portion of our tour.

- Offer to answer any questions guests may have
- Thank guests for supporting the Trust