

# Bucket Lists, Part I

## Be a Box Checker!



by Matthew McDaniel

**E**ditor's Note: The following is the first of an upcoming series of articles which may resonate with King Air corporate and charter pilots when it comes to making the most of travel downtime. But it can also apply to the owner/pilot whether it's making a stop on the way to a planned destination or adding a future destination to visit. If you have layover pursuits or places you've enjoyed visiting that you feel are "must-sees," please feel free to drop the author an email with any ideas you might have for future installments of this series (contact information follows the article).

### List Makers and Box Checkers

History is full of famous list makers; list making is an enviable trait of all manner of successful people. It is said that those who make lists consistently accomplish more in a given time than those who move from task to task more randomly. Not only do lists give their makers a set of tasks to be accomplished, they often provide a prioritization of those tasks. Even more importantly, the simple act of checking or crossing a task off a list (to denote its completion) has been clinically proven to provide an endorphin rush to your brain's happy places. Many famous aviators were well-known list makers for their entire lives. Charles Lindbergh's list making was so pervasive that lists even as mundane as those for groceries eventually made their way into his historical archives.

Perhaps no one knows the merit of lists made and checked with precision better than pilots! But I'm not talking about checklists as aviators know them. I'm talking about something more akin to a bucket list – a list of tasks, places or adventures to be accomplished before "kicking the bucket." For the pilot, like me, who often has layovers (be they daytime or multiday) at a variety of places, there is an incredible opportunity to become a checker of many boxes. Boxes that represent places/things not just seen, but experienced. Start by making a list, then be amazed at the personal satisfaction gained by checking the boxes of said list – one layover or planned stop at a time.

There isn't one formula for your lists; it's definitely a personal matter. What interests you or concerns you? What do you like to talk about at home, after your trips? What have you always wanted to see or do and then realize you can see or do it 100 different ways, depending on where you are? These are questions you can ask yourself and use to craft your list. Also, don't limit yourself. You can have multiple lists running concurrently, checking off items from one list on one layover, another list with tomorrow's or items from several lists in a single layover. For the owner/pilot, there may be something on your list on the way to your planned destination or located not far away from your stop.

The only limit to your lists is your own imagination and inquisitiveness. During my many years of aviation

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layovers while flying as a corporate, charter, fractional, airline and traveling-instructor pilot, I've had many lists active concurrently. For the initial installment of this series, let's tackle a list that can be equal parts educational and entertaining, while offering infinite flexibility.

## Museums & Collections

If there is one commonality among pilots, it is their ability to totally geek-out on whatever it is that they are into. That could be the all too obvious aviation stuff, or other topics as obscure or varied as American Indian wars, rare musical instruments, automotive history, fine art or Pez dispensers. Whatever flips your switch, there is likely a museum for it somewhere. If your tastes run more mainstream, there are likely scores, even hundreds, of depositories representing that topic. Thus, choose your topic, do a quick web-search and begin a list of facilities which include or are dedicated to it.

My experience operating for years in a cockpit-crew environment is that most pilots enjoy aviation collections, military history museums or both. The assortment of these in the United States is staggering in both sheer numbers and variety. Of course, in many cases, a single collection which specializes in or includes military aircraft overlaps both these areas of interest. But, don't say to yourself, "Well, of course, there's the *Smithsonian*

*Air & Space Museum* in D.C. or *The National Museum of the U.S. Air Force* in Dayton, Ohio, but those are huge museums that could take days to go through. I never have that much time on a layover!" Maybe that is true, but you can take such massive collections a bite at a time. A few hours here, a full day there. In time, you'll see it all and, in many cases (such as these two examples), such museums are totally free, taking away the financial pressure to see it all in one visit.

Beyond these huge, nationally known museums, there is a nearly endless array of small/local museums dedicated to aviation and/or military topics. Airports small and large across the country often have such museums right on (or adjacent to) the field. Such establishments often feature one specific aircraft manufacturer who started at that airport, or that airport's military history in years past (before it became an all-civilian or joint-use airport). Such smaller museums most often operate on shoestring budgets using exclusively volunteer staffing. Yet, many remain free, asking only for donations at the door. Frequently, such small museums operate as nonprofit organizations, making any admission fee and/or donation tax deductible. Many current or former military bases operate a small public museum and/or display an aircraft/armament collection representing that base's history. Some such collections are quite impressive and include some real rarities.

