

Florida Air Museum Part 1: Overview and Howard Hughes

The Directory of Aviation Museum and Exhibits by States (online) has noted 139 sites throughout the USA, plus 21 US Air Force field units and heritage centers. <airplanes-online.com> The Florida Air Museum is not one of them. It is part of the Central Florida Aerospace Academy, Sun 'n Fun Expo Campus in addition to the Dean & Liz Ramus Skylab Innovation Center, Flight Simulator Laboratory, and focusing on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) in the Museum. <floridaairmuseum.org>



As Florida's "Official Aviation Museum and Education Center," the Florida Air Museum features a dynamic display of unique designs, classics, ultra-lights, antiques, and warbirds. More than a collection of airplanes; it stands as a tribute to the history and joy of flight. Exhibits educate about pioneers like Howard Hughes, early air racers, and Floridians and others who have influenced the world of aviation.

In cooperation with ACE, the Museum also offers a variety of year-round educational experiences for all ages including camps, tours, workshops, and speaker presentations. The Museum continues to grow and meet the challenge of showcasing aviation history through exhibits, restoration and preservation, education, and outreach, and sharing a passion for flight with visitors of all ages. <floridaairmuseum.org>



The museum is in Central Florida at 4175 Medulla Road, Polk County, Lakeland, Florida. According to its website, a "mini-museum" was first set up near a hanger in 1986. Since then, it had several revisions and expansions working with the City of Lakeland. It was formerly known as the International Sport Aviation Museum. Today, the museum has the largest Howard Hughes Corporation collection. This photo program shares our experience at the Museum.

Florida Air Museum Beginnings

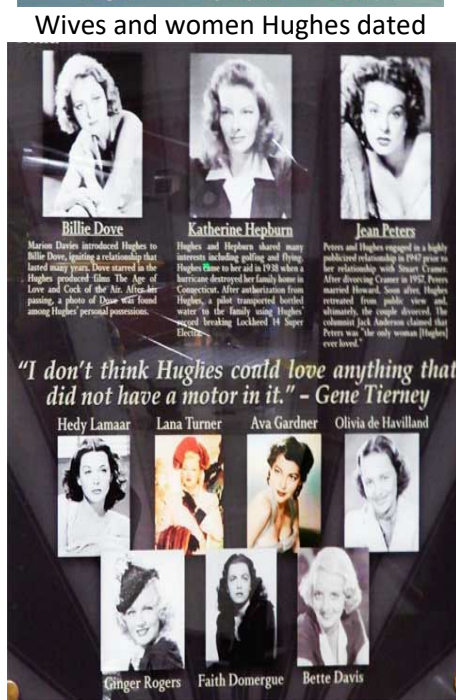
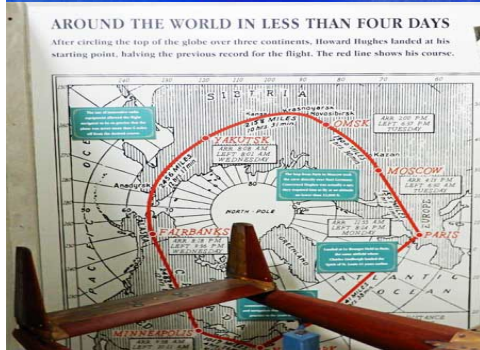
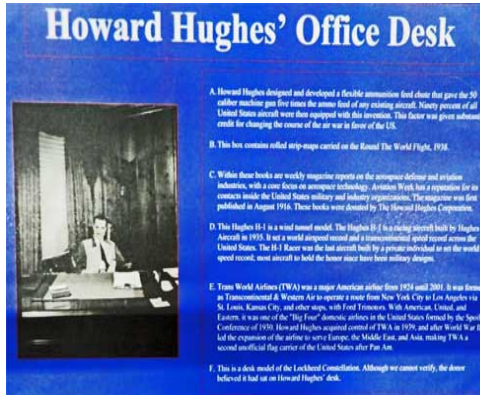
"As early as the 1980's – just a few years into the SUN 'n FUN Fly-In – founding director Billy Henderson and others envisioned an aviation museum to anchor the campus and provide a year-round educational and historic presence. In 1983, a museum committee interviewed architects, solicited land from the City of Lakeland, and secured the present Florida Air Museum location on the SUN 'n FUN campus just southwest of Lakeland Linder International Airport." <floridaairmuseum.org>

Howard Hughes, Jr. at the Museum

The only child of Howard Robard Hughes Sr. and Ailene Stone Gano was born December 24, 1905. He was a phenomenal businessman. His interests included being an investor, pilot, engineer, film producer, operating an airline company, Las Vega casino/hotel owner, and philanthropist. Hughes' business and personal life became a media event. Later in his life he became an eccentric billionaire and a recluse. Reportedly he died in 1976 from liver failure.

"The subsequent autopsy recorded kidney failure as the cause of death. Hughes was also in extremely poor physical condition as he was suffering from malnutrition and was covered in bedsores." <sundaypost.com>

[History.com has printed some interesting facts about Howard Hughes](#): At the age of 18, he was a millionaire. He directed and produced the 1926 film "Hell's Angels." The Hughes Aircraft Company was a major airplane and defense contractor in 1935. He broke several aviation records during the 1930s. The Spruce Goose was under contract by the U.S. government in 1942. Also known as the H-4 Hercules and the Flying Boat, it was intended to transport a load up to 60 tons or 700 troops. It cost millions of dollars to design and produce. It was made from wood due to wartime restrictions on steel and aluminum. It was flown once by Hughes himself. Hughes was criticized for his effort in 1947. The aircraft is in an aviation museum in Oregon. It had a wingspan of 320 feet as the largest plane ever constructed. In 1968 Hughes was part of a CIA operation during the Cold War to recover a Soviet submarine. The Glomar Explorer was used to recover the sub. In 1966, Hughes purchased the Desert Inn in Las Vegas. During that period, he purchased more land, including an airport and airline. During this time, he became a recluse and lived that way for the next six years before he died. At one point he was Nevada's biggest employer and landholder.



Florida Air Museum Grounds

The Florida Air Museum grounds has multifunctional buildings. The main building is the Central Florida Aerospace Academy. Other buildings besides the museum include labs, skill center, a pavilion plus other education centers, and the Lakeland AeroClub. Besides the two below, there were other outdoor aircraft on display also.

Florida Air Museum Part 2 will take you inside of the museum, excluding Howard Hughes exhibit. **Florida Air Museum Part 3** will take you to the outside plane exhibits and the Buehler Aerospace Skills Center with various types of engines.



Learn more about the Florida Air Museum

[Florida Air Museum Exhibits Part 2](#)

[Florida Air Museum Outside Exhibits Part 3](#)

Sources: <https://www.floridaairmuseum.org/>, <https://www.floridaairmuseum.org/index-cosmic-muffin/>, <https://www.airplanes-online.com/list-of-air-museums-exhibits-airparks.htm>, <https://www.floridaairmuseum.org/tag/howard-hughes/>, <https://www.history.com/news/7-things-you-may-not-know-about-howard-hughes>, and <https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/howard-hughes/>.

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