



MOONRISE HOTEL

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36 Hours in St. Louis

By DAN SALTZSTEIN | Published JUNE 18, 2010

ST. LOUIS is more than just a Gateway to the West. The famous arch, of course, is still there, along with plenty of 19th-century architecture and an eye-opening amount of green space. But St. Louis is a lively destination in its own right, full of inviting neighborhoods, some coming out of a long decline and revitalized by public art, varied night life and restaurants that draw on the bounty of surrounding farmland and rivers. Add to that a mix of Midwestern sensibility and Southern charm, and you've got a city looking to the future.

Friday

4 p.m. 1) STREET LIFE

See the city's evolution in action on Cherokee Street. Once known for their concentration of antiques shops (cherokeeantiquerow.net), the street's brick town houses are now also home to funky cafes and stores. Highlights include Apop Records (No. 2831; 314-664-6575; apoprecords.com), which carries an impressively eclectic selection of psych pop, punk, country and jazz records. The Mud House (No. 2101; 314-776-6599; themudhousestl.com) draws a young crowd with its excellent coffee. And PhD Gallery (No. 2300; 314-664-6644; phdstl.com) features nearly 2,000 square feet of space, with works from local and regional artists, including a just-opened photo exhibition, "Beyond XY," that explores male identity.

7 p.m. 2) SOULARD SOUL

The historic neighborhood of Soulard (pronounced SOO-lard) is one of those neighborhoods experiencing a renaissance, thanks in part to several quality restaurants. Franco (1535 South Eighth Street; 314-436-2500; eatatfranco.com), an industrial-chic bistro that opened in 2007 next to the famous Soulard farmers' market, serves soulful takes on French bistro fare, like country-fried frogs' legs in a red wine gravy (\$9) and grilled Missouri rainbow trout in a crayfish and Cognac cream sauce (\$22).

10 p.m. 3) ANALOG UNDERGROUND

Frederick's Music Lounge, a beloved dive bar, may be gone, but its legendary owner, Fred Boettcher Jr., aka Fred Friction, reemerged last year with a new club beneath the restaurant Iron Barley. Follow signs for "FSFU" -- Fred's Six Feet Under (5510 Virginia Avenue; 314-351-4500; www.ironbarley.com). Music venues don't get much more intimate; the band might take up a third of the total space. Drinks are cheap, and the tunes, courtesy of local bands like the Sins of the Pioneers, and their brand of New Orleans R&B, are as unpretentious as the crowd.



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Saturday

9 a.m. 4) CUPCAKES AND CANVASES

In the leafy neighborhood of Shaw, stately architecture mixes with hip spots like SweetArt (2203 South 39th Street; 314-771-4278; sweetartstl.com), a mom-and-pop bakery and art studio. Reine Bayoc (mom) makes the food, which features vegan ingredients like soy-based “facon” and “un-chicken.” Cbabi Bayoc (pop), whose colorful and playful artworks line the walls, paints in the studio in the back. Don’t leave without sampling Ms. Bayoc’s light-as-air cupcakes, which come in flavors like strawberry lemonade (\$1.95 each).

10:30 a.m. 5) PERSONAL LANDSCAPE

The neighborhood is named after Henry Shaw, a botanist and philanthropist whose crowning achievement is the Missouri Botanical Garden (4344 Shaw Boulevard; 314-577-5100; Founded in 1859, it is billed as the oldest continuously operating botanical garden in the nation. It covers an impressive 79 acres and includes a large Japanese garden and Mr. Shaw’s original 1850 estate home, as well as his (slightly creepy) mausoleum.

1 p.m. 6) TASTE OF MEMPHIS

St. Louis-style ribs are found on menus across the country, but it’s a Memphis-style joint (think slow-smoked meats, easy on the sauce) that seems to be the consensus favorite for barbecue in town. Just survey the best-of awards that decorate the walls at Pappy’s Smokehouse (3106 Olive Street; 314-535-4340; pappysmokehouse.com). Crowds line up for heaping plates of meat and sides, served in an unassuming space (while you wait, take a peek at the smoker parked out back on a side street). The ribs (\$12.99 for a half slab) and pulled pork (\$8.99 for a regular platter) are pretty good, but the winners might be the sides -- bright and tangy slaw and deep-fried corn on the cob (\$1.75 each).