The abundance of aviation and/or military history museums is truly staggering. Below is a list of just a few to get you started:

**The Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum: Washington, D.C.** The "gold standard" of aviation museums. The main building is in museum-row of Washington D.C.'s downtown Mall, a very short ride from Washington National Airport (DCA). The massive annex, known as the Udvar-Hazy Center, is located adjacent to Washington Dulles Airport (IAD). Regular shuttle services are available for transport between all these locations. Within this national collection, you'll lay eyes on the aircraft which shaped aviation as we know it today. From the original *Wright Flyer* (first powered, controlled, heavier-than-air flight), to the *Spirit of St. Louis* (Lindbergh's Atlantic spanning steed), to the Bell X-1 (first level, sustained, supersonic flight) to the Boeing 247 (first "modern" fully enclosed airliner), to the North American X-15 (fastest winged, piloted aircraft in history), to the Space Shuttle *Discovery* (even bigger than you ever imagined). ▶

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Taken inside the Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum's Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia. While the Air France Concorde and the Virgin Atlantic Global Flyer dominate this view of the museum's main hangar, less noticeable is the King Air suspended above the tail of the Concorde. This is "King Air 65-90," which actually started life as a Queen Air. It was later converted to what would eventually become a King Air C-90 configuration. During its operational life, it not only served in this test bed role, but also flew over 7,000 hours for a variety of corporations.

Each branch of the U.S. Military has a representative aviation museum, dedicated to the aircraft utilized within that branch.

**The National Museum of the United States Air Force: Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio.** This enormous collection is housed in four matching, Quonset-style hangars with storage and restoration annexes and some outdoor storage. You'll see everything from pre-World War I Army-Air Corp flyers to the Convair B-36 (the massive post-World War II, ten-engine strategic bomber) to next-generation fighters and drone aircraft.

**The National Naval Aviation Museum: Pensacola, Florida (also represents Coast Guard aviation).** The Navy's proud history in flight is well represented here with some incredibly rare aircraft on display in a well-designed setting. From Grumman's entire "cat series" of fighters to giant flying boats, to World War II torpedo bombers, to Top Gun, carrier-based, jet fighters – it's one of the finest collections in the world.

**United States Army Aviation Museum: Fort Rucker (Daleville), Alabama.** An odder assemblage of aircraft would be hard to imagine. While many famous fixed-wing Army aircraft are represented, it is the incredible variety of oddball helicopters, tilt rotors and experimental rotor-wing machines that really make this collection truly unique.

**The National Museum of the Marine Corps: Triangle, Virginia.** This joint public-private venture represents all facets of Marine Corps history, including an impressive aviation component.

**Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum: Marine Corp Air Station Miramar, San Diego, California.** Specific to Marine Corp Aviation, this collection is largely outside where you can partake of it while enjoying the SoCal sunshine.

A list of all sizable aerospace museums is available on Wikipedia, organized by country. Within the United States, the list is further broken down by state. It is not a truly comprehensive list, but it is certainly exhaustive enough to keep you busy for decades worth of layovers! Some other large collections include:

**The United States Space & Rocket Center: Huntsville, Alabama.** If you're into the history of the Space Age, NASA and military rocketry, this is a must-visit. It is also home of the hugely successful youth Space Camp for those aspiring to a career in aerospace.

**Pima Air & Space Museum: Tucson, Arizona.** The dry desert environment of Tucson is perfect for storage of vintage aircraft and artifacts and this is one of the largest non-government funded aviation museums in the world, with over 300 aircraft on display. While in town,



While not strictly an aviation museum, the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana, represents nearly every facet of that global conflict. A Douglas C-47 Skytrain, in U.S. Army Air Corps D-Day markings, hangs above the main entrance lobby, along with a Supermarine Spitfire replica.

consider also visiting the **Davis-Monthan AFB long-term preservation and storage facility for inactive military aircraft** (shuttles from Pima run often).

