

An Aviation Visit to Ohio

If you are looking for a history of homebuilt aircraft, the EAA Museum in Oshkosh is the best in the world. If Warbirds are your interest there is no finer place to look than the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

During the Thanksgiving holiday, my wife Terry and I were in the Dayton Ohio area visiting relatives. Saturday morning we took four hours to tour the museum at Wright Field. Oddly Patterson Field is separated from Wright by a ridge upon which a monument to the Wright brothers and a small museum sits. From this ridge you can see Hoffman field where Orville and Wilber flew their early airplanes after the initial success at Kittyhawk, NC.

Without a doubt, this is the most comprehensive collection of U.S. airpower past and present.

Three enormous hangars and outside exhibits showcase nearly every model of aircraft from the Wright Model B and early Curtiss designs that predate WWI to the F-22 Raptor and Stealth aircraft. Of special interest to me were a number of Allied and enemy aircraft from both World Wars and jets from the former Soviet Union that are rarely seen anymore.

An I-Max theater features two great movies, the Blue Angels, about the Navy aerobatic team, and Fighter Pilot, a close look at NATO training at Nellis AFB. Both films will get your stomach turning with amazing cinematography on the BIG screen.

The museum also offers a modern cafeteria and gift shop. The books offered there cover nearly every aircraft ever built, not just military types.

All too soon our schedule caught up to us and we still hadn't seen everything. There are rockets and space capsules, and an Aviation Hall of Fame with an art gallery. On another part of the field are two additional hangars housing different models of Air Force One, the Presidential planes. The other hangar is dedicated to experimental and research aircraft.

Closer to Dayton is the Wright Brothers home and their bicycle shop. Other aviation related sites in the area include the Hatzell Propeller Co., the McCaully Propeller Co., and Waco Field, which has its own small museum dedicated to that make of aircraft.

I hope someday to return to Ohio to spend more time at this cradle of American aviation.

Jim Cote

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