The North American X-15 Rocket Plane was a stepping stone between atmospheric flight and space flight. It was designed to study human and material factors involved in high-speed, high-altitude flight. Reaching into the fringes of space, several of the pilots of this manned missile earned "astronaut" rating, traveling to altitudes of greater than 50 miles!

Holding only enough fuel for 80 to 120 seconds of powered flight, the X-15 was carried aloft under the wing of a B-52 for a release at 45,000 ft. and 500 mph. After the brief rocket powered phase of the flight, the X-15 would continue unpiloted for an additional 10 to 11 minutes ending with a 200 mph dead-stick landing on a dry lake bed.

The first of these flights occurred Sept. 17, 1959, with 199 flights made between 1959 and 1968.

Historic X-15 #1 is displayed at the National Air and Space Museum.

Thanks to Dr. Jim Cookson for this great X-15 Design.