



ICELAND'S AVIATION MUSEUM GLOWS WITH HISTORY AND HERITAGE

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AKUREYRI, ICELAND — If you don't read Icelandic, the clue to the location of Iceland's aviation museum (Flugsafn Islands) is in the large nose of a Douglas DC-6 poking out the side.

The museum opened its doors fifteen years ago in June 2000, and moved into its current hangar in November 2007, which is crammed full of aviation heritage from this country where the advent of flight marked a significant point in the nation's development.

Iceland's first passenger and mail flight, marked in the museum, took place on June 4th, 1928, aboard a Junkers F.13 — the world's first all-metal transport aircraft — between Reykjavik and Akureyri via Isafjordur and Siglufjordur. The flight then took 4h45m, compared with Air Iceland's turboprop flights today, scheduled for 1h15m.

Iceland's aviation heritage isn't just about domestic flying. Icelandair predecessor Loftleidir made its name on the one-stop low-cost flights between North America and Europe that are such a staple of the current national carrier's network. Loftleidir's history is expansively detailed together with numerous models, including the Canadair CL-44 whose operation during the 1960s earned it

the title of “the Hippie Airline”.

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Another Icelandair predecessor airline, Flugfelag Akureyrar (Akureyri Airways), is also represented, with an Waco YKS-7 biplane acquired in 2009 and painted to resemble TF-ÖRN, the airline’s first aircraft.

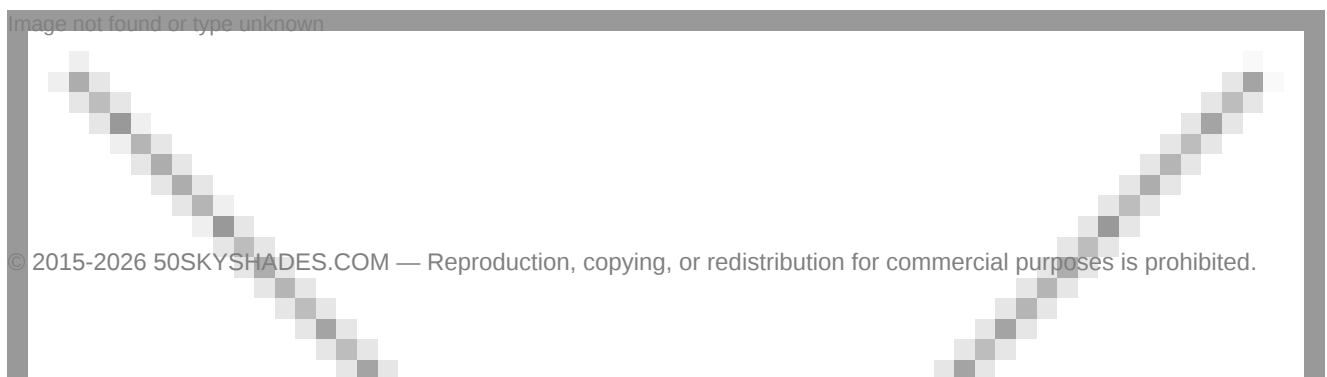
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Taking the place of honour near the entrance is an Aerospatiale SA 365N2 Dauphin helicopter, which was pulled out of the sea after an accident during a training exercise in 2007. TF-SIF saved over 250 lives in her twenty-two years of service to this nautical nation, and it's clear from the appreciation of the museum staff that its restoration and display are a matter of pride.

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Also from the coast guard is the Fokker 27 Friendship TF-SYN, which made the museum its home just before the required replacement of the wing spar made maintenance prohibitively expensive. It's the largest aircraft in the building and its dual purpose cabin (the aircraft's mission was maritime patrol plus search and rescue) is open for visitors to walk around.

Although the F27 will likely never fly again, many of the aircraft in the collection are in full flying order, with owners parking their planes on display in the hangar.



Another aircraft not in flying order is TF-FIE, Iceland's first ever jet aircraft. Just the flight deck of the Boeing 727-108, delivered to Icelandair in 1967, is on display. US readers may indeed have seen the aircraft during its years of service to UPS as N936UP. But the ability to lean inside such a historic aircraft — and for your author, to return to the age when there were flight engineers on the right hand side of the aircraft — is a real pleasure.

So, incidentally, is the chance of taking a seat at the conference table next to the 727 exhibit and leafing through original operational and emergency manuals from the aircraft. What a treat.

However, the airworthy Douglas C-47 (now made up to look more like its civilian equivalent, a DC-3) TF-NPK in the museum spends the long, light northern summers outside, where the golden orange of Icelandair's accent colour really pops. (The modern Icelandair livery, of course, is not historically accurate, but reflects the assistance of the national airline in the preservation of this aircraft, which played a significant role in soil conservation efforts across the country.)



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Back inside the hangar, engine fans can get up close with a radial engine from a DC-3 or a Rolls Royce RB-211 turbofan from an Air Atlanta Icelandic Lockheed L-1011.

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Air Atlanta is also well represented in the information exhibits around the hangar, with the charter and wetlease operator's significant work in the Middle East highlighted in particular.

Closer to the ground, Iceland's first braking action testing vehicle — a Saab 900 Turbo in service from 1984–2004 at Reykjavik Airport — is also on display, a present from airport operator Isavia to mark the opening of the new hangar in 2007.

But what really makes the museum are the cheery, personable volunteers who welcome visitors from around the world, explain the historical significance of each aircraft and enthuse about aviation in general. It's always a pleasure to talk to people like that in aviation — but it's even better to do so inside what's probably the world's most northerly commercial aviation museum.

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