

Top five things St. Louisans would do if they had to leave town forever

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Trees turn scarlet on the Gateway Arch grounds in the early morning at the beginning of November. Photojournalist: Tom Herman

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By Frank Cusumano

KSDK -- Here's a question to ponder: if you had to move from St. Louis, and you could never return, what would you want to experience one more time?

That's the question we put to viewers a few weeks ago on ksdk.com. Over 100 people answered our question via email on our website, and we read every one of them.

One word clearly described what St. Louisans love about their home town: tradition. The things people did growing up were the things they would want to enjoy one more time.

Number 5: Ted Drewes

Come on, you knew it was going to be somewhere in this story. At KSDK, nothing screams St. Louis tradition than a summer night at Ted Drewes.

In 1999, while on assignment for "Show Me St. Louis," NewsChannel 5's Dan Buck met St. Louisan Harold Goldberg. Goldberg summarized what Ted Drewes was all about. His feelings were equally representative today.

"This is what makes it," said Goldberg, amid a crowd standing and sitting along the parking lot of the Ted Drewes property on Chippewa. "This crowd, when they get together and sit on the fantails of wagons or on the cars or walk around together, it's typical of a good social crowd of St. Louis."

From traditional taste, to Ted's own concoctions, with a flavor list so big, and stomach room so small, summer has been a daily dilemma at Drewes. For seven decades families have come to this igloo stand for heavenly sweet treats.

Number 5.1

For Jim Whitlock of Florissant, the last St. Louis dessert he'd want to enjoy is from a small donut shop on New Florissant Road.

"I'd say arguably it's the best donut in the world," said Whitlock. The donut he loves is a chocolate, cream-filled donut from the Old Town Donut Shop.

"It's got a little bit of everything. It's a donut. It's got chocolate, vanilla cream filling. It's awesome," he said.

Number 4: Anywhere on the Hill

Okay, so we love our desserts, but we also love our appetizers. Especially on "The Hill," which, at number 4, is where those we sampled said they want to sample their last plate full of toasted ravioli. No destination emerged. Our viewers just want them from that slice of Italy in St. Louis.

Number 4.1

But Ron Merry of St. Charles had a much different culinary request. For his final meal, or meals, Merry wants two things.

"I'll take a corn dog from Woofie's in Overland and single Chuck with cheese from Chuck-a-Burger in St. Charles," Merry said.

Woofies, the legendary hot dog stand on Woodson Road, or "Woofson Road" as the mock street sign out front proudly displays, has been serving up dogs of all kinds since 1977. But Merry likes his hotdogs simple. The corndog serves more like an appetizer for what's to come.

"The single Chuck with cheese is really just a great hamburger," said Merry.

But the atmosphere inside the 50's style diner isn't hurting either. It just feels like the kind of place you'd expect to get a great burger.

Number 4.2

Also high on the list for a St. Louis last meal, a final square slice of an Imo's pizza, a last milk shake from either the Olivette Diner or the City Diner on South Grand, and a final breakfast from either Uncle Bill's or Chris' Pancake House.

Also garnering several viewer mentions was the Crown Candy Kitchen. This place has been cranking out to-die-for treats for years, as well as excellent lunches inside an old time atmosphere.

Number 3: The Gateway Arch

Its image is synonymous with this city. It comes in at number three. Twenty-five percent of you would visit the Gateway Arch one last time. We love the top of the Arch, but not just for the view, but because of the pride the structure has given us the last 40 years.

The Arch, according to many responses, has been the defining symbol of our city and one that many family traditions were based.

Number 3.1

What other local institutions do St. Louisans say they would go to spend one last day? The top choices included the Anheuser Busch (InBev) Brewery tour, a show at the Fox or the Muny, Grants Farm, the St. Louis Art Museum, the St. Louis Science Center and the City Museum.

Number 2: The Saint Louis Zoo

It was close, but of all the main attractions St. Louis has to offer, more of you wanted to visit the St. Louis Zoo one last time.

Nearly every major U.S. city has a zoo, but few are as engrained in the local psyche as ours. Perhaps it's the World's Fair era buildings, or maybe it's the animals, or maybe it's the price. But no matter the reasons, as one viewer who wrote in said, it's "the crown jewel" of St. Louis.

