

Jefferson National Expansion Memorial

As you approach the city of St. Louis from either Chicago or San Antonio, you can start to catch glimpses of the Gateway Arch as you look towards the St. Louis skyline. This iconic landmark dominates this historic city on the banks of the Mississippi River. The “Arch” symbolizes St. Louis’ role in the westward expansion of the United States. It is the centerpiece of Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, a unit of the National Park Service. The park was established to commemorate the westward expansion, and also includes the “Old Courthouse” in which the slave, Dredd Scott, unsuccessfully sued for his freedom in 1847 and 1850.

Underground, and directly beneath the Arch, is the Museum of Westward Expansion which houses many exhibits and displays on Native Americans, Lewis and Clark, life in the west and clashes of cultures. There are various movies shown in museum theatres that highlight the construction of the Arch and the westward expansion. National Park Rangers can assist you with information about the museum and provide a variety of educational programs throughout the day, and museum shops have a wide range of educational materials for purchase.

Depending on which route your train approaches or leaves St. Louis, on the east side, or Illinois side of the Mississippi, you may be able to get a good view of the Arch and the “Old Courthouse”. The stainless steel Arch towers 630 feet above the western shore of the river. There are trams which, for a fee, can take you to the top of the Arch in about four minutes. Here, one can have a great view of the city, looking out at the states of Illinois and Missouri. For more information about Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, please see their web site at www.nps.gov/jeff

Source(s):

National Park Service. (n.d.). Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. Retrieved January 7, 2011 from <http://www.nps.gov/jeff/index.htm>

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