## Chicago Auto Show concludes after 9-day run

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The 108th Chicago Auto Show made its public debut February 13, taking up much of the available space in Chicago's McCormick Place, the largest convention center in North America. Prior to the public opening of the show, the auto show's First Look for Charity event attracted over nine thousand guests and raised over \$2 million for local charities. The public show was open from 9 a.m. until 10 p.m. each day, with tickets on sale for \$12 for adults.

As a first-time auto show guest and as someone who isn't particularly interested in cars, visiting the auto show was still well worth it and quite a spectacle to behold. Upon ascending the escalators to the main exhibit floor of McCormick Place, I was overwhelmed by the amount of displays there were and the amount of effort and planning that was put into each company's exhibit. As I looked around, I saw a giant Toyota logo suspended from the ceiling, large screen displays showcasing highlights of different models, and dozens of cars in every direction.

The group I was visiting the show

with decided to arrive early, right as the show opened, on the last Saturday of the show's run. This turned out to be a wise decision, as many people had not yet arrived to the show, and afforded us several additional opportunities that would have had long waits later in the day. Almost immediately after deciding in which direction to proceed upon reaching the center of the exhibit floor, a Mazda representative grabbed our attention and offered us a test drive in a car of our choice. With some slight hesitation, our group was led down to the lowest level of the convention center, where we quickly signed up to test drive a new Mazda CX-5. Within minutes, we were led to an outdoor garage area where we were able to take the car on a short trip, driving it through the parking lot north of McCormick Place. Upon our return, I was pleased to find that we weren't pressured by any salespeople and were rewarded with a \$5 Starbucks gift card for giving the car a try.

One member of the group I was with is intending to buy a new car within the next year; after our first test drive, he was hooked. Next, we hurried over to Subaru's test drive station and signed up to drive a Crosstrek and Impreza. Subaru's test drive course was slightly more exciting, leading us out of Mc-Cormick Place's parking lot, up on to Lake Shore Drive, and down some additional streets before returning to the garage. With all of our test drives, we were accompanied by friendly representatives who were ready to guide us in learning about the car and answer any of our questions.

After having our fill of test drives, we headed back up to the main floor, where we began to walk through each car manufacturer's display and looked at each model they had on the floor, often taking the opportunity to sit inside them, which was an option for all but the most expensive cars on the floor. The show hosted more than 20 global debuts and a dozen concept cars. Every major car manufacturer was represented. We soon realized that we had made a wise choice in arriving early, as the show became more and more crowded as the day progressed, contributing to huge crowds around the super car displays and test drive opportunities.

At lunchtime, our group decided to skip the overpriced options at McCormick Place and took a short walk into Chinatown.

After returning from lunch, we were able to walk through the rest of the show and felt that we were comfortably able to see everything the Chicago Auto Show had to offer during our full-day trip.

Visiting the Chicago Auto Show was a fun experience, especially considering that normally don't find myself independently researching the latest news in the auto industry. I had a good time looking at new concepts for cars in the future, gawking at cars I can never hope to afford, and even looking at cars the average consumer might be considering for their next purchase. All of the brands present did a marvelous job creating their displays and facilitating guests in learning more about their company and the cars that they offer.

Upon conclusion of the 2016 show, dates for the 2017 Chicago Auto Show have already been announced. Car enthusiasts can look forward to checking out the show between February 11 and 20 of next year. Tickets are expected to go on sale starting in November.









Photos by Kori Bowns