

The National Air and Space Museum

(by Richard Bartlett)



Washington D.C., home of the American President and the National Air and Space Museum. The National Air and Space Museum was opened in July 1976, it brings together the story of discovery and invention of aviation and space exploration, housing the most comprehensive collection of artifacts in exploration. The National Air and Space Museum's collection extends from earth into space.

The National Air and Space Museum is open daily and is free to all. Guided tours for groups of up to 20 people start every hour or you can browse at your own leisure.

The guided tour option was chosen, and detailed explanations were given on all of the museums major attractions. The highlights of the tour have been documented.

The tour starts with the Wright Flyer. On December 17th 1903, Orville Wright went on the first controlled successful flight in mankind's history.



Wright Flyer

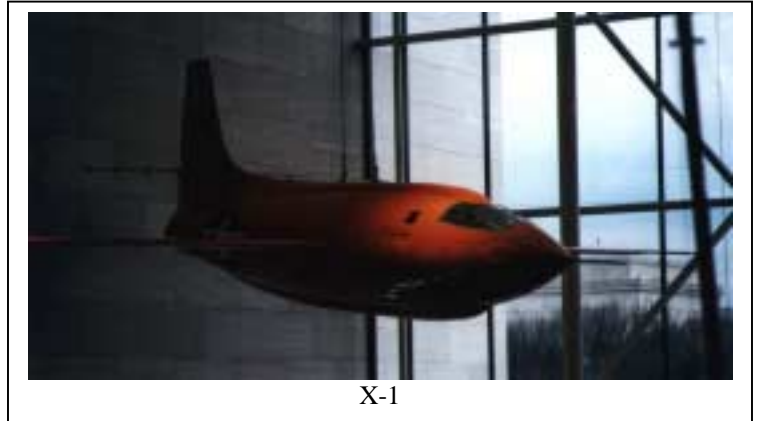


The Spirit of St. Louis

The next major achievement in our progression of flight, came from the "Spirit of St. Louis". Charles Lindbergh flew across the North

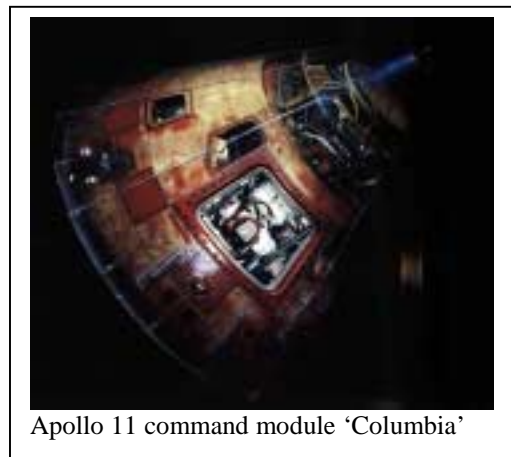
Atlantic from Roosevelt Field, Long Island to Le Bourget Field, near Paris in 1927. This was the first solo crossing of a major ocean by air, the trip took 33½ hours.

On October 14, 1947, Captain Charles Yeager became the first man to travel faster than the speed of sound, flying the Bell X-1 at Mach 1.06.



The X-15 flew at speed greater than six times the speed of sound, at altitudes high enough to be considered space flight.

The Apollo 11 command module “Columbia” carried astronauts Neil Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin and Michael Collins to the moon and back in 1969.



The museum contains 23 gallery's, each devoted to a specific subject area or milestone. The museum not only contains the most significant aircraft and spacecraft but also flight memorabilia, flight equipment, missiles and rockets.

A new addition to the museum's collection is Breitling Orbiter 3 Gondola, which on March 21st 1999 completed the first non stop around the world trip by balloon.



Breitling Orbiter 3 Gondola

Due to the continual growth of the museum's collection and space restrictions at their current site, The National Science and Space Museum is currently building a hanger type facility in the Dulles Center, which will house a more extensive array of their collection. This is due to open on December 17th 2003, to mark the 100th anniversary of mankind's first flight.

For further information on the new Dulles Center and the National Air and Space Museum can be found at www.nasm.edu.

References:

Official Guide to the National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C. 1991

Air and Space, The National Air and Space Museum Story of Flight, A. Chaikin, Little, Brown and Company Inc, 1997

National Air and Space Museum website: www.nasm.edu