

TOUR REPORT

AirVenture Oshkosh never fails to deliver – it has a heady mix of pretty much every conceivable form of aviation both on the ground and in the air and it draws visitors from around the world every year to see what it has on offer.

2017 was no exception and our group was a mix of hardened Oshkosh veterans along with a few first-timers who were eager to pick up tips on how best to approach the extravaganza awaiting them. “Don’t try to do it all in a day” was a good starting point and indeed, even after 6 days, I doubt that most of us could possibly have covered everything.



We settled into our accommodation at the University of Wisconsin and most took advantage of the all-you-can-eat breakfast and dinner available in the vast “Blackhawk” dining room at very reasonable prices. There are other places to eat nearby for a bit of variety and Kelly’s bar just down the road was a magnet for post-dinner beers on most evenings – quite a few of us took a liking to the local brew, Spotted Cow, rather than the usual Miller/Bud/etc.

The Shuttle bus to and from the main entrance leaves from just outside the dining room, takes about 15-20 minutes each way and \$20 gets you a weekly pass to come and go as you please with busses running every half hour or more frequently from 06:30 to 23:30.

Our first day at the show was Sunday when many of the exhibitions and displays are being set up but arrivals are in full swing. The parking areas were filling up nicely and the sky was full of a constant stream of arrivals on two runways and also parallel taxiways. In amongst the stream of general aviation and homebuilt types, there are always vintage, warbird, aerobatic, bizjet and modern military arrivals mixed in and this pattern continues throughout the week.



Every day brings new and exotic items – on Thursday morning, I arrived in the central display area known as Boeing Plaza to find the US Naval Test Pilot School DHC-3 Otter (*pictured left*) had sneaked in overnight – a lovely sight!

The huge warbird area is a favourite for many people and this year saw the 75th anniversary of the famous attack on mainland Japan – the Doolittle Raid – which attracted 13 B-25 Mitchells (*pictured right*) which were the highlight for many.



But over the course of the week, I also counted 20 Mustangs, 4 Avengers, 4 Cobras (3 P-39s and a P-63), 3 Corsairs, 2 Bearcats, plus lone examples of a Spitfire, P-40, Wildcat and Skyraider.



Jets were in abundance too including 3 F-86 Sabres (*pictured left*), 2 T-33s, an A-4 Skyhawk and a MiG-17 to go alongside the numerous L-29s and L-39s.

The lone airworthy A-20 Havoc was also on show although it didn't take part in the flying displays at any stage – maybe next year?

Plus C-47/DC-3s aplenty.

My personal highlight was the sight of the world's two airworthy B-29s together. Both "FiFi" and "Doc" were available for inspection at different stages of the week and "FiFi" was a regular sight overhead on other days giving pleasure flights, but both took part in the Tuesday and Friday airshows and looked stunning in glorious sunlight.

The airshows take place every afternoon with great light for photography, along with a night show on Wednesday and Saturday. The extreme aerobatic performers are interspersed with a warbird element every day, some modern military participation (B-1, A-10, F-35 and Blue Angels this year) and a few oddball items like the Scale Composites Proteus (*see bottom photo*) and, pictured right, the "Screamin' Sasquatch", a Waco biplane fitted with an additional 3000lb thrust jet engine which does unnatural things whilst making a most unnatural noise!



Other rarities coming and going during the week included the sole Boeing YL-15 light observation aircraft (*pictured left*), two gorgeous Howard 500s and a jet powered LongEze! Anniversaries meant that Piper Cubs formed a sea of yellow in places and an array of very attractive Cessna 190s also caught the eye.

In fact, over 8000 aircraft arrive at Oshkosh during a typical AirVenture and are grouped into sections for parking and camping purposes. You can stroll around these at leisure or just focus on your specific areas of interest. Forums and presentations take place constantly and Thursday evening saw a presentation on the

Apollo missions including 7 Apollo astronauts. Blue Origin also brought along their New Shepard reusable launch rocket and capsule to give a glimpse into future space travel opportunities.

Add in the EAA's excellent collection of unique aircraft in their museum, the tranquillity of the nearby seaplane base (not to be missed) and pleasure flying opportunities in Bell 47s, a Ford Trimotor and a B-17 and you have an experience not to be missed. There really is something here for every aviation interest. Most people don't do Oshkosh just once – if you haven't done it yet, add it to your "gotta go there list".



A final night's drink in Kelly's gave everyone the chance to share their highlights and on our return trip to Chicago the next morning we took the opportunity to stop off at the nearby overspill airfield at Fond Du Lac, the Russell Military Museum and, acting on a tip off from one of our group, we found two air racing Sea Furies at Kenosha which was a nice way to round things off before boarding our American Airlines 787 back home.

In 2018 Ian Allan Aviation Tours will be offering a short tour with 4 full days at Oshkosh; a longer trip with 7 full days at the show; PLUS an optional 7-day extension, to either the short or longer tour, to Grissom Aviation Museum in Peru, IN; the gigantic US Air Force Museum in Dayton, OH; the incredible collection in the National Air and Space Museum, and the huge collection of aircraft in the Udvar Hazy Museum, in Washington DC.

Report and all photographs courtesy of Chris Bosworth, Tour Manager, Ian Allan Aviation Tours.