

1941 to 1945

The Pacific Theater of World War II involved one-third of the earth's surface but only 1/145th of its total land mass. It involved vast distances and new strategy, tactics, equipment, and weapons of war. Moreover, it involved not just Japan and the United States but Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Canada, China, France, and the Soviet Union as well. Caught in the middle were the people of the Pacific islands, upon whose homelands and in whose waters the battles were fought. The following chronology touches on some of the more significant aspects of the Pacific War and provides a framework for understanding the people and events commemorated at War in the Pacific National Historical Park.



1941

7 December Without warning, Japanese planes bomb Pearl Harbor and Hickam and Wheeler Airfields on Oahu, and within 30 minutes destroy the power of the U.S. Pacific battle fleet—except for aircraft carriers *Enterprise*, *Lexington*, and *Saratoga*, which are at sea; Japan declares war on the United States and Great Britain. The Pacific war that the United States suddenly found herself embroiled in had begun many years before the attack on Pearl Harbor when Japan, lacking the raw materials for modern industrialization, looked to mineral-rich Manchuria to supply them. Japanese attacks on China led to open warfare in July 1937. As a result of Japan's involvement in China and the extension of Japan's "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" into Indochina, the United States, Great Britain, and other countries froze Japanese assets and exports, threatening Japan's industrial survival. This led to accelerated Japanese economic expansion into Southeast Asia and the Dutch East Indies, bringing her into direct conflict with western countries which also had economic interests in these areas. By 1941, Japan was committed to a policy of aggression to achieve her goals. Her inability to come to diplomatic terms with the United States, which she saw as her most formidable opponent, led to the Pearl Harbor attack.

8 December Congress declares war on Japan; Japanese bomb islands of Wake and Guam, and Clark and Iba Airfields in the Philippines; invade Malaya and occupy Thailand; and seize the international settlement at Shanghai.

10 December Japanese capture Guam and begin landings on northern Luzon.



1 President Franklin D. Roosevelt asks Congress to declare war on Japan, December 8, 1941.

2 US Navy task group returns to anchorage for repairs and supplies after strikes against the Japanese in the Philippines, December 1944.

3 Crew of carrier USS *Bunker Hill* battle fires resulting from kamikaze attack during Okinawa campaign, 1945.

4 Japanese kamikaze pilots prepare for a mission, 1944.

5 Japanese submarine I-370 carrying *Kaiten* one-man torpedoes en route to attack US fleet off Iwo Jima, 1945.

6 Navy officer scrambles to assist Helicat pilot who has crash landed on the deck of carrier USS *Enterprise*, 1944.

7 US Marines hurl grenades at Japanese positions during the fighting on Saipan, 1944.

8 Japanese Gen. Yoshijiro Umezumi signs document of surrender aboard USS *Missouri*, September 2, 1945.



The Pacific Theater, 1941-45



Names in red denote major battles or campaigns of the war in the Pacific.

24 August Battle of Eastern Solomons results in sinking of one Japanese carrier by aircraft from USS *Enterprise* and USS *Saratoga*.

12-15 November The decisive American victory in the naval Battle of Guadalcanal prevents the Japanese from landing reinforcements and makes possible the final conquest of Guadalcanal by U.S. forces.

1943

10 January U.S. troops begin final offensive to clear Guadalcanal. By February 9 organized Japanese resistance on the island is ended. The American victory opens the way for other Allied gains in the Solomons.

22 January Papuan Campaign ends in the first decisive land defeat of the Japanese.

2-3 March Battle of the Bismarck Sea. U.S. and

Australian aircraft decimate a 16-ship Japanese supply convoy bound for Lae and Salamaua, New Guinea, demonstrating the effectiveness of low-level bombing.

26 March An indecisive naval battle off the Komandorski Islands prepares the way for reconquest of the Western Aleutians. By mid-August Japanese troops have been driven out of both Attu and Kiska.

5 August Munda Airfield, New Georgia, is captured, providing Allied forces a base from which to bomb Japanese air and naval facilities at Rabaul.

25 August Americans overrun New Georgia, Solomon Islands, thus removing the Japanese threat to forces on Guadalcanal.

20 November Admiral Nimitz' Central Pacific offensive to reconquer the Marshall, Gilbert, Caroline, Mariana, and Philippine Islands begins with army



9 April Bataan surrenders. The starving U.S. and Filipino survivors begin a 60-mile "death march" to Japanese prison camps.

