

By Savanna Sargent

November is Aviation History Month, the perfect time to learn about flight. Aerospace history is filled with brave innovators, harrowing stories and awesome machines.

It all began 110 years ago with Orville Wright's 12-second flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. The Wright Brothers are credited with the aerial age's true start when they successfully operated the world's first "powered, piloted, heavier-than-air machine" that achieved "controlled sustained flight." Studying Pima Air & Space Museum's Wright Flyer replica—noting the vital hip-controlled rudder—one is astonished how this seemingly simple design is the cornerstone of aeronautical engineering. From then on, the sky was no longer the limit.

By 1909, the world was off to the air races in Reims, France, for the first air race, which was won by American Glenn Curtiss. In 1947, Formula One pylon racing began. Home-built airplanes, such as the Cassutt Pylon Racer, whizzed by spectators while steering around giant cones aka pylons on a closed course. Perched above a pylon at the Pima Air & Space Museum, Tom Cassutt's bright red racing plane still embodies the danger and excitement of the sport recently featured in the new Disney animated movie, "Planes."

The U.S. Postal Service helped establish commercial aviation transporting mail by air. Since then, air travel has become a crucial means of transportation for people and goods, turning it into a major industry. Today, more than two million Americans board over 30,000 flights every day.

Aviation not only changed travel, it also transformed warfare. During "The Great War," barely ten years after the Wright Brothers' feat, all the major WWI powers incorporated airplanes in their arsenal. Since then, aviation continues to change the face of the military and war. From bombers like the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress to spyplanes like the Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird—which still holds world speed and altitude records—airplanes have made the "friendly skies" fair game.

Perhaps aviation's most astonishing accomplishment is space travel. Rockets, satellites, robots and even humans have soared past our planet's boundaries and into the dark unknown of the universe. The Pima Air & Space Museum's Space Gallery chronicles the race to space and its exploration including an actual moon rock.

Celebrate Aviation History Month by learning about flight. One of the world's largest aerospace museums, ranking in TripAdvisor's Top 10% in global excellence ratings, the Pima Air & Space Museum showcases the development of civil, commercial and military aviation. Not only can you see all of the airplanes mentioned, and many more, you can also hear unique stories from trained docents, many of them past pilots or crew. The museum is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Thanksgiving and Christmas days. Check out their website www.pimaair.org.



Replica of Wright Brothers Flyer in Main Hangar at Pima Air & Space



Cassutt Formula One Pylon Racer in Main Hangar at Pima Air & Space



Waco UPF-7 in World War II Hangar at Pima Air & Space



Main Hangar at Pima Air & Space



B-29 in World War II Hangar at Pima Air & Space