

Kissimmee Air Museum & Warbird Adventures

by Neal Sands



The Kissimmee Air Museum is located in beautiful Central Florida just south of Orlando and just 8 miles from the Walt Disney World Resorts. Housed at the Kissimmee Gateway Airport the museum offers guests a multitude of opportunities and activities with the goal of sharing WWII history and Florida's rich aviation heritage with our next generation of aviators.

If you are looking for a get-away from the theme parks the Kissimmee Air Museum has the answer for you. Bring the entire family or just get away for a few hours! There is so much to see and do at our museum you could make a whole day of the trip! Museum admission is only six dollars and could possibly be the most inexpensive entertainment of your entire vacation.

The museum complex is contained in two large new hangars totaling nearly 24,000 square feet with a very large ramp area. Within the museum visitors are greeted by the museum's latest additions, numerous interactive

displays chronicling the United States entry into World War Two, including the early predictions of war, the Japanese attack plans, rare never-before published images of the attack on Pearl Harbor taken from Japanese aircraft, an authentic Imperial Japanese Naval Aviators uniform, the story of an island insurgency in Hawaii by a lone Japanese aviator whose Zero aircraft was downed during the attack, and the little known story of the second attack on Pearl Harbor!

Exhibits discuss the American ramp up for war including the tremendous national production and training efforts and the creation of the most powerful military on earth at the time. During this time period the State of Florida went from a handful of airfields to over two hundred! Learn how Air Corps cadets progressed, and how some washed out of flight training. Further exhibits detail these stories and the tremendous amount of training that took place in Florida as a result of the year-long favorable weather and multitude of training fields.

Additionally the museum is home to a large collection of privately owned military and civilian aircraft. The collection is ever evolving and guests are encouraged to return often as visiting aircraft are rotated through the museum on a regular basis.

The collection features a Boeing PT-17 Stearman, used as a primary trainer by Army Air Corps Cadets in WWII. A Ryan PT-22 Recruit another of the WWII trainers. A Vietnam era L-19 Bird Dog, one of the most famous of the Liaison or "L-Birds" and used as a forward air controller spotting downed airmen. Miss USA, an experimental Cassutt airplane and our resident race champion having won the 2009 Reno National Championship Air Race Formula 1 Silver class. A Mig-17 jet interceptor of the Vietnam War and the first afterburning jet to see combat. An S2F Tracker anti-submarine torpedo plane from the Cold War is on display on the ramp area. We also have three North American T-6 Texans, known as both the "Pilot Maker" and the "Terrible Texan" the T-6 was the premier advanced trainer during the second world war and was a cadets last stop before flying a single seat fight such as the Mustang or Corsair!

The museum is also home to the ten-year long restoration of an exceedingly rare German fighter... the Fock Wulf FW-190, White One. White One is destined to be the only flying example of this model when completed in just a few years. A Polish PZL TS-11 Iskra jet, used as a jet trainer originally ours is destined for the jet class at this years Reno Air Races! Two Bell 47 helicopters, a Hiller H-12, and a Robinson R-44 round out the museums helicopter collection. In the second hangar you will also find a homebuilt Vans RV-6A and for the time being and Aviat Husky bush plane.

Various other aircraft call the museum home through out the year including two North American B-25 bombers. Panchito as seen around the nation on the air show circuit is a beautiful example of the B-25J. Tondelayo, another

B-25J is presented in cooperation with the Colling's foundation and is available for flight experiences! Nothing comes closer to the sights, sounds and smells that our parents and grandparents felt riding these magnificent birds into combat, not knowing whether they would return or not. Other aircraft that have visited the museum and may be seen during your stay include a Vought F4U-5 Corsair, also presented by the Collings Foundation, a Grumman TBM Avenger, a North American P-51D Mustang that is currently nearing the end of its restoration is expected soon, and the worlds only flying Taylor Aerocar.

Also on display are many engines including a Russian Klimov VK-1, a Goblin jet engine, a deHaviland Gypsy and various others. Additionally be sure to see our large collection of WWII infantry rifles, handguns, ammunition and machine guns!



At the Kissimmee Air Museum you too will see, touch, and smell the history of these great machines and begin to understand the sacrifices of the men and women who valiantly served to protect the freedoms we hold dear today.

While at the museum visitors are invited to experience the museums aircraft the way they were meant to be experienced, take the opportunity to

take a ride in the B-25, or a tour in the helicopter, or, try your hand at flying the T-6 Texan!

Warbird Adventures was founded over 12 years ago and has flown well over 30,000 people in the T-6 Texan, the most famous of all the World War II trainers. With over 40 years of combined experience our instructors know the T6. You will be strapped into the front seat... just like the cadets of WWII with one of our highly experienced instructors along for the ride in the back seat. Make the world revolve around you and experience the thrills of aerobatics in this nimble airplane. This is not a simulator; it's the real thing! We'll keep you safe and get you into the air and back on the ground, but in the air... you take the controls and fly! We'll teach you everything you need to know and no previous flight experience is neces-

sary. From a leisurely flight around Central Florida to heart pounding aerobatics the choice is yours, but either way it's the thrill of a lifetime!

Warbird Adventures instructors specialize in check-out and orientation training in the T-6, if you are interested in more than an experience flight and would like to become qualified to fly the Texan or other WWII type aircraft, we can help! Warbird Adven

tures offers five and ten hour checkout courses in the T6 and can customize a training curriculum to fit your needs for check-out, tail wheel, and insurance requirements.

Helicopters more your thing? Be sure to visit the Air Museums newest addition, Kissimmee Helicopters, offering rides in the most popular civilian helicopter ever built, the Robinson R-44 Raven. Tour flights are available around the resorts areas and three people ride for the same price as one! Ever dreamed of flying a helicopter? This is your opportunity to take the pilots seat while one of our instructors flies along with you in the left seat. Learn the intricacies of helicopter flight and experience the challenge of hovering!

Want to earn your helicopter pilots license or need training in the R-44? We can help! Block rates are available for up to 25 hours and student pilots can be signed off for solo flight. If you are looking for a way to build helicopter pilot in command time, look no further! Our rates are the most competitive you will find worldwide!

Whether you are visiting for a relaxing day away from the theme parks, the ride of your life in a WWII fighter trainer, a sightseeing tour, and check-out and recurrency training in the T6 Texan or R-44 helicopter, The Kissimmee Air Museum, Kissimmee Helicopters, and Warbird Adventures have the opportunities for you, the sky is the limit!

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