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The Gateway to the West: St. Louis, Missouri

Travelled by [Jan Ross](#) on 19 May 2014 | 0 Comments



Travelled By

Jan Ross



Jan Ross has been traveling since she was an infant as her father was a career Marine Corps officer and her family traveled the globe. ...[Find out more!](#)

The [St. Louis Gateway Arch](#) is probably one of the main things that draws people to this beautiful city in the Midwest United States. Arcing over the

city on the bank of the Mississippi River, the Arch is a 630 foot high monument to the westward expansion of the United States. Covered in stainless steel that gleams in the sun, the Arch is the tallest man-made monument in the United States, the world's tallest arch, and an internationally recognized symbol of St. Louis.

But before you visit the Arch and begin your tour of this amazing city, check into the [Embassy Suites Downtown](#) for a relaxing and comfortable stay. We have discovered that Embassy Suites is a great place to stay because all of their rooms are suites with a completely separate bedroom, nice living room, a small kitchen area, and dining table. This is absolutely wonderful when you compare it to a small hotel room where you have no room to spread out and relax and you have to go out (and pay) for every single meal.

This Embassy Suites is located in the historic Laurel Building which was originally one of the first department stores in St. Louis so it's truly a unique, unusual, and beautiful hotel. High ceilings in the rooms, a marble floor in the lobby, and a glass atrium provide clues to the building's past. There are shops, restaurants, and a huge movie theater right nearby; there is even a rather large grocery store only a couple of blocks away. It's also just a short walk to the Edward Jones Dome, the home of the NFL's St. Louis Rams, and the Lumiere Casino which is accessed through an underground, well-lit tunnel so you don't have to deal with crossing busy streets.

But one of the best things about staying at an Embassy Suites is the complimentary, full, hot breakfast every morning. We are not generally big fans of the complimentary hot breakfast in most hotels and will often bypass the tasteless, packaged sweet rolls and runny scrambled eggs to head to a local McDonald's but this is so not the case at an Embassy Suites. Not only do they have a great breakfast buffet, but they also have a delicious and fresh, made-to-order omelet bar.

The Embassy Suites Downtown is also located just a few blocks away from the Gateway Arch so that was one of the first places we headed on our visit. The Arch was designed by the Finnish-American architect Eero Saarinen and German-American structural engineer Hannskarl Bandel in 1947 but construction did not begin until 1963. Completed in 1967 and opened to the public, the Arch cost \$13 million to build but, when you see it for the first time, it seems worth every penny. No photo of the Arch can begin to show the magnificence of this edifice as it soars into the sky.

When you enter the Arch, which is a National Park so it's very reasonably priced, there is a museum area and some movies are also available in the small movie theater. There are also plenty of ticket windows to get your tickets for the tram ride to the top of the 630 foot tall Arch – which you will want to do! The tram is like a very small train – and I emphasize small as the individual cars are really very small. There are seats for five people but it's a little scrunched in there is you have five good-sized adults. But once you get to the top and peer through the small, rectangular windows at the amazing view of the city on one side and the river on the other, the ride is worth it.

After your experience at the Arch, stroll down to the riverfront which is very close and purchase a ticket for a riverboat cruise on the Gateway Arch Riverboats. Designed like old fashioned paddle wheel steamers, the boats are roomy with plenty of places to sit and enjoy the narration by the captain. Like many big city rivers, the Mississippi River is very commercial but it's still interesting to cruise along and see the sights, especially on a pretty day.

After your day on the river, you must stop for some St. Louis style pizza at [Imo's Pizza](#). If you are like us, you had no idea there was even such a thing as St. Louis style pizza so you are in for quite an experience. Forget about regular pizza because this is a totally new food experience. St. Louis style pizza is made with provolone cheese, a white processed cheese made by combining cheddar, Swiss, and provolone cheeses. It has a low melting





point with a gooey and almost buttery texture so makes a perfect pizza or sandwich cheese. You are going to love it.

For dessert, stop at Ted Drewes Frozen Custard. This was again unlike anything we had experienced. The frozen custard we have had in the past did not begin to measure up to this creamy and delicious concoction. Put aside any preconceptions you might have concerning frozen custard because this stuff is amazing. Located on the original Route 66 which runs through St. Louis, Ted Drewes was a popular stop for a snack break for years. Frozen custard is different from ice cream because it must have at least 10% butterfat and 1.4% egg yolk. Frozen custard also has a much smaller amount of overrun or the amount of air which causes it to have a much silkier, smoother texture. At Ted's, the custard is so thick, you can literally turn your cup upside down and it will stay put. They offer every kind of topping and ingredient you can possibly imagine and each and every one is equally delicious.

For your next couple of days in St. Louis, head to the [Missouri Botanical Garden](#) and [Forest Park](#). Both are wonderful but possibly the most wonderful thing about them is that they are absolutely free, aside from shows at the MUNY which is the world's largest outdoor theater. The Botanical Garden is lovely and huge with gardens of blooming flowers and shrubs, flowing fountains, and plenty of walking paths. Forest Park is expansive – even larger than Central Park with 1,371 acres – and includes the St. Louis Art Museum, the Missouri History Museum, the St. Louis Science Center, the St. Louis Zoo, and the MUNY. We spent an afternoon at the zoo and were constantly amazed that this wonderful place was completely free – unheard of in most big cities. Each of the offerings has lots of people wandering about but we didn't experience any problem with crowds because the area is so large.



When you are ready for meal, stop by a new restaurant called the Precinct Sports Bar and Grill where you can grab some wonderful, hot sandwiches and a "potato bat" which is deep fried potato sliced thinly and swirled around a small, wooden bat. You should also sample the local, hot, soft pretzels and a highly addictive dessert they specialize in at [Park Avenue Coffee](#) called Goopy Butter Cake. True to its name, it's gooey, buttery, and quite delicious. You can get it in a variety of flavors and they even have mixes for sale that you can take home.



One of the most interesting tours we have ever taken, which is also free (!) is offered by [Anheuser Busch Brewery](#). This is the company which uses the beautiful Clydesdale horses in their advertising and you will get to see the horses in their stables, along with a rambunctious colt kicking up his heels in an outdoor corral. After your tour of the brewery, everyone is treated to a free sample of the various brews, which is probably the most popular part of the tour!

If you are as exhausted after all this activity as we were, stop by the amazing spa at the [Four Seasons Hotel](#) for a relaxing and quite fabulous experience. Nothing like a wonderful massage in a lovely spa to complete the perfect day. After your amazing experience, head upstairs for a drink and dinner at Cielo, the gourmet dining restaurant at the Four Seasons. Not only do they offer absolutely incomparable food, they have one of the best views of the city and the Gateway Arch we experienced during our visit.

If you have another day or two in St. Louis, check into the [River City Casino and Hotel](#) for a little gambling experience before you head home. This luxury hotel and casino will provide the perfect venue for your goodbye to the city. Have dinner at the 1940 Steak House, have a few drinks, gamble a little, or take in a show at the 1,400 seating concert center.

Now you have truly experienced the best of what St. Louis, the Gateway to the West, has to offer!

Tell the world!

Tags