

# Six Aviation Museums Where You Can Land and Linger

Off the beaten path, museums at airports often house rare gems.

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The Heritage Hangar at the Lone Star Flight Museum. [Courtesy: Lone Star Flight Museum]

When people want to see historic aircraft, they often head to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. That's a good thing, because the huge collection there—housed in the original museum on the Mall and at the Udvar-Hazy center out at Dulles—chronicles aviation history like no other.

But if you are looking for something a bit smaller, more manageable, and closer to home, or a place you can fly into, opportunities abound. Many airports across the country have on-site air museums that you can get

through in an hour or less, often while learning about makes and models of aircraft that you never knew existed.

Most of these places are run by volunteers and some have limited or irregular schedules, so it always helps to call ahead. Many host special events, from airshows to pancake breakfasts and barbeques as fundraisers. They might even offer rides in vintage airplanes. Of course, you might find it is best to visit during off-peak times so you can enjoy quiet time while perusing the exhibits. Below are six airport museums that you should include in future flight plans. Or if you must, you can always drive.

## Lone Star Flight Museum

*Ellington Airport (KEFD), Houston, Texas*

It's busy here. Pilots flying in for a visit will have to talk with ATC and be keenly aware of the Class B airspace around William P. Hobby (KHOU) and George Bush International (KIAH) airports. But the collection—which includes the Douglas SBD Dauntless, Chance Vought F4U Corsair, North American B-25 Mitchell, and Douglas DC-3—is worth the effort of extra flight planning. The main exhibit, running through July 10, features the Women Airforce Service Pilots, or WASPs, who initially trained at Ellington during World War II.



## Owls Head Transportation Museum

*Knox County Regional Airport (KRKD), Rockland, Maine*

When it opened in 1976, the museum consisted of a building housing two airplanes and two cars. Since then, the collection has grown to include more than 150 antique aircraft, cars, motorcycles, bicycles, engines, and other items. The focus here is on the oldest vehicles, like a 1912 Curtiss Pusher and a 1913 Deperdussin Racer. Most of the aircraft have two wings, whether from World War I, like the Sopwith Pup and Royal Aircraft Factory F.E.8, or the Golden Age, like the 1930 Pitcairn PA-7S Sport Mailwing and 1933 WACO UBF-2. Many of the exhibits are airworthy and fly regularly. The museum's 1946 Piper J3C Cub and 1941 Stearman biplane are among the most modern machines in the collection.





## Waco Historical Society

*Waco Field Airport (1WF), Troy, Ohio*

Fly into the 2,200-foot grass strip and visit a collection of Waco biplane designs that are nearly a century old. During the 1920s and early 1930s, Waco was a leading manufacturer of general aviation aircraft, and the museum's exhibits include 10 complete aircraft plus parts of others, a mock-up of the Waco factory with authentic tools, and a timeline with photos of all of the models the company produced. Visitors can call three weeks in advance to arrange guided tours. The museum also runs aviation camps for kids during the summer.



## Iowa Aviation Museum

*Greenfield Municipal Airport (KGFZ), Greenfield, Iowa*

When was the last time you saw an Evangel 4500? I had not heard of this rare light twin taildragger until I started looking into Iowa's aviation history. The Evangel Aircraft Corp. of Orange City, Iowa, developed the design during the 1960s as a bush plane for missionary work. It needed STOL capability and had to be simple to operate and maintain in remote places. This museum has one of eight built. Many aircraft in its collection have ties to the state, from the 1931 Kari-Keen Coupe manufactured in Sioux City to the Bell AH-1 Cobra attack helicopter donated by the Iowa National Guard.



## Commemorative Air Force Museum

*Falcon Field Airport (KFFZ), Mesa, Arizona*

The Commemorative Air Force (CAF) traces its beginnings to 1951, when five partners got together to buy a surplus Curtiss P-40 fighter. Over the next several years, the group noticed that vintage military airplanes in flying condition were becoming rare, and the group began searching for remaining examples. Along the way, they chartered as a nonprofit organization, recruited volunteers, and performed in air shows to gain public attention and support. Today, the CAF has dozens of units around the world with more than 13,000 members and a collection of more than 165 aircraft, including the B-17G *Sentimental Journey*, a well-known air show star.





## Planes of Fame Air Museum

*Chino Airport (KCNO), Chino, California*

When Steve Hinton isn't **leading the pre-game flyover** of Super Bowl LVI or **performing in airshows**, he's overseeing a vast fleet of warbirds and other rare aircraft as president of the Planes of Fame Museum. "Varied" seems like an understatement for a collection that includes a Lockheed P-38 Lightning, German Focke-Wulf 190, and Japanese Yokosuka MXY-7 Model 11 Ohka, but there's much more. The museum also makes space for classic civilian aircraft, air racers, airliners, and a bunch of Eastern Bloc fighter jets of the Soviet era.