



# Foundation Document Overview

## American Memorial Park

Saipan



### Contact Information

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## Purpose



Marianas Memorial

American Memorial Park (Saipan) and War in the Pacific National Historical Park (Guam) are co-managed. Each park has a unique “purpose” for why it was established and which guides its preservation. The National Park Service team developed the Foundation Documents for both parks together.

*AMERICAN MEMORIAL PARK on Saipan honors those who died during the Marianas Campaign of the Pacific Theater of World War II. The park supports education and appropriate use by the public.*



A U.S. Marine on patrol found this family hiding in a hillside cave (Saipan) USMC #83266

## Significance

Significance statements express why American Memorial Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- American Memorial Park on Saipan and War in the Pacific National Historical Park on Guam tell the history of the Pacific Theater of World War II and the devastating loss of life during the Marianas Campaign. The Mariana Islands were strategic colonial outposts governed by the United States and Japan and became battlefields for control of the Pacific during World War II. More than 70,000 Japanese, Americans, and civilians died over the 61 days of the Marianas Campaign.
- American Memorial Park and War in the Pacific National Historical Park, located in the western Pacific, are uniquely situated to introduce the national park idea to diverse, non-English speaking, international visitors from the Pacific and Asia.
- American Memorial Park interprets the unique experiences of the northern Marianas communities during World War II.



Mangrove trees anchor soil

## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- Memorials, including the Court of Honor and Flag Circle and the Marianas Memorial.
- Public use, including visiting memorials and historic structures; recreation such as walking, running, bicycling, fishing, wind surfing, snorkeling, picnicking, enjoying nature.
- Education—telling the story, including military, social, and cultural history of the American invasion of the Japanese-ruled Chamorro and Carolinian homelands.
- Connection to other World War II sites (the Battles for the Marianas). The major story interpreted is the Battle for Saipan along with the war events on Tinian and Rota.



Local dance group (Visitor Center)

American Memorial Park contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- Historic structures, including pre-war and World War II historic structures (pillboxes, storage tanks, a carbide building, and bath structures).
- Wetlands containing endangered species habitats and the largest remaining mangrove forest in the Northern Mariana Islands.
- Micro Beach for Carolinian uses. Micro Beach is the site of the first major Carolinian migration to Saipan and where elders taught traditional navigational skills to youth.
- Museum collection, including World War II memorabilia, artifacts, historic photographs, and oral histories.

## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- American Memorial Park and War in the Pacific National Historical Park tell the stories of the tragedy of war and promote reconciliation, friendship, and peace among former enemies.
- Throughout the Pacific, residents and indigenous island people were trapped between global warring nations and were deeply impacted by a war not of their making. The people of the Pacific Islands endured invasions, occupation, warfare, relocation, recovery, and reconciliation, while retaining their cultural identity, language, and traditions.
- The parks honor the extraordinary sacrifices and exceptional courage of military personnel who fought for their countries.
- The natural ecosystems of Saipan and Guam changed greatly during and after World War II. Vegetation and coral reefs have largely recovered from the devastating impacts of the war, but face new threats from invasive species, development, and climate change.
- The parks provide for continued cultural and traditional uses of the land and ocean where families and the public can perpetuate their heritage.
- As national parks in the remote western Pacific, American Memorial Park and War in the Pacific National Historical Park convey the significance of the Marianas Campaign and the role it played in helping to end the Pacific Theater of World War II. This significant historical event connects the Marianas people and international visitors to our nation's heritage.
- American Memorial Park serves as a living memorial to the past and present cultures of Saipan and the other Northern Mariana Islands.

# Description

American Memorial Park is on the island of Saipan, in the western Pacific's Northern Mariana Islands. The park is an affiliated area managed by the National Park Service.

American Memorial Park (133 acres) was created to honor the American and Marianas people who died in the World War II Marianas Campaign. The park serves as a living legacy for future generations to understand the Marianas Campaign, its sacrifices, and how the taking of the islands (Saipan, Tinian, and Guam) helped to shorten the Pacific Theater of World War II. The park contains World War II-era structures (Japanese pillboxes, fuel storage tanks, bunkers, and a carbide plant storage building) and more recently constructed memorials.

The park's concept of a "living memorial" offers activities enjoyed more than half a century ago by American service men and women. Visitors to the park can enjoy similar activities today, picnicking, fishing, photography, water sports, tennis, jogging, and bicycling. Today the park serves as the major venue for community gatherings and islandwide events. More importantly, American Memorial Park serves as a place to reflect on the history and to remember the fallen, so that those who died in the Marianas Campaign during World War II are not forgotten.

Inscribed in the Court of Honor and Flag Circle are the names of more than 5,000 American marines, soldiers, sailors, coastguardsmen, and airmen who died during World War II on Saipan, Tinian, and in the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

The Marianas Memorial honors the Chamorros and Carolinians who lost their lives as a result of the war from the beginning of the American aerial bombardment on Saipan on June 11, 1944, to the closure of internment camps on July 4, 1946. For many of the Chamorros and Carolinians who died during the war, this may be the only place where family members can honor their war dead as many have no tombstones to mark their final resting place.

Installed in 1995, the Bell Tower and Carillon Monument chimes the American and the Marianas anthems, a selection of patriotic tunes, hymns, and songs of hope and cheer.

Micro Beach, one of the best white sandy beaches on Saipan, is significant to the Carolinian people as the place where the first settlers landed when they migrated to Saipan and where elders taught traditional navigational skills and burial rituals to their young.

The wetland and mangrove forest, consisting of mudflats, marshes, and mangroves, is a remnant habitat now quite scarce in the Northern Marianas. This area contains rare flora and fauna including the endangered Nightingale Reed-warbler; while the entire park and the adjacent mudflats are an important migratory bird site.



The visitor center houses multilingual audio-visual displays combined with artifacts and exhibits, enabling visitors to walk through time. Visitors learn about pre-war life in the Northern Marianas under Japanese control, the epic story of the battle for the Marianas during World War II through the end of the Pacific War.