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Moving to St. Louis

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Introduction

Welcome to the peculiar world of St. Louis, where the toasted ravioli flows like wine and the local pride is as tall as the Gateway Arch. In this book, we're rolling up our sleeves and diving headfirst into the nitty-gritty of making St. Louis your stomping ground. Forget what you know about generic moving guides—we're talking specifics with a dash of humor, a sprinkle of local flavor, and a whole lot of practical know-how.

St. Louis isn't just any city; it's a vibrant tapestry of history, culture, and Midwestern charm, all wrapped up along the banks of the Mississippi River. From its diverse neighborhoods to its fervent sports culture, St. Louis has a personality of its own. This isn't a place you simply move to; it's a place you become a part of. Whether you're here for the gooey butter cake or the burgeoning biotech scene, St. Louis offers something unique for every new resident.

Before you mark this book as your one-size-fits-all manual, let me remind you that laws, taxes, and the general order of things can— and frequently do—change. Consider this your invitation to further explore official government resources and trusted local websites to stay updated on regulations that can affect your new life here in St. Louis. Think of it as a scavenger hunt with significantly more rewarding prizes than just a postcard view of the Arch.

Everyone knows moving can be stressful, which is precisely why we've added a healthy dose of humor and a touch of lightheartedness to these pages. Your relocation doesn't have to be all CrossFit training and spreadsheets. Let's enjoy the quirks and idiosyncrasies of one of America's most fascinating cities along the way.

So, go ahead and throw those packing peanuts in the air like confetti. You're not just moving to a new city, you're embarking on an exciting adventure. The adventure of calling St. Louis home. From us to you, here's to starting your next chapter in a place that takes itself seriously yet knows how to have fun. Happy moving!

CHAPTER ONE: Leaving the Old Homestead: Packing and Planning

Alright, let's talk about the elephant in the room, which, if you haven't started packing yet, might literally be an elephant figurine you can't decide whether to keep or donate. The phase before the actual move – the planning, the purging, the packing – often feels like wading through molasses wearing concrete boots. It's the necessary evil before you get to the fun part: discovering why St. Louisans put cheese that confuses outsiders on their pizza (it's Provel, and you'll form an opinion eventually, trust us). This chapter is your slightly sarcastic, mostly practical guide to wrestling your current life into boxes and pointing them towards the Gateway Arch.

First things first: timing. When are you actually planning this great migration? While your job start date or lease end date might dictate the schedule, if you have any flexibility, listen closely. St. Louis summers are legendary, and not always in a good way. Think air thick enough to swim through, temperatures that make asphalt shimmer, and humidity that instantly turns your carefully styled hair into something resembling a science experiment. Moving heavy furniture in July or August is basically volunteering for a sauna session combined with extreme weightlifting. Conversely, St. Louis winters can be deceptively cold and occasionally throw an ice storm into the mix, turning roads and sidewalks into treacherous skating rinks perfectly designed to trip up movers carrying your antique china.

If you can swing it, spring (April-May) and fall (September-October) are the golden tickets for moving to St. Louis. The weather is generally milder, the foliage is either blooming or putting on a spectacular autumn show, and the risk of weather-related moving disasters decreases significantly. That's not to say you *can't* move in the height of summer or the dead of winter – people do it all the time. Just be prepared. Hydrate like a marathon runner in August, and invest in some serious ice melt and caution if you're unloading in January. Also, be mindful of major city events. Trying to navigate a moving truck downtown during a Cardinals playoff run, the weekend of the Great Forest Park Balloon Glow, or anywhere near Soulard in the weeks leading up to Mardi Gras requires a level of patience usually reserved for saints or people assembling IKEA furniture. Check the city's event calendar; blissful ignorance won't help when you're stuck behind a parade float.

Now, before you even think about buying bubble wrap, let's discuss the Great Purge. Moving is the universe's way of forcing you to confront the sheer volume of stuff you've accumulated. This is not the time for sentimentality over that T-shirt from a concert you barely remember or the broken lamp you swore you'd fix five years ago.

Be ruthless. Why? Because St. Louis, particularly in the city proper, boasts a fantastic collection of historic homes and apartments in neighborhoods like Soulard, Benton Park, Lafayette Square, and the Central West End. These places ooze character, charm, and architectural detail. What they often lack is sprawling, modern storage space. Think narrow staircases, potentially smaller rooms, and maybe a basement that looks charmingly 'vintage' (read: slightly damp and spooky).

