

NAME THAT PLANE

P-38 Lightning

The P-38 Lightning was the only American fighter produced throughout all of World War II, from Pearl Harbor to V-J Day. The airplane employed distinctive twin-boom tails, earning it the nickname “fork-tailed devil” by the Luftwaffe. The P-38 scored its biggest victories in the Pacific and was the primary long-range fighter of the Army Air Forces until the P-51 Mustang started arriving. Designed by Lockheed engineer Clarence “Kelly” Johnson and his team, the P-38 represented one of the most radical departures in the history of American fighter development. The Lightning was a complete breakaway from conventional designs, yet its odd looks yielded the power of two engines and, at long last, the ability to carry heavy armament. The P-38 was unusually quiet for a fighter, the exhaust muffled by the turbo-superchargers. It was extremely forgiving, and could be mishandled in many ways, but the rate of roll in the early versions was too slow for it to excel as a dogfighter. The P-38 was the only American fighter aircraft in production throughout American involvement in the war, from Pearl Harbor to Victory over Japan Day.

The big twin fought the most important air battles of the 1943 to 1944 period and was a key element in breaking the back of Axis air power over Germany. In the UK, the P-38 wings initially provided long range escort for the 8th Air Force, in that critical phase of the daylight bombing offensive, when Luftwaffe strength was at its best, and US bomber losses began to reach unsustainable proportions. The P-38 was used most successfully in the Pacific Theater of Operations and the China-Burma-India Theater of Operations. In the South West Pacific theater, the P-38 was the primary long-range fighter of United States Army Air Forces until the appearance of the P-51D Mustangs toward the end of the war.

Much detailed information about the construction, test flying, modifications, etc.: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lockheed_P-38_Lightning

P-38L Lightning Specifications

General characteristics

Crew: One
Length: 37 ft 10 in Height: 12 ft 10 in
Wingspan: 52 ft 0 in Wing area: 327.5 ft²
Empty weight: 12,800 lb. Loaded weight: 17,500 lb.
Max. takeoff weight: 21,600 lb.
Powerplant: 2 × Allison V-1710-111/113 V-12 piston engine, 1,725 hp. each

Performance

Maximum speed: 443 mph on War Emergency Power: 1,725 hp at 64 in HG and 28,000 ft.
Stall speed: 105 mph Rate of climb: 4,750 ft/min
Range: 1,300 mi. combat
Service ceiling: 44,000 ft.

Armament

1× Hispano M2(C) 20 mm cannon with 150 rounds
4× Browning MG53-2 0.50 in (12.7 mm) machine guns with 500 rpg.
4× M10 three-tube 4.5 in (112 mm) rocket launchers; or:
Inner hardpoints:
2× 1000 or 2,000 lb. bombs or drop tanks; or plus either 4× 250/500 lb. or 6× 250/500 lb. bombs
Outer hardpoints:
10× 5 in (127 mm) HVARs (High Velocity Aircraft Rockets) or 2× 250/500 lb. bombs

(click photo to hear the fly-by)



P-38H of the AAF Tactical Center, Orlando Army Air Base, Florida, carrying two 1,000 lb bombs during capability tests in March 1944.

Click **“START-UP”** to hear a P-38 start up
P-38 Lightning in flight: [YouTube: P-38 in Flight](#)
Great flying video of the P-38: [YouTube: P-38 Flying](#)

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