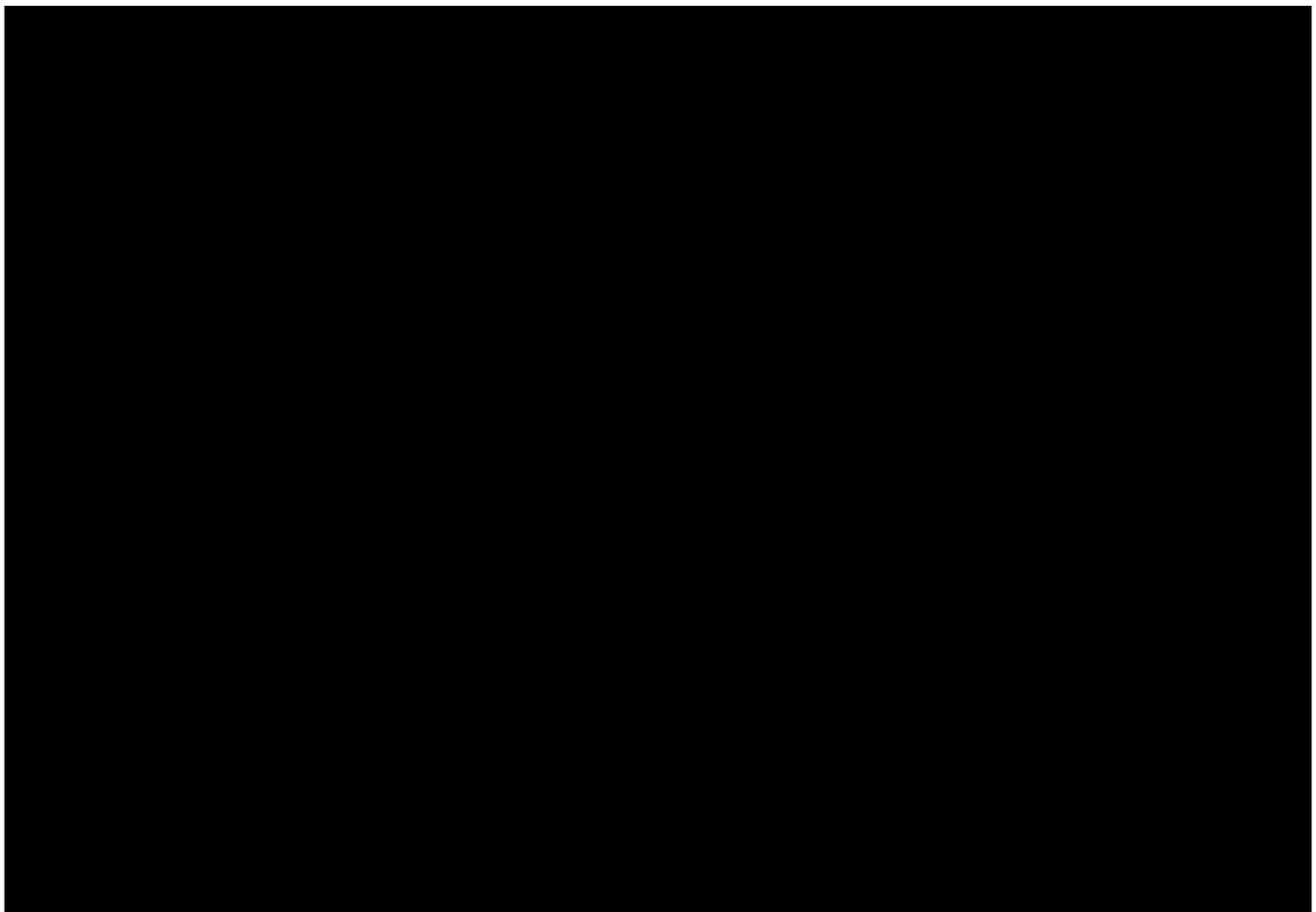
**Castle Air Museum: Atwater, California.** Home of the former Castle Air Force Base, Strategic Air Command facility, this collection is adjacent to what is now the civilian Castle Airport. The mostly outdoor display in



The Hughes H-1 Hercules (aka, Spruce Goose) is the main attraction on display at the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum in McMinnville, Oregon. This impressive museum is far more than the Spruce Goose, however. It contains scores of historically significant aircraft, both civilian and military, as well as many craft from various space programs.

California's central valley includes some of the largest aircraft to ever serve in the U.S. military – B-29, B-36, B-50, B-52, etc.

