

The Mighty 8th Museum in Savannah, GA

Description

Over the weekend of the 4th of July, I was on the road and finally found time to stop and visit the museum for the [Mighty 8th Air Force](#). It's right there on the side of I-95, just south of Savannah, GA, featuring a B-47 static display next to the interstate. I wasn't sure what I'd find, but, the interior of the building did have some things I hadn't seen at an air museum before.



The museum starts you out with a little walk through the history leading up to WWII, with some history of the rise of German power, and the attack at Pearl harbor. From there, it's a lot of info on the planes and men who became the 8th Air Force, stationed in the British Isles. I did note that the aircraft types memorialized were almost exclusively bomber or fighter models, with nothing discussing the logistical planes, which, after checking with [my friend Jim](#), indeed discovered the C-47s and gliders of the troop carrying groups all were in the chain of command. Savannah is the appropriate place for the museum, for, as I found out on my excursion, it was the place where the unit was established in 1942.

Be that as it may, the museum is still a worthwhile side trip, if you're traveling the East Coast. Here's what was in the central gallery display area, which took me by surprise:

ME 163B Comet

Yep, a real war trophy, the venerable ME-163B "Komet" rocket fighter! Armed with 30mm cannons, they launched this thing vertically (or horizontally with a drop away set of wheels), it then got above the bomber formations, swooped down through them in a high speed, gravity assisted glide, before it landed, sometimes blowing up when it hit the runway, due to the use of hydrogen peroxide as the fuel for the rocket motor.

Here's a picture of the business end of this interesting piece of history:

ME 163B Nose On Shot

There were displays galore, and several movie theaters looping historical films. Displays included a POW Camp barracks, forged documents from the escape and evasion efforts, aviation art, log books, etc, etc...the kinds of things you'd expect. As you near the end of the displays, there is the nose section of a MiG-21, with a walk up platform, so you can get a good view of the cockpit. One memorable display was a painting of a ME-109 escorting a battle damaged B-17. The story was the fighter swooped in to strike, and could see several of the crew being treated by others, so he flew alongside the bomber. It wasn't until about 30 some years later, the German pilot discussed his moment of compassion, and he was able to meet some of the crewmen of the B-17 he declined to shoot down.

Here are some of the other displays:

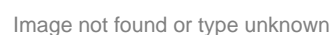
Rolls Royce fighter engine



The Rolls-Royce Merlin engine made famous for its use in the Spitfire and the later Mustangs. I came to know the sound of this Rolls-Royce/V1650 mill when it [powered](#) the [Unlimited Class hydroplanes](#) in the early '60s. If you're not familiar with that water sport, they were doing 200+ mph with the WWII fighter engines when I was in grade school and now they do 200 plus a little with helicopter turbines, just without the studly roar of the 12 cylinders hammering away.

There was also a Cyclone engine on a stand. The powerplant of the B-17s and B-24s:

Wright Cyclone Radial Engine on stand



A real P-51D hung proudly on the tail of an ME-109:

P-51D

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ME-109E

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They had a PT-17 Steerman, a scale P-47 and the nose section of a B-24 Liberator in the center gallery. They also had the two waist gunner stations from a B-17, set up with an aerial gunnery simulator, where you could wield a real M2 Browning against FW-190s and ME-109s coming from various attack angles.

Static display outside included [the B-47 Stratojet](#), a [MiG-17 "FRESCO"](#)

MiG-17 FRESCO

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and one of the longest serving aircraft with the US Armed Forces, [the F-4 Phantom](#):

F-4 Phantom

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So, there's my vacation travel report.

Category

1. Air Force
2. Army
3. History
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