Even if you're heading to the more spacious environs of St. Louis County suburbs like Kirkwood, Webster Groves, or Chesterfield, do you *really* want to pay movers (or bribe friends with pizza and beer) to transport items you haven't touched since the last move? Consider the diverse housing stock: a sleek downtown loft has different spatial realities than a stately Clayton colonial or a tidy brick bungalow on The Hill. Less stuff equals a simpler move, easier unpacking, and more room in your new St. Louis digs for important things, like a dedicated spot for trying out local craft beers. So, channel your inner minimalist, make some cash selling unwanted items online, or feel virtuous by donating generously. Your future self, unpacking in your new St. Louis home, will thank you.

Okay, the purge is complete (or at least, you've hidden the 'maybe' pile in the garage). It's time to pack. Oh, the joys of wrapping fragile items like ancient artifacts and trying to guess what size box your collection of novelty mugs requires. The basic rules apply: heavy stuff in small boxes, light stuff in big boxes, label everything with its destination room *and* a general description of contents. Future You doesn't want to open twelve boxes marked "Kitchen Stuff" searching for the coffee maker on that first desperate morning. But let's add a St. Louis spin.

Think about the climate you're arriving in. If it's summer, make sure shorts, breathable clothing, and maybe a fan are easily accessible. If it's winter, pack coats, gloves, hats, and boots where you can get to them quickly. St. Louis weather can change on a dime, so having layers readily available isn't a bad idea, regardless of the season. Consider the type of dwelling again. Moving into a third-floor walk-up in the city? Maybe pack books in multiple smaller boxes rather than one hernia-inducing crate. Will you have immediate access to laundry? Pack enough clothes for a week or two, just in case.

Crucially, assemble a "First 24-48 Hours in St. Louis" essentials box or suitcase. This travels with you, not the movers. Think toiletries, medications, phone chargers, basic tools (screwdriver, box cutter, wrench), coffee maker and supplies (vital!), important documents, pet food if applicable, snacks, maybe even a roll of toilet paper and some paper towels. Picture yourself exhausted, standing in an empty apartment or house after a long journey. What do you absolutely need before the mountain of boxes can be tackled? Pack that. And maybe throw in the contact info for a reliable St. Louis-style pizza joint - you're going to need it.

Next up: choosing your chariot. How is all this meticulously packed (or hastily thrown-

together) stuff getting to Missouri? You've got options, ranging from the full DIY approach (renting a truck and questioning all your life choices on I-70) to container services (they drop off a pod, you load it, they ship it) to full-service movers who handle everything from packing your fine china to placating your stressed-out cat. There's no single right answer; it depends on your budget, timeline, distance, and tolerance for heavy lifting.

If you go the DIY route, remember that driving a lumbering moving truck is very different from driving your sedan. Factor in lower speeds, wider turns, potential difficulties navigating tighter city streets (especially in older neighborhoods), and the unique thrill of finding gas stations with enough clearance. If coming from Illinois, be aware of bridge tolls crossing the Mississippi. Research your route beforehand.

If you opt for container services (like PODS, U-Pack, etc.), ensure you have a legal place to park the container for loading and unloading, adhering to local regulations at both ends. In some dense St. Louis neighborhoods, finding street space might require permits or strategic timing.

Hiring full-service movers? This is often the least physically demanding but most expensive option. Do your homework. Get multiple in-home estimates (binding estimates are usually best), check their U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) number, read reviews, understand their insurance coverage (and consider supplemental insurance), and ask about their experience with moves to *St. Louis*. A company familiar with the region might navigate logistics more smoothly. Book well in advance, especially during peak season (summer!), as good movers get snapped up quickly. If you're doing a long-distance DIY move but want help unloading in St. Louis, research local labor-only services ahead of time. Don't just rely on finding day laborers on arrival – plan for reliable help.

