

Travel Time WITH CHASE & BUD | ST. LOUIS



Tiny 5-person capsules carry visitors inside The Arch all the way to the top where 7" x 27" windows provide a view. Clever lighting along the way and more lights and signage at the top reduce claustrophobia – a bit.

Bud and I normally favor the direct approach to and from our winter home in Florida. We follow I95 right along the coast, stopping only for food, doggie pee stops for our Standard Poodles Maggie and Millie, and two short nights of sleep.

But sometimes there's a compelling reason to deviate from this straight-arrow itinerary. This May, for example, we stopped for a week in St. Louis, Missouri. Not exactly on the way home to NH, but we had good reason. Dear friends and Florida "winter" neighbors, Kevin and Shirley Sparks had just bought a summer home there. St. Louis is Kevin's hometown and is still chock full of relatives and memories. "You gotta visit!" they said.

I am an East-coast/West-coast kind of gal, but the Sparks were persuasive. "St. Louis has a unique and yummy version of pizza, a great zoo, the original Budweiser brewery, the St. Louis Cardinals and don't forget The Gateway Arch," they crowed.



Bush Stadium is a centerpiece of downtown St. Louis, home to the St. Louis Cardinals and a huge draw for Cardinals fans.



The Budweiser Brewery visitor center features company history and (of course) an extensive gift shop.

They had us at pizza, of course. But it turns out they didn't oversell the city.

We planned our arrival around the May 15th game between the Cardinals and the SF Giants. The weather was perfect—bright sun and a light breeze. The crowd was perfect. Redbird Nation showed up early, gathering around the Stan Musial statue near the main gate, brimming with excitement and completely decked out in Cardinals gear. And the game was perfect—seemingly non-stop hits and leaping to our feet to cheer on the team. They won 15-6 and the celebratory mood spilled over into sports bars all over the city—we know, we went to one!

One of my "must do's" was to experience the tram ride to the top of The Gateway Arch, the 630' tall monument to the role that St. Louis played in the westward expansion of the US. This was not, however, on Bud's Bucket List—largely due to his lack of enthusiasm for tiny spaces with no windows and no exit doors. Still, he agreed and we arrived at the Gateway National Park ready to go! The park's movie "Monument to the Dream" detailing the spectacular construction was inspiring and sometimes jaw-dropping. Alas, they closed admission to the tram ride just as we were ready to board—no more seats available for the day. (I have rarely seen Bud smile so broadly!) Next time!



Meeting gentle and tolerant Phoenix, one of the Budweiser Clydesdales, was thrilling. He weighs almost a ton and has hooves the size of dinner plates, 4 times the size of racehorse's hooves.

Another of my must-dos was to visit the Budweiser Brewery and hopefully see the iconic Clydesdale horses. After all, St. Louis is the headquarters of Anheuser-Busch and the flagship Budweiser Brewery—opened in the 1850's. Among their many tours—from beer brewing to a behind the scenes look at the brewery, I found the Clydesdale VIP tour where we would get to actually hang out with the Clydesdales in the Stables, learn about their lifestyle, training regimens, and mannerisms and chat with one of the trainer/handlers. Pictures allowed! To top it off, we got free beer!



At 630 feet, the Arch is the tallest man-made monument in the US.

There's lots more to do, of course. We thoroughly enjoyed the zoo and our tours through local neighborhoods to see the distinctly non-New England architecture, and (of course) the St. Louis style pizza with its cracker-thin no-yeast crust—baked in round pizza pans but cut into squares instead of wedges. Why the squares? It's a mystery.

It may seem silly to say, "the next time you're passing through Missouri, stop in St. Louis," but I'll say it anyway. St. Louis doesn't disappoint.