

Printable Teaching Guide Virtual Field Trip – St. Louis

Objectives

Students will:

- Learn about historic sites in St. Louis.
- Discuss why St. Louis is called the “Gateway to the West.”
- Create a travel advertisement about one of the following: Museum of Westward Expansion, Gateway Arch, or Old Courthouse.

Brief Description of Internet Site

The *Jefferson National Expansion Memorial* website is a tribute to the spirit of the nation’s pioneers. It features information and photographs on many historic sites throughout St. Louis.

Build Background

- Explain to students that St. Louis is located on the western bank of the Mississippi River, south of where the Missouri River joins it. As a major highway from the earliest days of settlement, the river has been important to the city’s history. Ask: *How has the Mississippi River been important to the history of St. Louis?* (Steamboat travel on the Mississippi began in 1817. Soon, St. Louis was a busy port city. St. Louis became the largest U.S. city west of Pittsburgh by the 1850s, and its port traffic was second only to New York City.)
- Tell students that the Museum of Westward Expansion is located underneath the Gateway Arch. It houses a variety of artifacts from the time of Lewis and Clark. Ask: *What can visitors to the museum expect to learn about?* (Visitors to the museum can learn the true stories of western pioneers who made their way through Missouri.)
- Tell students that the Gateway Arch was designed by the famous architect Eero Saarinen. Visitors can ride to the top of the 630-foot structure. The arch marks St. Louis as the “Gateway to the West.” Ask: *Why is St. Louis called the “Gateway to the West?”* (It was an important stop to pioneer’s traveling west.)
- Tell students that some of our country’s most important legal cases were tried at the Old Courthouse. Ask: *What can visitors to the Old Courthouse expect to find?* (Today the Old Courthouse is a museum. Visitors can explore the restored courtrooms and see the exhibits of famous trials that took place there.)

Teach

What to do:

- Connect to: <http://www.nps.gov/jeff/index.html>
- Select the Museum of Westward Expansion icon. Read about the museum and take the interactive museum tour. Ask: *Why did Thomas Jefferson enter into negotiations with France to buy the Louisiana Territory?* (Jefferson believed that if France owned the Louisiana Territory the United States would not be able to trade as freely along the Mississippi River.)
- Select the Gateway Arch icon. Read about the arch by clicking the tabs on the left side of the page. Be sure students view the photo gallery. Ask: *How tall is the Gateway Arch?* (630 ft.)

- Select the Old Courthouse icon. Read about the courthouse by clicking the tabs on the left side of the page. Be sure students view the photo gallery. Ask: *Can you name a historically important court case that was held in the Old Courthouse?* (Dred Scot case, 1847)

Close

- Have students discuss what they learned during the virtual field trip.
- Have students create a travel advertisement individually or in groups. Then have students present their advertisements to the class.