While your worldly possessions are being sorted, let's talk paperwork. The glamour never ends, does it? Before you seal that box labeled "Important Docs - DO NOT LOSE," actually retrieve the vital papers you'll need soon after landing in St. Louis. We'll cover the specifics of Missouri registration and licenses in Chapter 19, but you can't start those processes without the right ammunition. Gather birth certificates, social security cards, passports, marriage certificates, divorce decrees, and any name change documentation. For vehicles, locate the titles and proof of current insurance; Missouri will want to see those. If you have children, get copies of their school transcripts and immunization records. Same goes for pets – round up their vaccination history from your vet.

Think about medical records too. While electronic records are more common, having a summary from your current doctor, dentist, and any specialists can ease the transition to St. Louis healthcare providers (covered in Chapter 14). Make digital copies or scans of everything as a backup, storing them securely in the cloud or on a separate hard

drive. Keep the physical copies with you during the move, not packed away in Box #87 somewhere in the moving truck. This isn't paranoia; it's just smart planning to avoid bureaucratic headaches later.

With documents corralled and movers (or your own grit) secured, it's time to chart your course. If you're driving, map your route. St. Louis is conveniently located at the confluence of several major interstates: I-70 (east-west), I-55 (north-south), I-64 (east-west, also confusingly called Highway 40 by locals), and I-44 (northeast-southwest). Outside the city, I-270 and I-255 form a loop. Depending on where you're coming from, you'll likely funnel onto one of these arteries. Consider drive time, potential construction delays (Missouri loves its orange barrels), and overnight stops if it's a multi-day trek. If you're piloting a large moving truck, double-check your route for any low clearances or bridge weight restrictions, especially as you get closer to the city. Some GPS apps have truck-specific routing options. If you're flying into St. Louis Lambert International Airport (STL), arrange your ground transportation in advance, whether it's a rental car, ride-share, or MetroLink light rail (which conveniently connects the airport to various points including Clayton, the Central West End, and Downtown).

As departure day looms, it's time to systematically sever ties with your old location. Contact your utility companies (electricity, gas, water, sewer, trash) and schedule termination of services *the day after* you move out - you don't want the power cut while the movers are still there. Cancel or transfer other local services like internet, cable, phone, newspaper delivery, gym memberships, and any local club affiliations. Submit a change of address form with the U.S. Postal Service, ideally a couple of weeks in advance. You can do this online. This ensures your mail gets forwarded to your new St. Louis address (or a temporary one if needed). Start updating your address directly with banks, credit card companies, subscription services, employers, financial institutions, and anyone else who sends you important mail or bills. It's tedious, but way better than having sensitive documents floating around your old neighborhood. Don't forget online shopping accounts!

Notify your bank and credit card companies about your move, especially if traveling across state lines. A sudden flurry of charges in Missouri might trigger fraud alerts if they aren't expecting it. Confirm your moving dates and details with your moving company or truck rental agency one last time. Make arrangements for child or pet care on moving day itself if needed - the chaos can be stressful for little ones and furry friends.

Let's touch briefly on budgeting for the exodus itself. This isn't about the overall cost of living in St. Louis (that's Chapter 3), but the specific expenses tied to the physical act of relocating. Tally up the costs: movers or truck rental, packing supplies (boxes, tape, bubble wrap add up!), fuel if driving, lodging and food during transit, potential vehicle shipping costs, initial deposits for your new St. Louis residence (if renting), and

maybe a buffer for unexpected snafus (like needing a locksmith upon arrival because the keys were packed in Box #104). While St. Louis is generally known for its affordability, the move itself still costs money. Having a realistic budget helps avoid sticker shock and ensures you have funds available for those immediate arrival necessities – like that first celebratory Imo's pizza and toasted ravioli feast.

Finally, as you stand amidst the taped-up boxes and echoey rooms, run through a final checklist. Did you empty the fridge and freezer? Defrost it? Turn off the main water valve if required? Do a final walkthrough of every closet, cupboard, attic, basement, and shed? Leave the premises clean according to your lease or sales agreement? Pack that "First Night" box? Drop off the old keys? Say goodbye to your neighbors (even the weird one)? Take a deep breath.

Leaving a place behind, whether loved or loathed, is a significant step. You've navigated the logistical labyrinth of packing, planning, and purging. You've gathered your documents, booked your transport, and pointed yourself towards the Mississippi River. The hardest part of the *leaving* process is likely behind you. Now, the adventure shifts gears. It's time to hit the road, rails, or airways and prepare for your arrival in the Gateway City. The next chapter awaits, literally and figuratively.

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