

## Free Children Activities in St. Louis

St. Louis is one of the best cities in the country when it comes to free stuff to do. We're not talking about the small stuff you'll find in other cities, but major attractions. It doesn't matter if you've lived in St. Louis all your life or you're new to the area, these top attractions are worth a visit.

**[St. Louis Zoo](#)** (located at 1 Government Drive, just north of Highway 40 in Forest Park.)

Considered one of the top zoos in the country It's free! Home to more than 5000 animals, each visit to the Zoo can be a unique experience. Whether you're there to see the Penguins, or to welcome new baby elephants in the River's Edge, it's hard to beat a day at the Zoo. Although admission to the Zoo is free, some attractions like the Children's Zoo and Zooline Railroad have a small admission fee. Arrive during the first hour the zoo is open and you'll also get free admission the Children's Zoo!

The Zoo is open daily from 9 a. m. to 5 p.m., with extended hours in the summer.

<http://www.stlzoo.org>

**[The St. Louis Science Center](#)** (located at 5050 Oakland Avenue in Forest Park) [www.slsc.org](http://www.slsc.org)

The St. Louis Science Center is truly a hands-on experience for the whole family. You can test your knowledge of fossils and dinosaurs, clock the speed of cars on Highway 40 with a radar gun or experience what it's like to travel to outer space in the planetarium.

The Science Center is open Monday through Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission to the Science Center is free, but you must buy tickets to special exhibits and the OMNIMAX Theater. You don't even need to pay for parking if you enter on the planetarium side in [Forest Park](#).

**[The St. Louis Art Museum](#)** (Sits in Forest Park, just west of St. Louis Zoo)

<http://www.slam.org>

The St. Louis Art Museum has more than 30,000 paintings, drawings and sculptures and also boasts one of the world's top collections of 20th century German paintings. There are also free kid-friendly tours and activities on Sundays, and special free lectures and live music on some Friday nights. Save this one for older kids who will appreciate looking at the collection. The St. Louis Art Museum is open 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday. On Fridays, the museum is open until 9:00 p.m.

**[The Missouri History Museum](#)** (located at corner of Skinker and DeBaliviere in Forest Park)

More kid friendly than the art museum, you can sneak in a little education while having fun on this visit. The museum provides a look back at key events that shaped St. Louis through the centuries, with plenty of artifacts, exhibits and other stuff to capture your imagination.

General admission is free, though there is a fee for special exhibits. The museum is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., except on Tuesday when it stays open until 8:00 p.m.

<http://www.mohistory.org>

**[Citygarden](#)** (located along Market Street between 8th & 10th Streets in heart of Downtown St. Louis)

Citygarden is one of the newest attractions in Downtown St. Louis. It's a city park filled with fountains, wading pools, sculpture and more. It's a great place to do a little people-watching, take a walk or let the kids to play on a warm day. It is open daily from sunrise to 10 p.m. [www.citygardenstl.org](http://www.citygardenstl.org)

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**Missouri Botanical Garden:** Free to St. Louis City and County residents on Wednesday and Saturday before noon. Free admission includes the Children's Garden, an excellent play area just for kids.

[www.missouribotanicalgarden.org](http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org)

**Grant's Farm** (located at 10501 Gravois Road in South St. Louis County)

<http://www.grantsfarm.com>

Grant's Farm is another great place to see animals from around the world. The 281 acre farm in South St. Louis County is home to hundreds of animals, including the famous Budweiser Clydesdales. A tram ride takes you to the middle of the park. From there, it's easy to explore. Admission to Grant's Farm is free for everyone, but parking is \$11 per car. Grant's Farm is open on weekends in the spring and fall, and every day (except Monday) in the summer.

**World Bird Sanctuary** (located at 125 Bald Eagle Ridge Road in Valley Park)

A visit to the World Bird Sanctuary is your chance to get an up-close look at bald eagles, owls, falcons, vultures and more. The Sanctuary is also the place to learn more about the world's threatened bird species through a variety of seasonal shows, educational programs and special presentations. Admission and parking to the WBS are free.

<http://www.worldbirdsantuary.org>

The World Bird Sanctuary is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (except for Thanksgiving and Christmas).

**The Muny** (located at One Theatre Drive in Forest Park)

<http://www.muny.org>

The Municipal Opera is the nation's largest and oldest outdoor theater. Live performances at the Muny have been a summer tradition in Forest Park for nearly a century. Each year, the Muny stages seven musicals starting in mid-June and ending the first part of August.

For every performance, there are nearly 1500 free seats available at the back of the theater. They are available on a first come, first served basis. The free seat gates open at 7 p.m. Shows start at 8:15 p.m.

**Laumeier Sculpture Park** (outdoor art museum located at 12580 Rott Road in St. Louis County)

Visitors will find dozens of pieces of art spread out among the park's 105 acres. There are also indoor galleries, special exhibits and family events. Every year on Mother's Day weekend, Laumeier hosts a popular art fair. Laumeier Sculpture Park is open daily from 8 a.m. to sunset (except Christmas and the day before the art fair). Free guided tours are offered the first and third Sundays of each month from May to October. The one hour tours depart from the museum shop at 2 p.m.

<http://www.laumeiersculpturepark.org>

**Cahokia Mounds** (located at 30 Ramey Street in Collinsville, Illinois)

<http://www.cahokiamounds.org>

For a true look at history in the St. Louis area, there's Cahokia Mounds. This ancient archeological site was once home to the most advanced civilization north of Mexico. The U.N. has named Cahokia

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Mounds a World Heritage Site because of its role in early American history. Visitors can climb to the top of the mounds, take a guided tour or check out the exhibits in the Interpretive Center.

