

Aviation Related Suggestions

All or several of these attractions may be worked into a tour, depending on how much time a group has to visit.

Exploration Place

Take the controls in one of the realistic flight-simulators at Exploration Place! The \$62 million-dollar creative learning center, located on the banks of the Arkansas River in downtown Wichita, also includes a fascinating 40 ft. tall "wind wall" and many other hands-on exhibits related to flight.

Kansas Aviation Museum

Once the home of Wichita's first airport, this historic building showcases Wichita's aviation history from "barn-storming" pioneers to the multinational corporations of today. Its grand art-deco style appeals both to the aviation community and to anyone interested in historical preservation. The airport site in the 1920s was nothing more than prairie when the first air show was held on the site in August 1924. In its heyday, Wichita Municipal – ICT in aviation parlance – was a major mid-continent stopover for airlines. During the 1940s, it was one of the busiest airports in the nation, with tower operators managing the constant stream of incoming and outgoing commercial flights. In 1944, a take-off or landing occurred every 90 seconds. The new museum's newest feature is the Sim Adventure Center which features four fighter cockpits including an F-16 painted as a Thunderbird, an F-4 in the colors of the Blue Angels, an F-22 and a T-33, retrofitted to simulate the experience of combat operations in real-time. Visitors will begin the experience with a briefing about mission objectives and operational aspects of the simulator outside the cockpit that culminates in a real-time dogfight and/or formation flight with other participants.

Wichita/Sedgwick County Historical Museum

Wichita gained its claim as the "Air Capital of the World" in the early 1900s when pioneers of aviation – Clyde Cessna, Walter Beech and Lloyd Stearman - began building airplanes. Stearman's company eventually became Boeing; Cessna and Beech's companies are still in operation in Wichita. In the 1960s Bill Lear added his name to Wichita's aviation heritage with the Learjet. Cessna, Hawker Beechcraft and Bombardier Learjet produce 42% of the world's private aircraft today.

National Institute of Aviation Research (NIAR)

This Kansas Center for Excellence is located at Wichita State University. NIAR supports the aviation industry through research, which advances fundamental science and technology of importance to aviation. The facility includes 15 research and testing laboratories and provides state-of-the-art equipment, investigators, and administrative support to clients in private industry. The major labs are Aerodynamics, Composites and Advanced Materials, Crash Dynamics and CAD/CAM.

Kansas Cosmosphere & Space Center – Hutchinson, KS

This facility is affiliated with the Smithsonian Institute, is dedicated to the preservation of artifacts related to the exploration of space. The center contains the largest collection of space memorabilia outside the Smithsonian in Washington D. C. and an IMAX Dome Theater.

Aircraft Plant Tours

Tours of aircraft plants are *sometimes* available to *aviation related groups*. Scheduling which is based on several factors including current security levels, is at the discretion of the aircraft companies and scheduled only through Go Wichita Convention & Visitors Bureau.