



Huntsville's *Alabama Space & Rocket Center*

The U.S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama is a museum operated by the government of Alabama, showcasing rockets, achievements, and artifacts of the U.S. space program. Sometimes billed as "Earth's largest space museum", astronaut Owen Garriott described the place as, "a great way to learn about space in a town that has embraced the space program from the very beginning."

Opened in 1970, just after the second manned mission to the lunar surface, the center not only showcases Apollo Program hardware but also houses interactive science exhibits, Space Shuttle and Army rocketry and aircraft. With more than 1,500 permanent rocketry and space exploration artifacts, as well as many rotating rocketry and space-related exhibits, the center occupies land carved out of Redstone Arsenal adjacent to Huntsville Botanical Garden at exit 15 on Interstate 565. The center offers bus tours of nearby Marshall Space Flight Center.

Two camp programs offer visitors the opportunity to stay on the grounds and learn more about their respective subject matter. U.S. Space Camp gives an in-depth exposure to the space program through participant use of simulators, lectures, and training exercises. Similarly, Aviation Challenge offers a taste of military fighter pilot training including simulations, lectures, and survival exercises. Both camps provide residential and day camp educational programs for children and adults.

The Space & Rocket Center saw 540,153 visitors in 2010 and 553,137 in 2011, and over 584,000 in 2013, the latter earning the museum recognition as the top paid tourist attraction in Alabama.

The NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge, previously known as the Great Moonbuggy Race, has run every year since 1994, and all but the first two have been held at the Space & Rocket Center. The race challenges high school and college students to design and build a small moonbuggy that they can assemble on-site and ride across a simulated lunar terrain. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Space_%26_Rocket_Center]

