

# DRIVE INTO HISTORY

The Tucson Military Vehicle Museum offers one the country's largest public displays of military machinery

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A British Chieftain Mk 13 main battle tank (MBT).  
*Opposite page, from top:*  
A drive wheel on a USMC M60A3 MBT; an Iraqi T-62.



Military vehicles have long held a special place in the hearts of enthusiasts and collectors due to their rugged appearance, robust engineering, and historical significance. Whether its an iconic World War II Willys, a battle-scarred tank pulled from the front lines, or an armored scout car designed to carry out observation while remaining undetected, each vehicle provides a unique glimpse into the past.

Now, visitors to Southern Arizona can get up-close and personal with these motorized machines at the new Tucson Military Vehicle Museum (TMVM).

Part of the Arizona Aerospace Foundation, which operates the world-class Pima Air & Space Museum (PASM) in Tucson and the Titan Missile Museum (TMM) in Sahuarita, the TMVM takes guests on an engaging journey through history and explores the remarkable stories behind some of the world's finest modes of military transportation.

"It's a companion component of our existing museum enterprise," says Scott Marchand, executive director of PASM.

The Air & Space Museum and Titan Missile Museum are two of Tucson's top tourism destinations, together attracting upward of 250,000 visitors annually.

"Aviation has its enthusiasts, and we're certainly strong in that respect," Marchand says, "but if you consider that the main purpose of military aviation is, for the most part, direct support of the men and machines on the ground, vehicles are a natural complement to what we're already doing."

Located on 77 acres directly adjacent to PASM—the two facilities share a main entry drive—the museum showcases military vehicles from throughout history and around the world. Inside a 30,000-square-foot state-of-the-art

display gallery are hundreds of vehicles dating from the early 20th century to the present, with an emphasis on World War II to current day.

"We're trying to cover all eras as much as possible," Marchand explains. "We've been able to amass an existing collection of about 150 vehicles, and we've been continuing to acquire and accumulate cargo trucks, Humvees, DUKW amphibious transport, and battle tanks—it's quite an ambitious expansion."

There are vehicles from all branches of the U.S. military, as well as from international forces, including the U.K. and Russia. NATO-era vehicles from the 1970s and 1980s share space with contemporary anti-terrorism armor, such as MRAPs (Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected) and M60 tanks. There are light reconnaissance tanks from England and British Special Forces Land Rover patrols.

An M1A1 Abrams tank is one of only a rare few on public display in the country. And the M88 Hercules recovery vehicle is the same one that toppled the now infamous statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad in 2003.

"We're trying to cover a lot of bases when it comes to telling the veterans' stories, the technical stories, some of the doctrinal reasons why designs change and why equipment changes," Marchand notes.

The experience continues outside, as well, with an events ramada, demonstration corral, driving tracks, and much more. Ride and drive activities allow guests to see the vehicles in action. Get behind the wheel of a Humvee, watch a safety demonstration by an airfield fire truck, or take a guided ride in a 60-ton battle tank.

Whether you're a veteran who operated one of these vehicles, a family member who wants to better understand what Grandpa did in the Army, an automotive enthusiast seek-



ing out new forms of machinery to study, or even a gamer hoping for a real-life *World of Tanks* adventure, the Tucson Military Vehicle Museum offers a tactile experience unlike anything else.

"We're really poised to do something unique and special," Marchand says. "There's nothing like this in a major population center with easy access to major transportation hubs. This is going to become a rare gem and a valuable resource not only for Arizona but also for the southwest region of the United States."