



# Show me the the city— on a SEGWAY

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When pigs fly. That's the likelihood of getting my too cool, digitally-enhanced, text-messaging teenager interested in a tour of the art and architecture of Kansas City's magnificent Country Club Plaza.

So how is it on a pleasant summer afternoon a few weeks ago, my family was tooling around the Plaza, a smile on my son's face as he high-fived his friends and actually listened to our guide tell about the numerous fountains, sculptures and tiled murals that distinguishes the Plaza as one of the world's most intriguing shopping districts?

Segways.

Not only are Segways the answer to parental prayers when traveling with teenagers around the world, but they are also a lot of fun for people of all ages, and they're a great way to see some of Missouri's great sites.

If you are not familiar with this 21st century mode of transportation, a Segway is a two-wheeled, self-balancing personal transportation device. It moves quietly along at speeds of up to 12 mph and gets you to your destination without wear and tear on your knees, hips and ankles.

First manufactured in March 2002 as a zero-emission form of human transportation designed to help people with mobility issues, Segways caught on quickly with law enforcement, postal employees and other industries that require people to be on their feet and in motion much of the day. You might have seen them at events such as The Super Bowl and the Olympics.

Today, there are about 170 Segway touring companies around the world, and three of them are located in Missouri.

The Segway Experience of Kansas City opened in July 2004 and was the first Segway dealer and tour operator in the state.

The company offers three tours: An Urban Journey, which covers the area around Union Station, Crown Center and the Liberty Memorial; the Plaza Art and Architecture Tour; and a Segway Safari at the Kansas City Zoo.

"The zoo tours have really gone crazy because the zoo is such an open space and seeing it on a Segway adds another level of excitement to seeing the animals," says Katie Morhfeld, director of operations.

According to Missouri law, Segway riders must be at least 16 years old to operate on a city street, but because the zoo is private property,



(ABOVE) Visitors to Kansas City can tour the famous Country Club Plaza through a service offered by The Segway Experience of Kansas City. (RIGHT) The Segway was first introduced in March 2002 as a zero-emission form of human transportation. The vehicles move quietly at speeds up to 12 mph.

children as young as 12 can ride a Segway. But Mohrfeld and her guide, Melissa Graham, have had riders in their 80s as well.

"It's not an age thing at all," Mohrfeld explains. "It's people who are adventurous and active and looking for a fun, new way to do things."

Kansas City Segway tours operate all year long, except when ice and snow cover the walkways. The holiday Plaza Lights Tour has become increasingly popular, as are tours during the First Friday art walks in the Crossroads Arts District. Rates range from \$40 to \$70 per person for 60 and 90 minute tours. Call 816-531-0600 or visit [www.segwayexperience.com](http://www.segwayexperience.com).

In Branson, pharmacist Mike Stuart was first interested in the mobility potential for some of his patients with bad hips and knees. Soon after checking into it and visiting the Segway plant in Bedford, New Hampshire, Stuart found himself the owner of Segway of Southern Missouri.

A number of legal technicalities prohibit the sale of Segways in his pharmacies, so Stuart bought a few acres just off the Branson strip on Highway 165 near the Titanic Museum. There he built a 1.5-acre track that crisscrosses up and down hills and around obstacles, somewhat like a go-cart track. It's the only course in the country specifically designed for Segways.

"If you don't get on it, touch it and feel it, you just don't get what a Segway is all about," Stuart says. "Once you try it, you'll be addicted and want to do it again and again."

After a 15-minute training session, guests can buy time on the track in roughly 20-minute increments at \$20 a pop. Call 417-336-2744 or visit [www.bransonsegway.com](http://www.bransonsegway.com).

Segway Tours in St. Louis are operated through the Science Center and provide considerably more training than do the Kansas City or Branson experience. For \$20, you can enroll in Segway 101, which includes a training film and about 15 minutes of riding time. This is good for people who are not sure they want to invest more money in a longer ride or think they might not physically be able to do it. You also receive a laminated souvenir Segway driver's license with your picture on it.

With that under your belt, you're then ready to go for a Behind the Scenes tour of the Science Center in the Explorer Dome. Tours also head outside and across the walking bridge that crosses Highway 64/40 to the Planetarium. Throughout the tours, the science of the Segway is discussed in relation to the exhibits on hand.

Just recently, the Science Center partnered with the St. Peters Parks and Recreation Department to offer three-hour Segway tours along that city's bike paths. Similar plans are underway to take the tour across the river to the city of Alton.

To check in with the St. Louis Science Center



**(ABOVE)** Segways provide an excellent way to tour open spaces, such as the zoo in Kansas City. **(RIGHT)** Show-Me Missouri writer Diana Lambdin Meyer shows just how easy it is to operate the unique vehicles. **(BELOW)** A St. Louis group visits downtown sites aboard their segways.





**(ABOVE)** One Kansas City segway tour covers the area around Union Station, Crown Center and Liberty Memorial. **(LEFT)** Segway tours in St. Louis are offered by the St. Louis Science Center, which offers a Segway 101 course for new operators.



call, 800-456-7572 or visit [www.slsc.org](http://www.slsc.org). Click on What To Do, then Special Programs, then Segway Tours for the schedule.

A Segway moves forward and backward based on the slightest shift of your weight on your feet. You want to go faster, just lean forward a little more. You want to stop, just straighten up. You want to go backwards, shift your weight to your heels.

If you've ridden motorcycles or scooters with the acceleration on the right hand, you'll appreciate that Segway designer Dean Kamen intentionally placed the steering on the left hand of a Segway PT. Newer models simply allow you to steer based on leaning to the left or right.

Segways are capable of moving at three speeds—black, yellow and red. Your

guide will advance you to the faster speed when he/she feels you have mastered the lower speed.

Be prepared for a little tingling, numbness or stiffness in your legs and feet at the beginning. Although a very slight workout, your calf, ankle and feet muscles will feel the strain of managing a Segway. Simply lift your feet and shake out the tingling—then zoom on down the road.

Missouri law and common sense requires that you wear a helmet. Although it might look a little goofy, the hip-and-cool factor of riding a Segway will overpower any dorky stigmatism. I'm a 40-something female with a reputation for tripping over my own feet, so if I can do it, you can, too.

*Diana Lambdin Meyer is a regular contributor to Show-Me Missouri.*