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# 10 great places to savor the wild blue yonder

Fasten your seat belt and soar back in time to celebrate National Aviation Day on August 19. From early stick-and-canvas constructions to the Saturn V's 7.5 million pounds of thrust, the exhibits at aviation museums are over the top. **Pat Trenner**, a pilot and senior editor at *Air and Space* magazine, shares her favorites with **Kathy Baruffi** for USA TODAY.

## Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome

Rhinebeck, N.Y.

Some people plan their vacations around the Aerodrome's 20-minute open-cockpit biplane tours above the lush Hudson Valley. They also come for the vast collection of early airplanes and to watch air shows. "Every weekend from June to October, Old Rhinebeck re-creates a delightfully corny World War I air battle, complete with a damsel in distress, a slightly smudged white knight and period autos and motorcycles," Trenner says. 845-752-3200; oldrhinebeck.org

## Fantasy of Flight Museum

Polk City, Fla.

Veterans get VIP treatment here; requests to sit in the cockpit again are granted whenever possible. It's "a classy presentation of the history of flight, civil and military, through the 1950s," Trenner says. There's a portly Grumman Duck, a Spirit of St. Louis replica and a Bell 47G helicopter. "Buy a hot-air-balloon ride for dessert," Trenner suggests. 863-984-3500; fantasyofflight.com



Mike Tsukamoto, USA TODAY

**Air history:** Visitors to the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center outside Washington, D.C., can take in an Air France Concorde in the main hangar.

## EAA Airventure Museum

Oskosh, Wis.

"The Experimental Aircraft Association has a huge group of 'homebuilders' — pilots who eschew the conventional and choose to build their own craft, from scratch or from a partially prebuilt kit," Trenner says. The family-friendly museum holds 250 eclectic aircraft, including 2004's SpaceShipOne, the first privately financed manned spaceflight. 920-426-4818; airventuremuseum.org

## Flying Heritage Collection

Arlington, Wash.

"Gazillionaire Paul Allen has collected 20th-century military aircraft and

restored them to pristine condition using only original materials." A number are flown regularly for visitors, including a North American P-51 Mustang and "a Curtiss Jenny from the barnstorming era." Oral histories from those who flew the aircraft give visitors the story behind the planes. 360-435-2172; flyingheritage.com

## National Museum of the United States Air Force

Dayton, Ohio

The collection of Air Force Ones is a big draw here. Visitors can board and "see the desks and beds in FDR, Truman, Eisenhower and JFK presidential planes," Trenner says. Plus, there's "an A-to-Z collection of international airpower," from early balloons to modern-day craft. 937-255-4704; www.nationalmuseum.af.mil

## Evergreen Aviation Museum

McMinnville, Ore.

"This is the final resting space of Howard Hughes' behemoth flying boat," Trenner says. Hughes "loathed the 'Spruce Goose' nickname bestowed by the press; it was constructed of birch." 503-434-4180; sprucegoose.org

## National Air and Space Museum

Washington, D.C.

Billed as the world's most-visited museum, it's on the Mall and in the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy annex near Dulles airport outside Washington, and it's "a no-kidding must-see," Trenner says. "Touch a moon rock, see Charles Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis, Chuck Yeager's Bell X-1 that

broke the sound barrier in 1947 and — holiest of holies — the Wright Brothers' Flyer that started it all in 1903." At the annex, enter a mock control tower; also, you'll also see the Enola Gay and the space shuttle Enterprise. 202-633-1000; [www.nasm.si.edu](http://www.nasm.si.edu)

**Kennedy Space Center  
Apollo/Saturn V Center**

Near Titusville, Fla.

Named for the president who was focused on putting a man on the moon and located near NASA's actual launch area, this museum is dedicated to astronauts and all things Apollo. "Relive the first manned Saturn V launch in a reconstructed 1960s Apollo control room," Trenner says. 321-449-4444; [kennedyspacecenter.com](http://kennedyspacecenter.com)

**Museum of Flight**

Seattle

It's the only place where civilians can sit in the cockpit of a U.S. SR-71 spy plane. It's also where a pioneering fighter aircraft, a 1914 Italian Caproni, is displayed after having been walled up in a monastery for more than a half-century. Trenner says to start your tour in the Red Barn, "where William E. Boeing took his first steps



Kennedy Space Center

**Sky sentinels:** The Rocket Garden at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex on Florida's east coast takes visitors back to the dawn of space exploration.

to becoming one of the world's aerospace giants." Check out historic Lear jets and the Concorde. 206-764-5720; [museumofflight.org](http://museumofflight.org)

**Air Force Flight Test Center  
Museum**

Edwards Air Force Base, Calif.

For security reasons, public tours to this desert hallowed ground of the Right Stuff crowd are limited to the first and third Fridays of the month;

online sign-up is required. "This is where military experimental planes first went supersonic: Mach 1, 2, 3. Lots of exotic stuff here," Trenner says. Future military aircraft are tested here; it's like going on an aircraft safari, because you never know what's winging overhead. 661-277-3512; [www.edwards.af.mil/tours](http://www.edwards.af.mil/tours)

**DISCUSSION**

- ▶ Attempt to name three important developments in military aviation and three in civil aviation. What recent developments have occurred in each area?
- ▶ What are the benefits and drawbacks of building and flying your own aircraft?
- ▶ What was the "Spruce Goose"? How do you think it got its name? (Check your guess in an reference source.)
- ▶ How did President Kennedy contribute to aviation?
- ▶ Why is security tight at the Air Force Flight Test Center Museum?
- ▶ Imagine that you were designing an exhibit about aircraft that have changed the course of history. Which three of the aircraft mentioned in the article would you include in your exhibit? Defend your choices in writing.

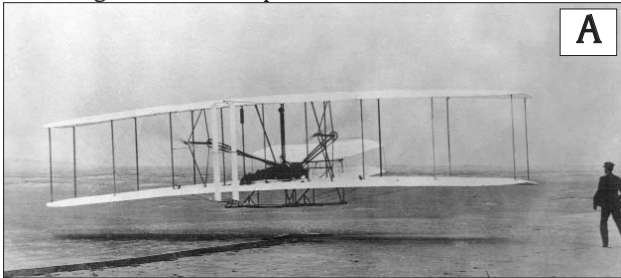
**VOCABULARY**

aviation	behemoth
biplane	bestowed
damsel	sound barrier
portly	monastery
eschew	hallowed
eclectic	supersonic
pristine	

**Directions:** Every new development in aviation is based on a previous invention or innovation. And, each time someone advances aviation technology, others in the field take note and build on the new idea. Below, are six pictures of aircraft that have had a tremendous impact on human life and aviation history.

Using information in the article as well as outside research, find several relationships between the aircraft. (In other words, explain why one aircraft was important to the development of another.) Each time you find a connection, explain it in the chart at the bottom of the page (see example). Finally, on the other side of this page, draw a simple graphic of an aircraft that you think will be developed during your lifetime. Describe the connection between it and an aircraft on this page.

The Wright brothers' biplane



Chuck Yeager's X-1 supersonic plane



Saturn V rocket (Apollo program)



The Concorde



The Space Shuttle



SpaceShipOne



Photo credits: A: Smithsonian Institute; B: Northrop handout; C: Kennedy Space Center; D: Mike Tsukamoto, USA TODAY; E: NASA; F: AFP handout

B → D	Chuck Yeager broke the sound barrier in 1947, paving the way for supersonic jets like the Concorde.