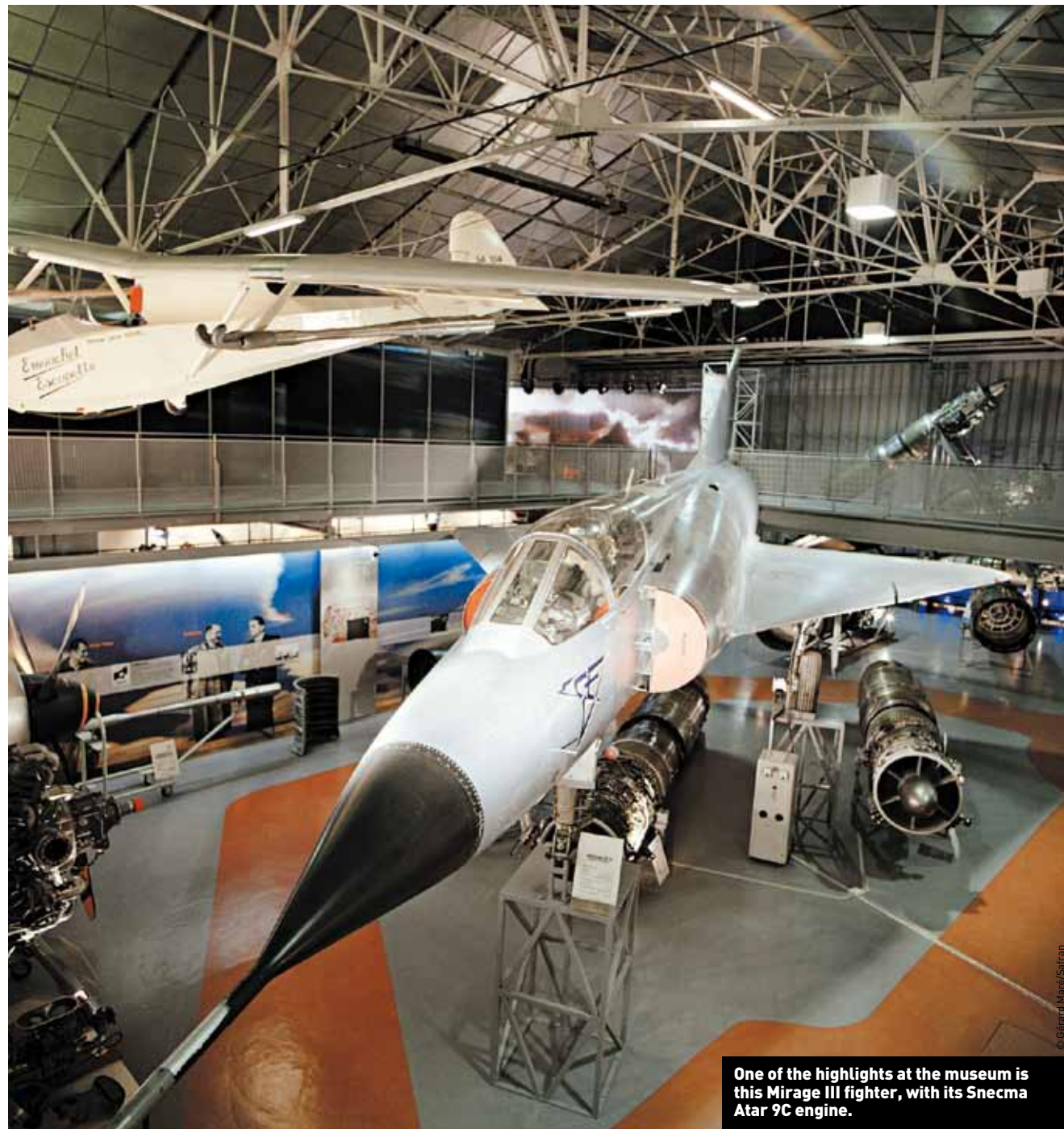


HERITAGE. Located in Villaroche, south of Paris, the Safran Museum recounts our adventures in air and space reaching back more than a century. The museum welcomes over 10,000 visitors a year.

A LEGACY OF PASSION



One of the highlights at the museum is this Mirage III fighter, with its Snecma Atar 9C engine.

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Safran is the only aerospace corporation in France to have preserved so much of its past. The Group traces its origins back to 1905, a year before the first heavier-than-air flight in Europe, in the Bois de Boulogne by the Brazilian-born dandy Alberto Santos-Dumont.

The history of Safran is inextricably linked with that of the French aerospace industry. In fact, the museum is located in a seaplane hangar built back in the 1930s.

Created in 1985 and renovated in 2000, the Safran Museum showcases over 200 major pieces – aircraft, jet and piston engines, landing gear, etc. – and a hundred models of aircraft powered by engines made by Group companies. “We have a number of very rare, or even unique pieces,”

VIEWPOINT



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JEAN-CLAUDE BACHON, MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM, IN CHARGE OF PHOTOS DURING THE 2008 NATIONAL HERITAGE DAYS

“I spent my whole career with Snecma (Safran Group) in Villaroche. In particular, I was in charge of calibrating the engine test cells, and scheduling tests for the M53, M88 and Atar jet engines. Once I retired, I joined the association. I accompany groups of visitors two to five times a week, showing them the various pieces in the museum. My role in the museum doesn’t stop there: I also took part in constructing some of the models, the coléoptère in particular, and in restoring a seaplane. It’s great being part of this association, and shows that people of all ages can still be useful. Plus, by going to the museum I get to meet friends and former colleagues, all united by a shared passion.”



© Pierre Michaud

The model rocket workshop at the last National Heritage Days, led by Snecma volunteers.

notes Jean-Pierre Grassi, the museum director.

Visitors are invited on a chronological trip through the conquest of air and space, from the pioneering rotary engines to modern jets and powerful rocket engines. “The exhibits are designed to be as lively and interactive as possible, with a number of audiovisual aids in addition to the actual objects and models on display,” adds Grassi.

By air or on land

Landmarks such as a Mirage fighter, Blériot XI monoplane and an Ariane launcher stage are of course the highlights of the collection. But the museum also

has a vast collection of antique motorcycles. After the first world war, Gnome & Rhône (which became Snecma in 1945) sought to diversify its business portfolio, and produced motorcycles from 1923 to 1960. “We also acquired a 1935 Messier automobile featuring a unique hydropneumatic suspension system,” says Grassi. “George Messier, the inventor of the suspension system, tried to make his mark as a car manufacturer, but he didn’t sell too many of them. He was much more successful when he decided to apply his hydropneumatic suspension technology to aircraft landing gear.”

The museum houses another amusing example of the Group’s historic diversifi-

cation: a collection of cast-iron pots and pans manufactured by Snecma after the second world war...

Sharing knowledge

Most of the pieces on display were restored by retired Safran employees, through the association of friends of the museum – whose members also offer guided tours. “These men and women are really passionate about aerospace, and they love to share their knowledge,” smiles Jean-Pierre Grassi. “A recent visit that was supposed to take an hour had to be interrupted after three and a half hours because the museum was closing!”

The Safran Museum is proving increasingly popular with the public. It welcomes over 10,000 visitors a year, including about one-fifth from outside France. During the French National Heritage Days, held every year in September, the museum organizes a number of special events, especially for children. “We welcome an average of 2,000 people over these two days,” Grassi notes with pride. “It’s an excellent promotional opportunity, since we know that a lot of these visitors, who just came to ‘take a look’, are so impressed that they’ll be back in the following weeks for a much longer visit.” In other words, air and space continue to inspire the dreams of young and old alike. ■

MORE

www.museesafran.com (French only)