Cahokia Mounds also hosts special events like Kids' Day, Indian Market Days and Indian Art Shows. Admission is free, but there is a suggested donation of \$4 for adults and \$2 for children. Cahokia Mounds is open daily from May to October, and Wednesday through Sunday from November to April. I

**Cathedral Basilica** (located at 4431 Lindell Boulevard in St. Louis) [www.cathedralstl.org](http://www.cathedralstl.org)  
The Cathedral Basilica in the **Central West End** is more than just a church. It is the spiritual center of the St. Louis Archdiocese. It is also the home of the largest collection of mosaics in the world. It took nearly 80 years to install the more than 40 million mosaic glass pieces that adorn the inside of the church. Guided tours are offered Monday through Friday (by appointment) or on Sundays after noon mass.

Museum of Westward Expansion & Old Courthouse (located under the Gateway Arch)  
[www.nps.gov/jeff/planyourvisit/museum-of-westward-expansion.htm](http://www.nps.gov/jeff/planyourvisit/museum-of-westward-expansion.htm)  
While it does cost money to ride to the top of the Gateway Arch (\$10 adult, \$5 child), the Museum of Westward Expansion is located under the Arch is **FREE**. It features exhibits on Lewis & Clark and 19th century pioneers who moved America's borders westward. Just across the street from the Arch is another free attraction, the Old Courthouse. This historic building was the site of the famous Dred Scott slavery trial. Today, you can tour restored courtrooms and galleries.

It is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily, with expanded summer hours from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. The Old Courthouse is open daily from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., except Thanksgiving, Christmas & New Year's Day.

**National Great Rivers Museum** (located next to the Melvin Price Locks and Dam in Alton, Illinois)  
The Mississippi River has played a key role in the history of the St. Louis area. Visitors can learn all about the Mighty Mississippi and other rivers through the educational and interactive exhibits at the National Great Rivers Museum. <http://www.greatriverroad.com/cities/ealton/rivermuseum.htm>

It's open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The museum is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

**Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts** (located at 3716 Washington Boulevard in Grand Center)  
The Pulitzer Foundation is a place that celebrates art through exhibits, gallery talks, tours, concerts and other collaborative programs. It is free and open to the public on Wednesdays from noon to 5 p.m., and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
<http://www.pulitzerarts.org>

**Lone Elk Park** (Part of the St. Louis county park system)  
[www.stlouisco.com/ParksandRecreation/ParkPages/LoneElk](http://www.stlouisco.com/ParksandRecreation/ParkPages/LoneElk)  
Lone Elk Park sits on 546 acres near Interstate 44 in St. Louis. Visitors to the park can drive through and view elk, bison, deer and turkeys without leaving their cars. Other **activities** in the park include two hiking trails, picnic areas and the World Bird Sanctuary with bird and reptile exhibits. Both the driving tour and the World Bird Sanctuary are free and open to the public year-round.

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**Purina Farms:** Not exactly in St. Louis, but it's well worth the drive if you have small kids who love animals. Purina Farms offers a variety of free activities and events for kids. Kids can check out a real working farm and pet baby animals in the barn and play area. The Pet Center features a 20-foot-tall cat house where visitors can view the cats and dogs of Purina Farms play and interact. You'll need to call ahead to RSVP, and they aren't open on Mondays. Go early so you can avoid eating lunch at the concession stand—instead, why not pack a picnic and drive to the nearby [Shaw's Nature Reserve](#), just on the other side of Hwy 44. It's also free! <http://www.purinafarms.com/>

## NOT FREE but worth visiting

### **Magic House (\$8.75 per admission)**

[www.magichouse.org](http://www.magichouse.org)

Visit the region's first interactive children's museum, built in a sprawling Victorian mansion in suburban St. Louis. Kids will enjoy all sorts of fun and educational activities at the [Magic House](#), including sitting at the president's desk in a spot-on recreation of the Oval Office and performing patriotic karaoke. In a miniature town, kids can play grownup for a day as they change the tire on a wooden car, stock shelves in a model grocery store or serve pizza in a pretend kitchen. Visitors can even climb a three-story beanstalk, spin a giant kaleidoscope or perform a puppet show! Enjoy special events that include magical story time, free family nights and fitness first Fridays.

### **City Museum (\$12 per admission, \$10 after 5pm Friday and after 5pm Saturday)**

[www.citymuseum.org](http://www.citymuseum.org)

Explore the [City Museum's](#) unique all-ages playground filled with caves, slides and climbing apparatus made from recycled and found objects. Visitors can interact with over 10,000 sea creatures in the World Aquarium, venture through the Museum of Mirth, Mystery and Mayhem and wander through the Elmslie and Sullivan architectural exhibit. Stop in for circus-themed food, parties and educational circus classes and workshops held daily. Create your own masterpiece in Art City, take notes with the world's largest pencil and enjoy the view while grabbing a bite at The Roof Top Cantina.

### **Museum of Transportation (\$6 adults, \$4 children 5-12, Free-Children under 4)**

<http://transportmuseumassociation.org>

This is a must see if you have a youngster into transportation! A sizable collection of locomotives and railroad equipment. They have a miniature train you can ride, along with a trolley and a small fire truck.

The admission doesn't cover these, it's an extra fee. They also have LOTS of trains for you to look at as well as some cars and a boat and plane.

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Also visit: Visit [www.familyattractionscard.com](http://www.familyattractionscard.com) also where you can get coupons for attractions in St. Louis.

**Saint Louis Family Attraction Card:** This free card is available at most local grocery stores (any Dierbergs store, Shop n Save or Schnucks in customer service counter), and offers free or half price admission to area attractions such as the City Museum, the Magic House, Cardinals baseball games and the Saint Louis Children's Aquarium.