

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service



Although the site of the Park was not the scene of major fighting during the war, several historic structures are scattered throughout park lands. Before World War II, much of the land was residential, commercial, or agricultural. During the war years, Japanese bunkers, pillboxes, anti-aircraft emplacements, fuel storage tanks, and other military facilities were developed. These features are eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

American Memorial Park is designed to be a living memorial. Visitors can enjoy a wide variety of activities within the Park, including swimming, wind surfing, softball, and jogging. Tennis courts are available and are lighted to allow for nighttime use.



Micro Beach, along the western shore, is one of the island's finest white sand beaches. Visitors from outside the tropics are cautioned that they should take care in sunbathing since they may not be used to sunlight this intense.

The twelve-hundred seat amphitheater is the setting for a variety of events, including Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands government functions. Concerts, graduations, performances, and public meetings are also held here.



One major yearly event on Saipan is the Flame Tree Festival. The celebration is held in the late spring to early summer, about the time that the beautiful flame tree bursts into bloom, as shown at left. The schedule of events varies from year to year, and the Park provides a venue for various activities.

Within the boundaries of the Park is the landing site of the first major Carolinian immigration to Saipan. In the Twentieth Century, people tracing their ancestry to this more southerly island chain became a major segment of the population of Saipan.



The thatched structure shown here was erected in 1999, using traditional Carolinian methods and mate-



The Carillon Bell Tower supplements the Park's original World War II monument. It sits in a secluded wooded area, perfect for relaxation or for contemplation.



Within the Park is a 25 acre wetland and mangrove forest -- a habitat already quite rare in the Northern Marianas, and an excellent environment for native birds and other species. Continuing island development is reducing the number of natural areas such as this

Numerous birds can be seen in the Park, including those above. Left to right: the Rufous Fantail (known locally as *Naabak*), Collared Kingfisher (*Sihek*), and Golden White-eye (*Canario*). Wading birds, such as the Whimbrel (*Kalaang*) at left, can best be seen along the beach and near water.



D-DAY ON SAIPAN: U.S. MARINES CROSS THE BEACH



The Pacific War 1941-1945

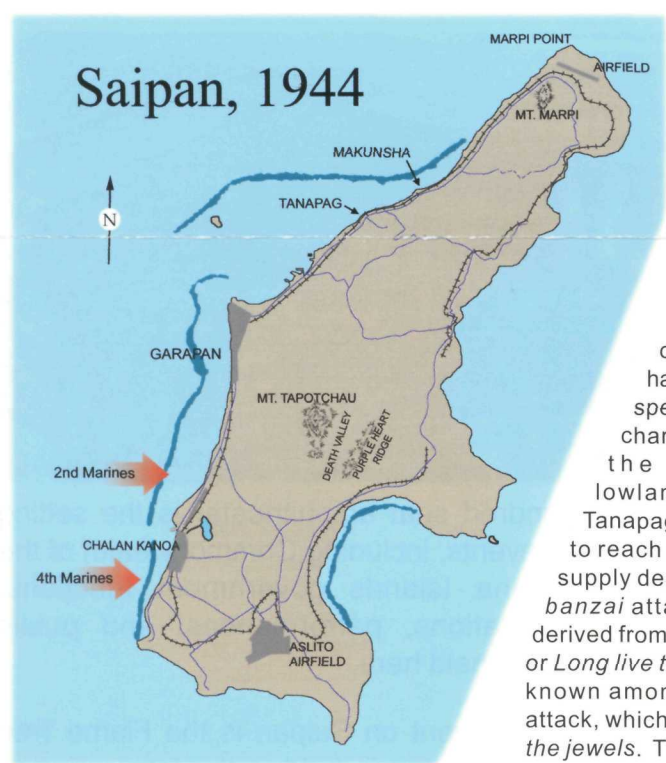
Following the attack on the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Japanese forces advanced on many fronts in the Pacific. The area outlined in red on the map at left represents the furthest limits of Japanese conquest.

The Battle of the Coral Sea, although a loss for the U.S. Navy in tactical terms, halted the southward advance of Japan.

The subsequent American victory at Midway Island is often called the turning

point of the War. The Japanese Navy's ability to support the forces occupying the islands of the Pacific was severely damaged. The American conquest of Guadalcanal was the beginning of a long counteroffensive.

The Allied island-hopping campaign advanced along two routes (shown in light yellow on the map at left), the northern campaign led by Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz, and the southwest Pacific route led by General Douglas MacArthur.



Saipan and the other islands of the Northern Marianas were German-controlled until seized by Japan in World War I. Following the war, Japanese rule was recognized under a League of Nations mandate. Located only 1250 miles from Tokyo, Saipan became a vital Japanese administrative, supply and communications center.

The assault on the Mariana Islands was the first breaching of the inner defensive line of Japan's empire. The orders to proceed with Operation FORAGER, as the invasion was code-named, were issued by Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas. The landings were carried out by the 5th Amphibious Corps, commanded by Lt. General Holland Smith.



ADM. NIMITZ

Despite having undergone days of bombing, Japanese forces fiercely opposed the landings. The 31st Army, commanded by Lt. General Saito Yoshitsugu, inflicted over 4000 casualties on the Americans in the first two days of fighting.

Overcoming this opposition, the 2nd Marines took Garapan, and the 4th Marines captured Aslito Airfield on June 18. Having failed to contain the invaders, General Saito was forced to withdraw to form defensive lines in the north and in the island's central highlands.

The capture of Mt. Tapotchau on June 27 by U.S. Marine units was accomplished only with difficult, bloody fighting. The 27th Infantry Division attacked the most heavily defended Japanese positions, located east of the peak in steep, heavily forested terrain that Americans came to call Purple Heart Ridge and the Valley of Death. The defenders were overcome with the aid of accurate fire from naval forces, and

Following this slaughter, American forces advanced up the island to Marpi Point. Most of the remaining Japanese military leaders and troops, and some civilians, chose suicide over surrender. Among the military, this choice was based on the warrior's code (*Bushido*) which forbade surrender. The civilian



STREET FIGHTING IN GARAPAN

deaths were partially the result of propaganda which led civilians to expect torture and death from the Americans. In addition, there were an unknown number of incidents in which Japanese military personnel killed civilians or forced them to kill themselves.

The island was declared secure on July 9, 1944. Several small groups of Japanese soldiers who had avoided the suicidal final charge took to the forests and mountains of the island to continue the fight. The largest, best organized of these groups was led by Captain Sakae Oba. Refusing to believe early reports of the surrender of Japan, he and about fifty battle-weary followers fought on, finally emerging from the jungle to surrender

the defeat of Japan on August 15 and the formal surrender was signed September 2, 1945, aboard the *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.



SURRENDER OF CAPT. OBA'S FORCE

CAUTION

Do not disturb or remove any munitions you find in the Park. Even after more than fifty years, such items can be dangerous. Leave ordnance where you find it! Notify any member of the park staff of its location so that it can be disposed of safely by trained personnel.



You can contact the staff of American Memorial Park by stopping by the park offices at the amphitheater (see the park map on the other side of this brochure).

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