**Commemorative Air Force (CAF) Airpower Museum: Dallas, Texas.** As with all CAF museums, the aircraft based here may or may not be in residence during your visit. Because CAF's primary mission is to restore and





The San Diego Air & Space Museum is only minutes from San Diego's Lindbergh Airport and contains an impressive collection. Mainly military in scope, but with some civilian aviation represented too. It is also a unique building and is located in San Diego's beautiful Balboa Park area.

maintain airworthy examples of historical military aircraft, the aircraft are often touring or participating in airshows on a seasonal basis. During the offseason is when you are likely to see the most concentrated display here.

**San Diego Air & Space Museum: San Diego (Balboa Park), California.** One of the top draws to the famous Balboa Park area, this circular structure contains a nice mix of historically significant civilian and military aircraft and artifacts. While some are replicas, most are the real McCoy, and all are fascinating to anyone who loves aviation history.

Smaller collections dot the United States from coast to coast, in such quantity and variety it would take several lifetimes to see them all. While smaller, many have fascinating collections of aircraft and artifacts. Their more diminutive sizes make them perfect for partial-day layovers. A few of my favorites over the years include:

**The Fargo Air Museum: Fargo, North Dakota.** Just outside the Fargo airport perimeter, this is another flying museum, where many of the aircraft are flown in the summer months. Thus, all the aircraft are in excellent condition.

**Fantasy of Flight: Polk City, Florida.** Kermit Weeks' conceptual museum in central Florida has opened and closed its doors to the general public twice in the past couple of decades. Currently, being redeveloped yet again (as Act III), it should re-open again in the near future with a whole new way to experience aviation, history and the pursuit of life goals. Kermit's wildly diverse collection of ultrarare civilian and military aircraft (many in flyable or near-flyable condition) is as unique as Mr. Weeks himself.

**Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum: Pooler, Georgia.** Home of the *Memphis Belle* and the history of the World War II aerial fighting force that played the leading role in the European air war.

**Atterbury-Bakalar Air Museum: Columbus, Indiana.** A great example of the hundreds of museums to be found in small communities hoping to preserve their rich military histories for locals and visitors alike. A combat glider training base in World War II that continued as

This small memorial at the Tamiami Airport in Miami, Florida, consists of a single Douglas B-26 Invader (re-designated from an A-26 after the World War II Martin B-26s were no longer in service). This aircraft was flown by the Cuban Air Force in the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion. The memorial honors the 10 Cuban pilots and four American CIA pilots who died as part of that "Liberation Air Force."



an Air Force base into the 1970s, this is a Midwestern jewel that can be toured in an hour, or over the course of a day.

It is rare to be laying over or stopping anywhere there is not some sort of military and/or aviation museum within a reasonable distance. Many Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) Chapters have local museums. Similarly, many Wings of the CAF have a display space for their aircraft (at a minimum). Aircraft restoration shops often welcome aviation-centric visitors, as well. Finally, we cannot leave the topic of aviation museums without mentioning the stunning Beechcraft Heritage Museum in Tullahoma, Tennessee; the one-stop-shop for all things Walter and Olive Ann Beech, Beechcraft corporate history and immaculate examples of every major model ever produced with a Beechcraft data-plate. From Walter's early Travel Air designs to the graceful lines of the Staggerwing and Starship models, any Beechcraft pilot should consider a visit to this museum to be akin to a pilgrimage.

### Future Installments:

In forthcoming issues of *King Air*, we'll continue to explore additional topics for bucket lists which might motivate you to make or expand your own bucket lists. Architecture, national and state parks, historic sites

and things you maybe never even knew you wanted to see. We'll touch on it all. Maybe with your suggestions, we'll take this discussion in directions even we don't anticipate. In the meantime, safe travels and happy list making and box checking! **KA**

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Matthew McDaniel is a Master & Gold Seal CFII, ATP, MEI, AGI, & IGI and Platinum CSIP. In 30 years of flying, he has logged over 18,000 hours total, over 5,500 hours of instruction-given, and over 2,500 hours in various King Airs and the BE-1900D. As owner of Progressive Aviation Services, LLC ([www.progaviation.com](http://www.progaviation.com)), he has specialized in Technically Advanced Aircraft and Glass Cockpit instruction since 2001. Currently, he is also an Airbus A-320 series Captain for an international airline, holds eight turbine aircraft type ratings, and has flown nearly 90 aircraft types. Matt is one of less than 15 instructors in the world to have earned the Master CFI designation for nine consecutive two-year terms. He can be reached at: [matt@progaviation.com](mailto:matt@progaviation.com) or (414) 339-4990.



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