

LEISURE / TRAVEL / INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

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The Miracle on the Hudson plane's final home

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The Miracle on the Hudson plane is the centerpiece exhibit at Carolinas Aviation Museum in Charlotte.

Mary Gilbert

“It’s the white elephant in the room.”

That’s how Wally Coppinger describes the [US Airways](#) plane that dominates the [Carolinas Aviation Museum](#) in [Charlotte, NC](#), where he’s executive director.

“Everyone stops dead when they see it,” he adds.

No wonder. It's the famed, ill-fated [Miracle on the Hudson](#) plane and the centerpiece of the collection of historical aircraft at this Smithsonian affiliate.

On January 15, 2009, Flight 1549, carrying 150 passengers and a crew of five, took off from LaGuardia Airport in New York City bound for Charlotte. A few minutes later, the Airbus A320 flew into a flock of Canadian geese. The two engines each sucked in two birds, and they shut down immediately. The disabled plane rapidly descended.

Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger and First Officer Jeff Skiles were in command. Thanks to their quick and sound decision making, a plane embodying modern aviation's technology and safety features, and, frankly, blessed luck, the men successfully maneuvered the plane to land in the Hudson River. Rescue followed close behind. Miraculously, everyone survived.

Visitors can walk completely around the plane and see the damage.

Clearly visible is the buckling from the initial impact, about two-thirds of the way back, and scrapes and dents from the rescue and recovery efforts. When the plane crashed, the back cargo door broke off and dangled as water flooded the cabin. Also on the plane's ribs are the markings the National Transportation Safety Board made during its investigation of the crash.

Display cases contain actual items on board that day – a fur coat, cell phones, newspapers, pillows, wine bottles, seat cushions, briefcases, the captain's logbook, and crew uniforms. A life-

size model of a Canadian goose illustrates that this bird brought down that great big bird.

All in all, the exhibit leaves you believing in miracles.

When you go

Carolinas Aviation Museum is located at 4672 First Flight Drive, Charlotte, NC, 28208, near Charlotte Douglas International Airport. Phone is 704-997-3770. Check the [website](#) for more information.

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