18 April Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle leads sixteen B-25 bombers from carrier *Hornet* to bomb targets in Tokyo, Yokohama, Yokosuka, Kobe, and Nagoya.

7 May Gen. Jonathan Wainwright, MacArthur's successor in the Philippines, surrenders Corregidor and all U.S. troops under his command.

4-8 May Battle of the Coral Sea. This Japanese tactical victory but strategic defeat is the first naval battle in history in which all fighting is done by carrier-based planes and the opposing ships never saw each other.

3-6 June Battle of Midway. This American victory deals the Japanese their first major naval defeat, and confirms the power of the aircraft carrier as an offensive weapon in war.

7 June Japanese occupy Attu and Kiska in the Aleutian Islands.

22 July Papuan Campaign begins as Japanese troops land at Gona and Buna, 100 miles east of Lae and Salamaua in northern New Guinea, and begins an overland drive across the Owen Stanley Mountains to capture Port Moresby on the southern coast. In the months that follow, Australian and U.S. forces frustrate every attempt to take the port and eventually drive the Japanese back to Gona and Buna.

7 August U.S. Marines invade Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands in the first American offensive of the war. Subsequent Japanese efforts to drive the Americans off the island are consistently unsuccessful.

8-9 August Japanese navy sinks four Allied cruisers in Battle of Savo Islands.



landings on Makin and Marine landings on Tarawa, the keystones of Japanese defenses in the Gilberts.

26 December General MacArthur's Southwest Pacific offensive to secure the western Solomons, New Guinea, and the Philippines begins with the landings on New Britain, the largest island in the Bismarck Archipelago.

1944

31 January-4 February American forces capture Roi-Namur and Kwajalein in the Marshalls.

29 February-7 March MacArthur surprises Japanese by seizing the Admiralty Islands.

15 June China-based B-29s make their first attack on Japanese homeland. U.S. forces invade Saipan.

17-19 June Battle of the Philippine Sea (called the Marianas "turkey shoot"), in which U.S. carrier-based aircraft engage and inflict crippling losses on Japanese carrier-based aircraft.

21 July U.S. forces invade Guam.

24 July U.S. forces invade Tinian.

15 September U.S. forces invade Morotai and Peleliu.

20 October U.S. forces invade Leyte.

23-25 October Battle of Leyte Gulf, the last and greatest naval engagement of the war, results in near destruction of the Japanese Navy.

24 November Air offensive against Japan begins with B-29 attacks on Tokyo from bases in the Marianas.

1945

9 January-23 February Reconquest of northern Philippines begins as U.S. forces invade Luzon and occupy Manila.

19 February-17 March U.S. Marines invade and conquer island of Iwo Jima after bitter fighting.

9-10 March B-29 fire-bomb attack on Tokyo leaves much of the city in ashes and inaugurates a series of incendiary strikes against other Japanese cities.

19 March-21 June Battle for the Ryukyu Islands, in which U.S. carrier-based planes make large-scale attacks on Japanese ships and airfields in the Ryukyus.

1 April-21 June U.S. troops invade and capture Okinawa, main island of the Ryukyus. Japanese military forces inflict heavy casualties on American troops, but the island is finally secured.

6 August Air Force drops atomic bomb on Hiroshima. A second atomic bomb is dropped on Nagasaki three days later.

14 August Japan accepts Allied unconditional surrender terms.

2 September Japan signs formal terms of surrender.



War in the Pacific

War in the Pacific
National Historical Park/Guam

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Guam

The Guam operation "was brilliantly and valorously conducted and resulted in the recovery of important American Territory and the liberation of loyal people. Well Done." — Admiral Chester W. Nimitz



Assault troops of the 3d Marine Division splash ashore at Asan Beach, July 21, 1944. On hitting shore, the Marines were



Marines take cover behind logs during the battle for Guam, July 1944.



Asan Beach, showing the devastation that followed the landing of the 3d Marine Division. At the time this photograph was



Marines of the III Amphibious Corps Artillery fire their 155-mm. howitzers in support of the 305th Infantry's attack on



Battle-weary Marines head for a rest area via the Agana-Piti Road, July 29, 1944, after being relieved at the front.

