



Experience Living History

The Experience

It's been more than half a century since the Japanese Imperial Navy inflicted what they envisioned to be a crippling blow on U.S. forces at Pearl Harbor. It was a defining moment in history – and a vast underestimation of American resilience. The USS Arizona Memorial, a unit of the National Park Service, stands as a poignant reminder of that attack and as a proud testament to the strength and courage of the men who served here and the people who loved, supported and too often mourned them.

A visit to this remarkable historical cultural site is a pilgrimage of sorts, often evoking a deep emotional reaction. Sorrow mingles with a rush of pride and becomes inextricably woven into the fabric of our awareness. For those who remember the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Park bears hundreds of tangible reminders of the day and its aftermath. Younger visitors too are touched here, perhaps for the first time, by the powerful human drama of this tumultuous chapter in our history. The interpretive experience of the USS Arizona Memorial transports World War II out of the two-dimensional realm of textbooks. It's truly living history.

The Entryway

Standing like a sentinel in the entryway of the Park Visitor Center is the enormous anchor that steadied the great battleship. The anchor, a huge historic mural depicting the Arizona underway, and the ship's bell are all reminiscent of the living Arizona. In counterpoint to this, the entryway is also graced with a rendering of the Tree of Life, the symbol of eternal renewal designed for the Memorial by renowned architect Alfred Preis.

Here, visitors are also greeted by even more powerful reminders of the attack – the survivors. Each day, veterans come to this place, the site of one of the most profound events in their lives, and generously share their remembrances with the public.

The Museum

The Park Museum is filled with exhibits that give visitors a sense of the magnitude of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Letters from young sailors lie with telegrams of condolence. It is here, among the photographs and personal mementos of sons, brothers, husbands and fathers that the tragedy comes sharply into focus. One of the Museum's most dramatic features is the amazing eyewitness photography of the attack. National archives, personal collections and even film from Japanese pilots yielded an array of dramatic pictures of the attack in progress. As a whole, the Museum captures the story of the attack from human interest to historic significance. It's one of the primary components of the overall experience.

The Bookstore

The Bookstore offers visitors an opportunity to take home the rich history of Pearl Harbor. The Bookstore, operated by the Arizona Memorial Museum Association, carries an extensive selection of material and memorabilia documenting the life of the USS *Arizona*, the attack on Pearl Harbor and the war that followed. It is also an important source of revenue that helps support the operations of the USS *Arizona* Memorial. Proceeds from the Bookstore help sustain the operation of one of America's most important interpretive historical resources.

Interpretive Exhibit Panels

Outside the center building, along a lovely waterfront promenade, visitors can see the scene of the attack and visualize the events of that fateful Sunday morning. There is a Remembrance Circle dedicated to the men, women and children, military personnel and civilians, whose lives were extinguished during the attack. Here visitors will see a relief map of the island of Oahu identifying the geography of the attack. Beyond this, there are a series of waterside tablets that correlate the events of December 7 to the actual location on the panorama before them. Pictured landmarks and explanations are interspersed with historic anecdotes and facts that further educate visitors about the place and its meaning.

The Memorial

Everything visitors experience throughout the Center help with the interpretation of the Memorial proper. The formal tour begins with a powerful 23-minute documentary narrated by award-winning actress Stockard Channing. This poignant tribute to the USS *Arizona* captures both pride and sorrow in honoring the 1,177 men who lost their lives that day on the *Arizona*, as well as the additional 1,213 people who died as a result of the attack. From there, visitors embark on a brief narrated shuttle boat trip to the Memorial. It's an opportunity to see the hustle and bustle of Pearl Harbor, in sharp contrast to the reverent stillness of the glistening white Memorial.

People of all nations gather quietly on the USS *Arizona* Memorial. Side-by-side they stand those who remember World War II and those who have only heard the stories, pondering the enormity of the wall of names before them and the shadowy *Arizona* beneath. The USS *Arizona* Memorial marks the site of one of the most divisive acts in recent history. Remarkably though, it has come from those origins to be a place of healing and unification as well.

USS Arizona Memorial

The USS *Arizona* Memorial was dedicated on Memorial Day, May 30, 1962 to commemorate the attack on Pearl Harbor and the men who died defending it. In 1989, the USS *Arizona* was designated a national historic landmark. Since 1980, the National Park Service has operated the Memorial and the Visitor Center to ensure the preservation and interpretation of the tangible historical resources associated with the attack – including the rich and vivid memories of its survivors. Veterans have always played a key part in maintaining this historic site. In fact, funding for the USS *Arizona* Memorial is provided in part by the Arizona Memorial Museum Association, a group of Pearl Harbor

survivors and others interested in preserving this important legacy.

Each year, the USS *Arizona* Memorial welcomes 1.5 million visitors from around the world. To accommodate its international and out-of-state visitors, the park has brochures written in 23 different languages including English, as well as an audio program which is currently offered in English, Chinese and Japanese.

The USS *Arizona* Memorial Visitor Center is located adjacent to Kamehameha Highway, near the Aloha Stadium, between Ford Island Bridge and Pearl Harbor's Makalapa Gate. To reach the USS Arizona Memorial from Waikiki, take the H-1 Freeway to the Airport Viaduct and follow the signs to the Arizona Memorial Exit 15A.

The Visitor Center is open 7:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. every day except Thanksgiving, December 25 and New Year's Day, with tours beginning every 15 minutes, and the last program starting at 3 p.m. Admission is free and tours are given on a first-come, first-serve basis. Reservations are not accepted. If you have questions, you can access recorded information at (808) 422-0561. To reach a National Park Service representative, call (808) 422-2771. To contact the Arizona Memorial Museum Association, call (808) 422-5664 or (808) 422-5905. The web site address for the USS Arizona Memorial is www.nps.gov/usar, while the address for the Arizona Memorial Museum Association is <http://www.arizonamemorial.org>.

###