

St. Louis: Something to Offer Everyone

by Sarah Mudd, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Along the Mississippi River on the Illinois-Missouri border, you'll find the city of St. Louis. Known as the rallying point for Lewis and Clark's journey to the Pacific Ocean and called the "Gateway to the West", the city of St. Louis has something to offer everyone of every age.

The city is represented by the Gateway Arch. Opened in 1965, the Arch was built to honor President Thomas Jefferson and his vision of a continental United States, and is part of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. There are elevators to take you to the top of the Arch -- a whopping 635 feet up! -- which offers spectacular views of the area. Tickets are \$10 per adult, \$7 for youth and \$3 for children. If you hold a National Park Passport, you can get a discounted admission of only \$7 per adult. Other sites in the Memorial are the Museum of Westward Expansion, which chronicles the country at the time of the Lewis and Clark expedition, and the historic Old Courthouse, which is where the Dred Scott trials took place (a case which helped lead the U.S. to civil war).

About four miles west of the arch is Forest Park, dedicated in 1876. At 1,293 acres, it is approximately 500 acres larger than New York's Central Park! The Park was the location for the 1904 World's Fair (also known as The Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and the setting for the movie musical Meet Me In St. Louis). Nowadays, at Forest Park, you can find the St. Louis Zoo, St. Louis Art Museum, Missouri History Museum, Science Center and the Muny, America's largest outdoor musical theater. It also serves as the location for the Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis and a sports center of sorts, with golf, tennis, baseball, biking, boating, fishing, ice skating, rollerblading, jogging, rugby... you name it!

Speaking of sports, if you are a sports fan, the city of St. Louis has got you covered. The St. Louis Cardinals play baseball at the beautiful and brand spanking new Busch Stadium downtown from April through October, the Super Bowl XXXIV champion St. Louis Rams pack the Edward Jones Dome from late August through December, and you can catch the Rams at their practice facility in Earth City during the late summer. The NHL's St. Louis Blues bring hockey fans into the Savvis Center from October through April, and if you are into car racing you can find the St. Louis/Gateway International Raceway just across the Mississippi River in Illinois.

And what is watching a game without a cold beer? Anheuser-Busch

offers free tours of the brewery's World Headquarters seven days a week. The tour starts with a visit to the famous Clydesdales' stables, heads inside to the Brew House then on to the packaging area before ending in the Hospitality Room. At the end of the tour, guests that are 21 and over can taste samples of Anheuser-Busch products and poke around in the gift shop. You can learn more about brewery tours at <http://www.budweisertours.com/home.htm>.

I really enjoy visiting another Anheuser-Busch-owned establishment, Grant's Farm. Grant's Farm is an attraction built upon the 281 acre "ancestral home" of the Busch family, a portion of which President Ulysses S. Grant founded and farmed in the 1850s. President Grant's log cabin still stands on the property. The farm currently has 1,000 animals representing more than 100 different species from six continents, which you can view by tram and on foot. If you feel a bit peckish, or feel the need for a sample of Budweiser products (and are over 21), stop at the Bauernhof to visit the Anheuser-Busch Hospitality area. You can get samples inside, visit the gift shop or grab a bratwurst, pretzel, pizza or chicken strips to munch on!

Are thrills more your thing? Check out Six Flags St. Louis! The brand-new free-fall ride "SUPERMAN Tower of Power" and the new Bugs Bunny National Park opened in May 2006. Six Flags has a ride for all levels of thrill seekers and lots for families to do together. There is also Hurricane Harbor, a water park next door to Six Flags, to cool you off! It is open only during the late spring to late summer months, and admission is free to Six Flags guests.

If you are like me and like to do something "different," you can check out the many riverboat casinos in the area. For other "interesting" attractions, you can visit the Museum of Transportation, The American Kennel Club Museum of the Dog or the International Bowling Museum and Hall of Fame.

There are many kid-friendly attractions in the St. Louis area - Magic House (the St. Louis Children's Museum), the Saint Louis Zoo, Purina Farms, City Museum, the Butterfly House and the Missouri Botanical Garden are just a few worth checking out!

If you are in the mood for shopping, there are many shopping malls in the area and just about every store you could want to find! My favorite place to shop in the St. Louis area is the St. Louis Mills Mall in Hazelwood. For scrapbookers, there is an Archiver's store at the Mills, and just recently a Disney's Character Warehouse Outlet Store opened there as well!

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I also enjoy shopping at St. Louis Union Station. Union Station was once the largest and busiest passenger rail terminal in the world. It opened in 1894, and although the train tracks nearby are still active, the Station closed as a rail terminal in 1978. In 1985, it reopened and was (and still is) considered to be the "largest adaptive re-use project in the United States." Today, Union Station contains restaurants, a night club, a Hyatt Regency hotel and the Hard Rock Cafe. There are also a multitude of specialty stores featuring everything from All Tied Up which sells nothing but neckwear, to Beatles for Sale, a memorabilia shop.

You can get around the St. Louis area by car, bus, taxi or MetroLink (the local train system), but wherever you go in the metropolitan area, you are sure to find something fun and interesting. You can find more information on the St. Louis area at <http://www.explorestlouis.com/>.

About The Author: Sarah Mudd is the Guide for the Disneyland: Getting There (and Back!) forum on the PassPorter Message Boards. She is a stay-at-home mom, Navy wife, and displaced San Diego native who is married to a displaced St. Louis native! Her family is currently preparing for a move to the Norfolk, Virginia area..

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