Guam 1941-1944: Conquest and Liberation

The Japanese conquest of Guam began about an hour after the attack on Pearl Harbor when Saipan-based Japanese bombers launched the first in a series of raids on the island. At that time Guam's only protection was a 153-man Marine garrison, an 80-man Insular Guard Force, an ill-armed and ill-trained volunteer naval militia, and 271 regular navy personnel. The heaviest weapons on the island were 30-caliber machine guns. Faced with a Japanese invasion force of more than 5,000 troops, Guam surrendered on December 10 after only slight resistance.

Guam remained in Japanese hands for two and a half years. For the first four months the island was under the control of army troops, who were housed in schools and in the government buildings in the plaza area of Agana. The Japanese met "no armed resistance anywhere." Father Oscar Calvo, a Catholic priest, later recalled, "But they found no welcoming committees... either... The Guamanians had never seen so many soldiers and so much implements of war. Not knowing what to expect, they were terrified by the threatening sights of Japanese invaders in war attire..." Japanese yen became the island's currency,



The 1944 invasion of Guam, shown on the map at left, followed the same pattern as several dozen similar campaigns conducted by American forces between 1942 and 1945: the opening air and naval barrages, the amphibious assault, the contested landing, the hard jungle fighting against well-entrenched Japanese. The only questions were how long would the campaign take and how many lives would it cost. The blue lines and dates on the map signify the stages in which the Americans occupied the island and cleared it of its Japanese defenders.

and civilian affairs were handled by a branch of the army called the "Minselsho." Cars, radios, and cameras were confiscated and food was rationed until supplies became exhausted.

Control of the island came under the Japanese navy in March 1942. The "Keibitai," as it was known, governed the populace for about 19 months. Guamanians were paid for their work, although wages were low, and many were allowed to remain on their farms and trade for products they needed. Social activities included parties, Japanese movies, and sports competitions. Mass meetings were held in Agana to reinforce the "Nippon Seishen" (spirit of Japan). Schools were reopened to teach Japanese customs and language, and both adults and children were compelled to practice reading, writing, and math, and to learn Japanese games and songs. Only those Guamanians suspected of hiding family members wanted by the Japanese or of aiding the few Americans left on the island were harassed or beaten by the authorities.

In early 1944, with the war going badly for Japan and American invasion threatening, the Japanese army

returned to Guam, bringing with it a new and stricter form of government, that of the "Kaikontai." Social activities were terminated, schools were closed, and all Guamanian men, women, and children were forced (without compensation) to work the fields, to repair or build airfields and defensive installations, and to dig hundreds of Japanese shelter caves, many of which are within the boundaries of today's park. Those who did not work, except for the seriously ill, were mistreated or executed. During the final weeks before the invasion, most of the people were moved to concentration camps on the eastern side of the island. Despite the hardships, this probably insured the survival of the Guamanians as a viable ethnic group. Had they not been moved, many would probably have been killed by the American invasion bombardment and crossfire.

On the morning of July 21, 1944, after one of the longest and heaviest pre-assault naval bombardments of the war, the invasion of Guam began with simultaneous landings at Agat and Asan Beaches by 55,000 men of the 3rd Marine Division, 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, and 305th Regimental Combat Team of the 77th Army Division. By day's end, despite some

initial confusion over landing sites and stiff resistance by the island's 18,500 Japanese defenders, both beaches had been secured. In the three weeks that followed (see map at far left), the Americans cleared the Orote Peninsula and secured the Fonte Plateau. They then moved north toward Agana, Barrigada, Mount Santa Rosa, and on to Ritidian Point. By August 10 organized resistance had been eliminated and the island declared secure. The recapture of Guam had cost more than 7,000 American and about 17,500 Japanese casualties. Japan's grip on the Marianas had been broken and the end of the war was now just slightly over a year away.

Seeing the Park

With the establishment of War in the Pacific National Historical Park, the United States National Park System now extends across the Pacific Ocean. Authorized on August 17, 1978, the park was established "to commemorate the bravery and sacrifice of those participating in the campaigns of the Pacific Theater of World War II and to conserve and interpret outstanding natural, scenic, and historic values and objects on the island of Guam..."

Like many other Pacific islands, Guam contains a number of historical features associated with World War II, especially the 1944 American invasion. The park itself consists of seven physically separated units, each providing a different insight into the Pacific War. They are located in or near the villages of Asan, Piti, and Agat, on the west side of the island facing the Philippine Sea.

