

Its sleek lines and graceful curves make the Supermarine Spitfire arguably the most esthetically pleasing aircraft of World War II. Although only available in small numbers during the fall of 1940, the Spitfire became world famous thanks to its performance during the Battle of Britain. The Spitfire was truly a global fighter with more than forty different versions of the aircraft used all over the world. The Spitfire was the product of the great British designer Reginald J. Mitchell, who found fame designing racing seaplanes for the Schneider Trophy races. First flown on March 5, 1936, the Type 300 (as the prototype of the Spitfire was known) was ordered into production for the Royal Air Force (RAF) in July 1936. When World War II broke out in late 1939, the RAF had taken delivery of a total of 306 Spitfires, only half of which were in service with front line squadrons (the remainder were assigned to training units).



As the air war over Europe raged on, Supermarine continuously updated and modified the Spitfire to keep it ahead of, or at least on par with, the latest version of the German Me-109 or FW-190. The basic Spitfire airframe proved readily adaptable, receiving a variety of engines, wing layouts and armament mixtures. During its long career, Spitfires were modified for use as naval fighters (the Seafire), unarmed photo reconnaissance aircraft, fighter/bombers, night fighters and seaplanes. When Spitfire production ended in March 1949 more than 20,000 Spitfires, of all types, had been manufactured. The Spitfire Mk. VIII was basically a non-pressurized version of the Mk. VII. The Mk. VIII featured a stronger fuselage than earlier Spitfires and a retractable tail wheel. Ironically, the Mk. VIII entered service after the Mk. IX, which was built as a "stopgap" fighter following the long teething period experienced by the Mk. VIII. First ordered in July 1942, Supermarine built nearly 1,658 Mk. VIIIs by the end of 1945.

The RAF took delivery of the museum's Mk. VIII in June 1944. It was quickly tropicalized in England and shipped to Bombay, India in July 1944. Once in the Far East, the plane was

assigned to the



RAF's No. 17 Squadron, based at China Bay and Vavuyina, Ceylon (Sri Lanka). It flew numerous combat missions against the Japanese from July 1944 to June 1945 and often flew as a fighter escort for the No. 28 Squadron, a dive bomber unit equipped with Hawker Hurricanes.

The aircraft was sold to the Indian Air Force in 1947. After thirty years in India, the aircraft was sold in 1977 and returned to England. An Italian collector purchased the plane in 1979 and completely restored the aircraft. The Cavanaugh Flight Museum acquired the Spitfire in 1993 and it wears the same colors it carried while serving with No.17 Squadron during World War II.

- ENGINE Rolls-Royce Merlin 66 developing 1,720 h.p.
- ARMAMENT 2 Hispano 20mm cannons, 4 Browning .303 machine guns
- WING SPAN 36 feet 3 inches
- LENGTH 32 feet 2 inches
- HEIGHT 11 feet 8 inches
- MAX TAKEOFF WEIGHT 7,167 pounds
- CREW 1
- MANUFACTURED BY Vickers Supermarine
- TOTAL BUILT 20,334
- TOTAL EXISTING Approximately 70
- STRENGTH - 1943 538
- MUSEUM'S AIRCRAFT BUILT 1944
- ON DISPLAY AT Cavanaugh Flight Museum, Addison Airport (KADS), Dallas, Texas
- MAXIMUM SPEED 404 mph
- RANGE w/ EXTERNAL TANKS 1,800 miles
- SERVICE CEILING 43,500 feet
- SERIAL NUMBER 5779