

ROBIOUS CORRIDOR

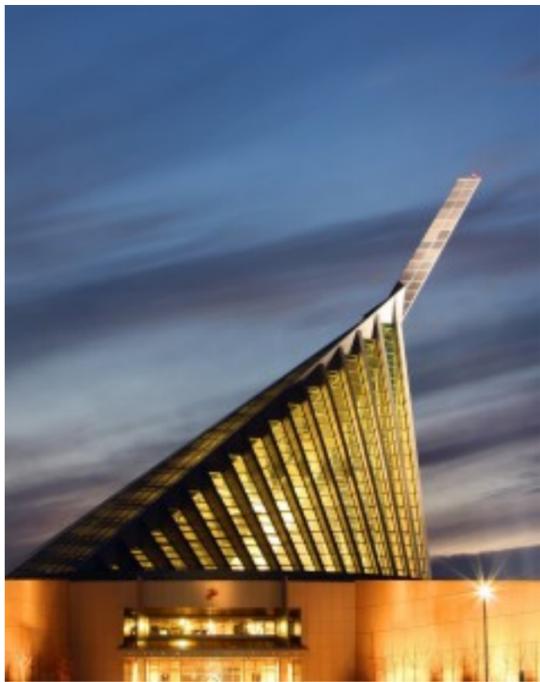
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Feb6

[Day Tripping: The National Museum of the Marine Corps](#)

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Semper Fi!

Looking for a day trip that is indoor, educational, and free? Head to the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico! You can't miss its soaring, 210- foot tilted mast from 95 North. Its distinctive shape mirrors the famous photo of the tilted American flag raised over Iwo Jima after some of World War II's fiercest fighting.

A visit to this impressive world-class museum is a winning proposition for just about anyone. Even families who aren't really "into" the military will appreciate the Marines' many contributions dating back to 1775. Regardless of age, it is impossible to emerge without being a bit more proud to be an American. Plus there's a newfound sense of gratitude the Marines fight for our side and not our enemies.

Since opening in the fall of 2006, the museum has welcomed four million with rave reviews from Marines and civilians alike. Situated on 135 sprawling acres next to the Marine Corps Base Quantico, the 120,000 -square – foot building is nothing short of mammoth and planning to expand! Currently it contains over 1,000 artifacts and 1,800 photographs, letters, and illustrations. There is no way to take it all in during a single visit.

The exhibits immerse the visitor directly into historical settings, simulating all but the actual line of fire. (Phew!) First there is the typical boot camp experience letting kids qualify on an M-16 at the laser rifle range. The next step is to follow the footsteps of Marines into conflict. Visitors literally feel the ground shaking while landing on Iwo Jima in 1945, experience the freezing cold air of a North Korean battlefield, and get the rush of exiting a helicopter over Vietnam. By thrusting visitors into the middle of the action, the exhibits force them to see, feel, and appreciate what it means to be a

Marine.

The museum is wonderfully interactive for kids using state-of-the-art technology, multimedia exhibits, and thousands of artifacts. The combination of 3-D projections, audio recordings of Marines telling their individual stories, and life-sized figures cast from actual Marines creates a truly unique learning experience. Upon entering the immense glass atrium, visitors see four historical aircraft suspended from the ceiling. There is also a real amphibious tractor from WWII and Sikorsky HRS-2 helicopter from the Korean War.

The museum sponsors “Family Day” on the second Saturday every month. It’s a creative event geared to kids of all ages with arts and crafts, puppet shows, movies, and hands-on learning activities. February’s event will explore the Civil War, and March’s will focus on Women in the Marine Corps. In addition, there are events on other Saturdays this winter like Model Trains, an MRE Chef Cookoff, a Fly-Tying Marathon, and Vietnam History.

If it’s warm enough, the outdoor children’s playground has three levels for swinging, jumping, and climbing. In addition, there are hiking trails, cabins, and camping nearby. With over 12,000 acres, Prince William Forest Park is the largest nature area in the Washington area.

WANT TO GO?

Visit: www.USMCMuseum.org and find it on Facebook.

Cost: Admission and parking are free. The M-16 A2 rifle range cost \$5.

Address: 18900 Jefferson Davis Highway, Triangle, Virginia 22172. Directions: From I-95 N take Exit 150. This is also the exit for the main entrance to Quantico. It takes about an hour and 15 minutes to make the 76-mile drive.

Hours: Open every day of the year from 9 am-5 pm except Christmas Day.

Dining: Don’t be afraid to come hungry because the museum features two high-quality restaurants with kids’ menus – the cafeteria-style Devil Dog Diner and the Tun Tavern for some colonial pub dining.

Gift Shop: It is an activity in itself with a wide range of items pertaining to Marine Corps life. Don’t miss the massive Lego structure of Iwo Jima in the center.

Libby McNamee is a former Army JAG Officer enthralled by the National Museum of the Marine Corps. For other travel ideas, check out her blog “Libby With a Y” at www.libbymcnaee.com



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