2:30 p.m. 7) OUTSIDE ART

The new jewel of downtown St. Louis is Citygarden (citygardenstl.org), a sculpture park the city opened last summer, framed by the old courthouse on one side and the arch on the other. The oversize public art, by boldface names like Mark di Suvero and Keith Haring, are terrific, but the real genius of the garden’s layout is that it reflects the landscape of the St. Louis area: an arcing wall of local limestone, for instance, echoes the bends of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers.

4 p.m. 8) GREEN DAY

St. Louis boasts 105 city-run parks, but none rivals Forest Park (stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/parks/forestpark), which covers more than 1,200 acres smack in the heart of the city. It opened in 1876, but it was the 1904 World’s Fair that made it a world-class public space, spawning comely buildings like the Palace of Fine Art, which now houses the Saint Louis Art Museum. In 2002, a \$3.5 million renovation of the Jewel Box, a towering, contemporary-looking greenhouse dating back to 1936, gave it an extra sheen. Rent a bike from the visitor’s center (314-367-7275; weekends only, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; \$30 per person per day) and just meander.

8 p.m. 9) MIDWEST BOUNTY

Locavore fever has hit St. Louis. Leading the pack may be Local Harvest Cafe and Catering (3137 Morgan Ford



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Road; 314-772-8815; localharvestcafe.com), a mellow spot in the Tower Grove neighborhood that's a spinoff of an organic grocery store across the street. A chalkboard menu lists all the local products featured that day, including items like honey and peanut butter. On Saturday nights, Clara Moore, the chef, creates a four-course menu (\$48) based on what's fresh at the farms and markets that morning. The menu recently included a light vegetarian cassoulet, with beer pairings from local producers like Tin Mill Brewery.

10 p.m. 10) ROYALE TREATMENT

Tower Grove is also home to a handful of fine watering holes, including the Royale (3132 South Kingshighway; 314-772-3600; theroyale.com), where an Art Deco-style bar of blond wood and glass is accompanied by old photos of political leaders (John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., the late Missouri governor Mel Carnahan). But it's the extensive cocktail list, with drinks named after city neighborhoods like the Carondelet Sazerac (\$8), and a backyard patio that keep the aficionados coming.

Sunday

10 a.m. 11) THE HOME TEAM

Take a number for one of the small, worn wooden tables at Winslow's Home (7211 Delmar Boulevard; 314-725-7559; winslowshome.com). It's more than just a pleasant place for brunch; it doubles as a general store that carries groceries, dry goods and kitchen items like stainless steel olive oil dispensers (\$16). When it's time to order, try the brioche French toast with caramelized bananas (\$4). It's worth the wait.

Noon 12) ART CLASS

Washington University gets high marks for its academics. But the campus, with its rolling green hills and grand halls, is also home to terrific contemporary art. The Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum (1 Brookings Drive; 314-935-4523; kemperartmuseum.wustl.edu; free admission), designed by the Pritzker Prize-winning architect Fumihiko Maki, is charmingly cramped and vaguely organized by theme -- so you'll find a Jackson Pollock cheek by jowl with a 19th-century portrait of Daniel Boone. You'll also find ambitious contemporary art exhibitions curated by Wash U faculty. Like much of St. Louis, the Kemper may not be flashy, but it's full of gems.

IF YOU GO

American Airlines flies nonstop from La Guardia to Lambert International Airport in St. Louis. A recent online search found round-trip fares in July starting at about \$300. The city has a fairly extensive public transportation system (metrostlouis.org), though a car is recommended for more out-of-the-way destinations.

Part of the rejuvenated Delmar Loop, the Moonrise Hotel (6177 Delmar Boulevard; 314-721-1111; moonrisehotel.com) offers a pleasant boutique vibe and a central location. Service is friendly, rooms are comfortable, and parking is plentiful. There's also a restaurant, Eclipse, and a rooftop bar. Standard rooms start at about \$170.

The Four Seasons in downtown St. Louis (999 North 2nd Street; 314-881-5800; fourseasons.com/stlouis) opened in 2008, part of a striking riverside complex that also includes the Lumière Place casino and hotel. Standard rooms start at \$280; expect to pay more for views of the arch.

Read more: <http://travel.nytimes.com/2010/06/27/travel/27hours.html#>