

Southwest Military Loop Four-Day Itinerary

The state of Oklahoma has a rich and diverse military history. This tour lets travelers explore the stories behind some of the state's most courageous leaders and historic places.

Day 1

The tour begins at **45th Infantry Division Museum** in Oklahoma City. Dedicated to preserving Oklahoma's military history, the 27,000-square-foot museum has one of the country's largest military firearm collections, including many rare Civil War weapons. You can also view more than 200 of Pulitzer Prize winner Bill Mauldin's World War II cartoons and an extensive collection of Adolf Hitler's personal items, including a mirror from the bunker in Berlin where he spent his final days. Then head outside to the museum's 16-acre park to see military planes, tanks and other vehicles. From there, it's a short drive to the **American Pigeon Museum & Library**, where you'll learn about pigeons' important role as messengers in World Wars I and II. Guests can hold and pet some of the museum's unique species of pigeons and see memorabilia like a portable loft used to transport pigeons on the battlefield and equipment used to parachute the birds with soldiers.

After a stop for lunch, it's time to move on to **Historic Fort Reno**, located just west of the town of El Reno. Established in 1874 to facilitate relations with the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, the fort has a varied and fascinating history. It's been a home to the famed buffalo soldiers, a remount station that bred and trained horses for the military, and a German and Italian prisoner of war camp during World War II. Your first destination will be the **Historic Fort Reno Visitor Center & Museum**. Located in an officer's house from the 1930s, the museum showcases vintage weapons and art and has a fascinating exhibit on the buffalo soldiers. Cavalry uniforms and a huge collection of saddles are among the treasures you'll see at your next stop, the **U.S. Cavalry Museum**, which is housed in a building constructed by buffalo soldiers in 1876. You can also visit **Post Cemetery**, where soldiers, Native Americans, civilians and prisoners of war are buried, and **Post Chapel**. Built by prisoners of war in the 1940s, the chapel is a favorite of fort visitors thanks to its beautiful craftsmanship and rich, exposed-wood interior.

Then you'll head to Watonga to spend the night in one of the spacious, modern rooms at **Roman Nose State Park Lodge**, located in the heart of beautiful Roman Nose State Park. Enjoy a meal on the patio of the lodge restaurant overlooking Boecher Lake.

Day 2

The day's first stop is the **Stafford Air & Space Museum** in Weatherford, where you can view more than 3,500 aviation and space-flight treasures. Highlights of the Smithsonian-affiliate museum include

a moon rock, a Titan II rocket and a flight pressure suit worn by Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Stafford — an astronaut and Weatherford native who is the museum's namesake — during his flight on Apollo 10. Next, your group will head west to Cheyenne and the **Washita Battlefield National Historic Site**, where you'll learn about Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer's 1868 surprise winter attack on a Cheyenne encampment led by Peace Chief Black Kettle.

After that, it's south to Hobart and the **General Tommy Franks Leadership Institute & Museum**. There, you'll view memorabilia from the personal collection of Franks, an Oklahoma resident and retired four-star general who led American and Coalition troops in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq. The museum tells the story of Franks' career from his time serving in Vietnam to the Cold War years through his leadership in Afghanistan and Iraq. See awards and decorations Franks earned — including the Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded to him by George W. Bush — and gifts he received from world leaders, including a motorcycle given to him by the King of Jordan. The 9/11 exhibit contains one of the museum's newest pieces: a 3,000-pound I-beam from one of the World Trade Center towers.

Then you'll head to Lawton for dinner and to spend the night in one of the city's great hotels.

Day 3

The third day starts off at the **Comanche National Museum & Cultural Center** in Lawton, where you can see a fascinating exhibit on Comanche Code Talkers, who used codes based on their native language to relay secret messages during World War II. You can also view works from the museum's large collection of Comanche art and try your hand at a buffalo hunting simulator.

Then it's on to Fort Sill, a Lawton-area U.S. Army base that is rich in history. First, you'll stop at **Fort Sill National Historic Landmark & Museum** to see exhibits and a video about the fascinating past of a base that was established in 1869 during the Indian Wars. You can go inside some of the base's historic buildings, like the cavalry barracks, which are set up as they would have been during the Civil War. Then there's the **U.S. Army Field Artillery Museum** with its hundreds of pieces of artillery. Among the many unique treasures inside and outside the museum is Atomic Annie, the only cannon to ever have fired a nuclear shell. The M65 atomic cannon was a prototype developed in the early Cold War years and tested in 1953. The museum's other

fascinating items include Revolutionary War cannons and the only surviving Gun Motor Carriage M12 — a type of self-propelled gun — from World War II. You'll then move on to **Post Cemetery**, where many soldiers, pioneers and Native Americans are buried. Make sure to visit the area known as Chief's Knoll, where prominent members from the Southern Plains tribes — including Comanche leader Quanah Parker — are buried. If time allows, you'll also want to head out to the base's Apache cemetery to visit the grave of Geronimo. The legendary Apache warrior spent the final years of his life living at Fort Sill after being taken as a prisoner of war.

Next, you'll head to nearby Elgin to the **Fort Sill National Cemetery**. Dedicated in 2001, this beautiful place is the second national cemetery in the state of Oklahoma.

If time permits, you'll then make a final stop in Chickasha at the **Grady County Museum** to learn about the W&B Flying School, one of the civilian schools that contracted with the government to provide pilot training before and during World War II. The museum has many items from the school, including yearbooks, logbooks and a plane propeller.

You'll then return to Oklahoma City for dinner at one of the city's many restaurants and then to your hotel for the night.

Day 4

Day 4 begins at Oklahoma City's **99s Museum of Woman Pilots**. This gem celebrates female pilots and takes its name from an international organization of women's pilots founded in 1929 with 99 members. You'll also see exhibits that tell the story of the early women's air races, female pilots in World War II and the history of women in the space program. The 99s' first president — and most famous member — was Amelia Earhart, and the museum has a large collection of her personal items, including her original pilot's license, her 99s scarf and her lucky elephant hoof bracelet.

Next up is the **Oklahoma Veterans Memorial**. Located near the State Capitol, the memorial features a bronze statue of a soldier and four walls of bronze panels depicting scenes from the major wars. Names of Oklahomans killed in action are etched into the backs of the walls. There's also a USS Oklahoma memorial dedicated to those killed at Pearl Harbor.

The tour's final stop is the **Oklahoma History Center**. This stunning facility includes a fascinating exhibit on the history of the United States Armed Forces, along with exhibits on Oklahoma's American Indian tribes, oil and gas industry and the early history of the state.

Southwest Military Loop Point to Point

Day One

45 th Infantry Museum	9:00am – 11:00am
American Pigeon Museum	11:30am – 12:30pm
Lunch	1:00pm – 2:00pm
Historic Fort Reno	3:00pm – 5:00pm
Overnight at Roman Nose State Park Lodge	

Day Two

Stafford Air and Space Museum	9:00am – 11:00am
Washita National Battlefield	12:45pm – 2:15pm
Tommy Franks Leadership Institute and Museum	4:00pm – 5:00pm
Overnight in Lawton	

Day Three

Comanche Nation Museum and Cultural Center	9:00am – 10:00pm
Fort Sill Museum/Field Artillery Museum/Chief's Knoll	10:30am – 2:30pm
Fort Sill National Cemetery	3:00pm – 3:45pm
Grady County Museum (W&B Flying School)	Time Permitting
Overnight in Oklahoma City	

Day Four

99s Museum of Women Pilots	9:00am – 10:00pm
Oklahoma Veterans Memorial	10:30am – 11:00am
Oklahoma History Museum	11:30am – 12:30pm