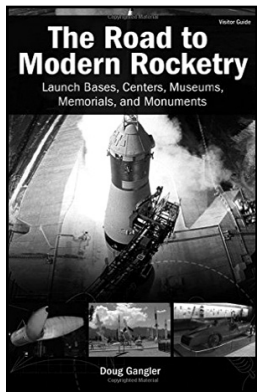


BOOK REVIEW

THE ROAD TO MODERN ROCKETRY: LAUNCH BASES, CENTERS, MUSEUMS, MEMORIALS, AND MONUMENTS



by Doug Gangler

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Doug Gangler was a career US Navy officer who then operated a tour company taking visitors to historic military sites in Europe. In his book he presents both the history of rocketry and descriptions of a selection of sites and museums in the United States and Europe—sites that readers would find interesting and educational. Unfortunately, the dual purposes are intertwined in a fashion that renders each difficult to follow. Gangler divides the book into five chapters—Germany, France, United Kingdom, Russia, and the United States, with the United States chapter divided into three sections: East Coast; Southwest, Mountain, and West Coast; and the South and Midwest—the history of rocketry, however, does not fit well into this geographic distribution.

Gangler's history of rocketry is solid, if on occasion overly celebratory. In his Preface, Gangler states that "Six brilliant men were critical to the development of modern, long-distance rockets"—Tsiolkovsky, Goddard (Gangler refers to him as Robert in the text), Oberth, Esnault-Pelterie, von Braun, and Korolev. This reader found his adherence to the Goddard/Tsiolkovsky/Oberth triad lacking original insight, although the inclusion of Esnault-Pelterie and Korolev are useful and interesting. Von Braun is an obvious requisite. In the "United States: South and Midwest" section, Gangler does provide readers with an interesting subsection titled "USAF Missiles, Rockets, and Space." In it, Gangler covers the development of the ICBM in the United States through to the deployment of the Minuteman in 1962, focusing on the work of General Bernard Schriever. The "six brilliant men" are fine, but this reader wishes that *The Road to Modern Rocketry* would have provided readers with a history richer in these fascinating and lesser known characters.

Gangler provides his readers with five important sites to visit in each of Germany, France, and the United Kingdom—Gangler refers to them as "attractions,"—as well as three in Russia, and more than twenty in the United States. Readers with a background in rocketry or military history will know of most of them. This reader appreciates the inclusion of the Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp Memorial in Germany where the V-2 rockets were produced, as well as the Eperlecques Blockhouse and La Coupole—both in France—where the Nazis planned to launch the V-2s against Great Britain. Within the United States, most of the "attractions" are museums and NASA facilities, already popular on the tourist circuit, but Gangler, as a military officer, includes military bases such as Vandenberg Air Force Base in California and Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado, both of which are a challenge to visit. An interesting, if odd, inclusion is the Goddard Monument in Worcester, Massachusetts. Gangler describes the flagpole with a stainless steel rocket as a "fine remembrance to this distinguished American," and Gangler includes that Goddard's Aunt Effie's farm is now the Pakachoag Golf Course on which is a small monument marks the spot where Goddard's 16 March 1926 rocket came down—visiting that spot would be remarkable on many levels—this reader must work on his handicap.

The Road to Modern Rocketry provides the history of rocketry in accessible language aimed at readers with an interest in rocketry, but without substantial background in the subject matter. Indeed, this reader believes that there will be an audience for Gangler's work, particularly those with a wish to travel to historic sites off the radar of the average tourist map. Gangler provides his readers with a nice foundation for further exploration—both intellectually and physically.

Hunter Hollins
National Air and Space Museum
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, DC