Number 1: The St. Louis Cardinals

When it comes to your number one wish in what you'd do before leaving town forever, it wasn't even close. Nearly 50 percent of you said attending one more Cardinals game was a must. But you said it could not be just any Cardinals game, it had to be a game against the arch rival Chicago Cubs.

"If you're going to get one last taste of St. Louis you got to go to a Cardinal game, and the Cardinals-Cubs is sort of the ultimate game for Cardinal fans," said team president Bill DeWitt, III. "I'd say thanks for thinking of the Cardinals in a poll that you can choose anything in St. Louis, I would also tell them that we're going to do our best to make sure that that's always something you would say."

Complete listing by how many times each selection was mentioned in all submissions:

Cubs vs. Cardinals game - **48%**
St. Louis Zoo - **37%**
Ted Drewes - **26%**
Go up Arch one more time - **24%**
Forest Park - **20%**
Visit and Eat Toasted Ravioli on the Hill - **18%**
See a show at the Fox - **11%**
Imos pizza - **9.5%**
Botanical Garden - **9.5%**
Show at the Muny - **8.5%**
Anheuser Busch Brewery Tour - **8%**
See a Blues Game - **7%**
Visit Augusta Wineries - **7%**
Grant's Farm - **7%**
Main Street St. Charles - **6%**
Crown Candy Kitchen - **6%**
Blueberry Hill - **6%**
Great Balloon Race - **6%**
Haunted Lemp Brewery Tour - **5%**
City Museum - **5%**

4%

Drive the Great River Road
Gus' Pretzels
Sledding down Art Hill on a snow day
St. Louis Science Center
Forest Park Boathouse
Soulard bars and restaurants
St. Louis Art Museum

3%

Missouri History Museum
Tony's
St. Patrick's Day Parade
Rams game
Fourth of July on the riverfront
The Magic House
The Loop
Beer and Bocci Ball at Milos

2%

Experience caverns under St. Louis
Tilles Park at Christmas
Dinner at Rigazzis
Big Bang Piano Bar on Landing
Boat ride on Mississippi
Jefferson Barracks
Fast Eddie's
Helicopter / Balloon ride over my home town
Lone Elk Park
Hodak's Chicken
Shop Central West End
Fritz Custard
Cahokia Mounds
Carousel & Butterfly house.

1%

Pizza at Black Thorn
Soda Fountain Square
Show at the Black Repertory Theater
Visit Memorial Park Cemetary
Lambert Airport
Jewel Box
Visit Soulard Market
Visit Seven Falls in Forest Park
Metro bus ride to downtown at Christmas time
Merb's Chocolates
Drive into St. Louis from the East
Eat a pork steak
Drive back roads to Hannibal, Missouri
One last concert at the Pagaent
Golf at Forest Park
Playing darts at Hill Top Inn
One more visit to Lion's Choice
Visit my high school
Protzel's for corned beef
The Old Spaghetti Factory for dinner
Toasted Ravioli at the real Rich and Charlies
One last visit to McGurks
Pirrones' Pizzeria in Florissant
Visit to rural Illinois
Bicycle on the paved routes in Madison County
Eat at Moxie Bistro and sit outside
Play 18 holes at Annbriar Golf Course
The Melting Pot
Have an all day Spa treatment at Studio Branca
King and I restaurant
Shopping at Vivianos on "The Hill"
Ride on Screaming Eagle
Festival of Nations in Tower Grove Park
Babler State Park
Joe's Cafe
Fishing at Klondike Park
One last stroll through South Grand
Sit at City Hospital and thank God
One last visit to Solider's Memorial
Citizen Kane's
Schlafley's Brewery
"Just Sue's" in Edwardsville for pizza
Papa Vito's in Waterloo for best roast beef
Get Chocolate Covered Cream Filled from Old Town Donuts in Florissant
Skeet shooting at Busch Wildlife
Jazz Concert At Touhill
Comdog at Woofies Hotdogs
Single Chuck at Chuck-A-Burger.
Museum of Transport
Wabash Frisco Rail road
Cunnetto's
Powder Valley Nature Center
Wax Museum on landing
Cherokee Antiquing
Back roads of Hermann, Missouri
Downtown Charlie Gittos
Breakfast at Uncle Bills
Lunch at South City Diner
Shake at Olivette Diner
Shaner at Seamus McDaniel's
Laumeire Sculpture Park
Visit Children's hospital and become a volunteer
Tower Grove Park

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