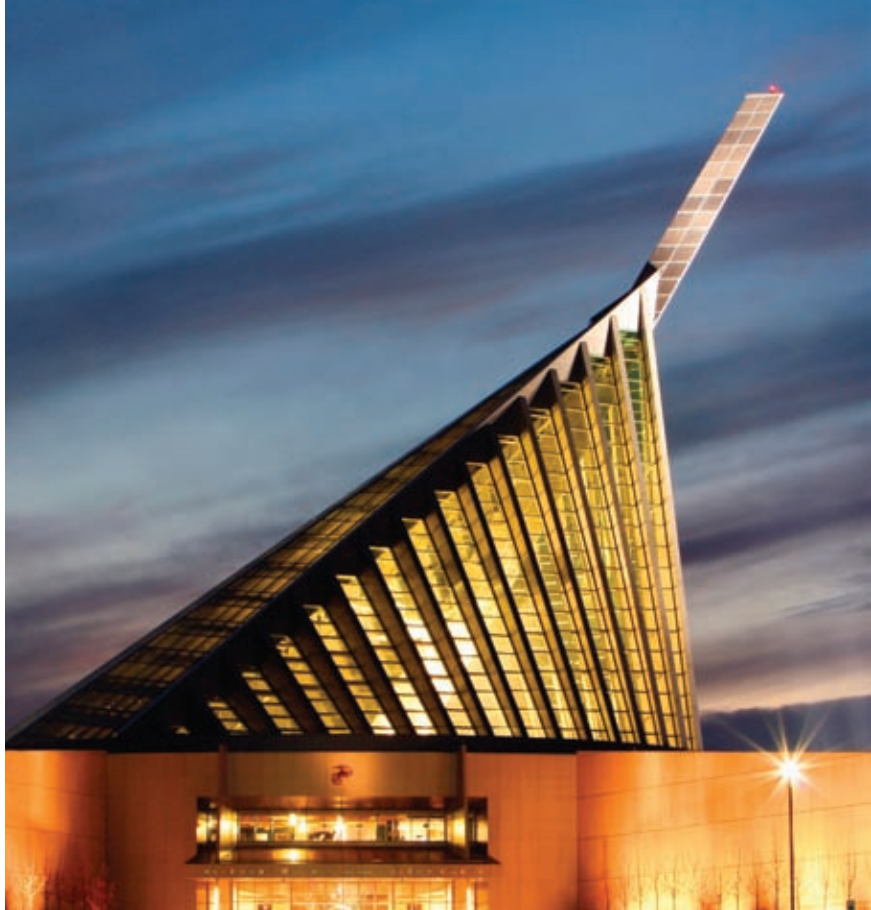


Are we
there
yet?



FAMILY FUN

Ooh-rah!

Celebrate the Marine Corps birthday with a trip to their Museum

For many, November is a time of giving thanks; a special month for recognizing those who make lasting impressions on our lives. It is also a month dedicated to honoring the brave men and women who fought — and continue to fight — for our freedom. This November, there's no better way for Virginians to share their appreciation than by visiting the National Museum of the Marine Corps, a fascinating complex devoted to the history and pursuits of Marines.

The National Museum of the Marine Corps opened with much fanfare on its birthday, November 10, 2006, ushering in a new generation of fans for the smallest military unit in America. Built as a lasting tribute to the Marines — the past, present and future — this high-tech museum is a cooperative effort of the United States Marine Corps and the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation. The museum serves as the centerpiece of an upcoming complex called the Marine Corps Heritage Center, a campus that will include the Semper Fidelis Memorial Park, parade grounds, hiking trails and other offerings.

As it stands now, the Marine Corps Museum is the

number one tourist attraction in Virginia, eliciting visits from more than 500,000 people annually. The facility is an astonishing work of architecture resting on a 135-acre site just a stone's throw from the Marine Corps base in Quantico. What sets this 118,000-square-foot structure apart from its contemporaries is its provocative exterior—the museum boasts a soaring design modeled after the heroic flag-raisers of Iwo Jima. While the façade is an impeccable work of craftsmanship, some would argue that it doesn't compare to the highly interactive, technologically savvy exhibits that honor bravery at its best.

Upon arriving at the museum, visitors will enter Leatherneck Gallery, where they will be confronted with life-size aircraft suspended from a 210-foot stainless steel spire. The four authentic planes are “piloted” by mannequins, all of whom serve to recognize the brave Marines who protect America by air. As you're walking, don't be alarmed if you pass by a few life-like figures— actual Marines were used as models for all of the figures in the museum. If it's genuine artifacts you're looking for, a casual jaunt through the galleries will expose you to more

than 60,000 historic relics, including authentic news reels of war-time footage, personal letters from Marines in battle and the first and second flags raised at Iwo Jima.

While these amazing artifacts of history educate and entertain visitors, the real selling point is the museum's "immersion" exhibits; grandiose displays that leverage cutting-edge technology to bring the true Marine experience to life. Folks of all ages can step into a Marine's boots and walk the mock shore of Iwo Jima, witness the winter battle of the Korean War and experience the life of a soldier at war. An integral part of the immersion effect is the museum's helicopter, an authentic, hollowed-out aircraft separating exhibits. Visitors can walk from one scene, through the belly of the helicopter and into the steamy Vietnam War set. Topping it all off is a practice M16 rifle range with a recorded drill sergeant egging you on.

In addition to these interactive galleries, visitors can view the Global War on Terrorism and Marine Corps Band exhibits, as well as artwork by Marine artists. What's more, tourists can relive the Corps' beginnings through the recreation of Tun Tavern, the famous building where the military branch was born. When your brain is full of fun information, you can fill your stomachs at an authentic "mess hall," modeled after a typical dining area where Marines would gather to eat. If you're looking for a souvenir or you want to relax, the museum offers classrooms, a theater, a gift shop, and a beautiful bar and restaurant— everything you need to top off an amazing journey through the 234-year history of the United States Marine Corps.

This November 10, take some time to recognize the brave men and women who put their lives on the line so that we can comfortably live ours. One family trip to the Marine Corps Museum will enrich the mind, excite the eye and remind us that we all have a lot to be thankful for. In the end, that's really the best birthday gift of all.

— Nicholas Addison Thomas

To learn more about the United States Marine Corps Museum, visit the official Web site of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation at www.usmcmuseum.org.

Details:

National Museum of the Marine Corps
18900 Jefferson Davis Highway
Triangle, VA 22172
1.877.635.1775
info@usmcmuseum.org

Hours and Admission:

The National Museum of the Marine Corps is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day except Christmas Day. Admission to the museum is free.



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