

The transformed RAF Musuem London RAF Museum

The new RAF Museum London opens its doors this weekend following a multi-million pound transformation. It’s reopening just in time to mark RAF100, but what can visitors expect?

The first thing you’ll notice when arriving at the RAF Museum in Collindale, North London is its new hangar one. A vast building of glass and steel, it’s a bold, in your face, 21st-century welcome to a museum dedicated to the world’s oldest independent air force.

It hits the mark. It’s the kind of dynamic welcome a museum that explores the work and people of an international aviation leader and pioneer, deserves. And it’s opening just in time to mark the Royal Air Force’s 100th anniversary.

If it's flying machines, military hardware and kit you’re after, then the new RAF Museum delivers. The new hangar has enabled more exhibits, many of which have been behind the scenes or in storage, to go on display than ever before.

Star attractions include a Sea King helicopter flown by HRH Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, during his days as a pilot at RAF Valleys. There’s also London’s only Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II stealth fighter.

From the mighty to the personal

In total, there are over 500 previously unseen artefacts and displays. They range from the mighty to the very personal. Sand from Stalag Luft III, site of the Great Escape, is particularly fascinating. There's also: a toothbrush with a concealed compass in the handle; a signed dress collar given to Barnes Wallis by Guy Gibson, leader of the Dam Busters raid; and an Amy Johnson doll from the 1930s.

For those who enjoy getting interactive, there's a state-of-the art 'Gnat' flight simulator, and an interactive plotting table, which emulates the demands of being a WAAF (Women's Auxillary Air Force) plotter in an active operations room.

The people of the RAF

One of the museum's most inspirational aspects is its shift towards telling the stories of the people of the RAF. It explores different roles people undertake in the RAF beyond pilots through a visual display of RAF hats and head gear.

But it is the personal stories that are the star of the show, like that of Beatrice 'Tilly' Shilling. Tilly joined the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough and served as an aero-engineer for 43 years. During the Second World War, she saved pilots' lives with her brilliant idea of introducing a metal washer into the Merlin engines of early Spitfires and Hurricanes to stop them cutting out in combat.

Special offer for National Lottery players

The new RAF Museum opens to the public on Saturday 30 June, Armed Forces Day. To thank National Lottery players for their support, the RAF Musuem London is offering half price tickets to its 4D Cinema between 30 June - 7 July. Players just need to present a National Lottery ticket or scartchcard at its London box office.





Costumed volunteers at RAF Hendon RAF Hendon

Royal Air Force Museum secures National Lottery investment for Historic Hendon