The Asan Beach Unit consists of 109 land acres and 445 water acres and is the site of the northern invasion beaches. It was here that the 3rd Marine

Division came ashore for the initial assault and was met by troops of the Japanese 320th Independent Infantry Battalion. War-related structures and sites, all associated with Japanese defenses, are located at Asan Point and Adelup Point. The remains of some American military equipment lie underwater in the offshore area. Fishing, hiking, picnicking, and (for experienced persons) snorkeling and diving are permitted.

Asan Point is a primary visitor area where the overall story of the Pacific War is told by means of museum exhibits. A shoreside view of the Asan invasion beach and hillside battleground is located at this point.

The Asan Inland Unit is directly opposite the Asan Beach Unit across Marine Drive. It was on the face of these cliffs and hillsides that the American invasion forces met heavy resistance. Today, thick jungle growth or swordgrass savannah covers the area, making hiking fairly difficult. Historic sites, in-



cluding a number of gun emplacements, caves, foxholes, pillboxes, and a 75mm mountain gun, are located at each end of the unit. There are no facilities available to the public at this time.

The Piti Unit is on the ridge behind the village of Piti and contains three Japanese coastal defense guns in good condition.

The Mt. Tenjo/Mt. Chachao Unit is on a ridge line between Mt. Tenjo and Mt. Chachao. This unit provides a scenic overview of the surrounding area, including Apra Harbor and Orote Point. The few historic remains here include foxholes and a World War I American gun emplacement. Hiking is permitted along

the unimproved trail. The Agat Unit is the site of the southern invasion beach. It was here that the First Provisional Marine Brigade and the 305th Regimental Combat Team of the 77th Army Division came ashore. They were met by the Japanese 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry. Apaca Point, Gaan Point, Bangi Point, and Bangi Island contain historic sites and structures, including caves, bunkers, latrine foundations, and more than 10 pillboxes, some in excellent condition.

The beach and offshore area here are relatively unspoiled and provide a good impression of how the invasion beach looked in 1944. Several pieces

of American military equipment still lie underwater near the edge of the reef. Picnic areas are at Rizal Point and Apaca Point. Fishing, hiking, picnicking, and (for experienced persons) snorkeling and diving are also permitted.



The Mount Alifan Unit is behind the village of Agat. The slopes of these hills saw heavy fighting between the Marines and the defending Japanese forces. Today the area is covered with historic sites and debris. Access to the area is fairly difficult, allowing only limited hiking.

The Fonte Plateau Unit, currently under development, is not yet open to the public.

War in the Pacific National Historical Park contains numerous World War II relics, including three Japanese coastal defense guns in the Piti unit (far left) and miscellaneous remains of American military equipment sunk offshore during the July 1944 invasion.

Park headquarters and visitor center are in the Asan Beach Unit in the village of Asan. Here you will find museum exhibits and audio-visual programs telling the story of the Pacific Theater of World War II. The audio-visual programs are presented in English and Japanese. An outdoor lanai/patio area behind the visitor center provides a view of the invasion beach and the reef. Uniformed park rangers at the information desk will be glad to answer any of your questions about the park. They can also provide you with information about other sites around Guam, the Marianas, and Micronesia. Please feel free to ask any question you might have.

Most important of all: Please do not disturb or remove any ammunition that you may find on or off shore. To do so is extremely dangerous! Inform a ranger about its location and he will have it removed by qualified personnel.

Do not remove or mar the historic and natural objects beneath the water's surface. They are protected by law.

Do not trespass on private property. Some land in the park are privately owned. Please respect these property rights. If in doubt, check with the ranger at the information desk in the visitor center.

Use caution when swimming, snorkeling, or diving along the reefs. Strong currents and heavy surf may be present at any time. There are also several species of poisonous fish on the reef; you should make an effort to recognize them. And dangerous military explosives are sometimes found in the water. Leave them alone!

Things You Should Know

Many recreational opportunities are available in the individual park units and around the island. Guam's climate makes it an ideal place for outdoor activities. The year-round average temperature is 27°C (80°F) and the ocean temperature averages a pleasant 27.2°C (81°F). May to November is the rainy season, and you can expect wet, hot, and humid days. Temperatures cool down from November through

April, the dry season, and tropical trade winds are common. Typhoons can occur in any month, but they are more common during the rainy season. But don't worry; typhoons give ample warning of their coming and there is plenty of time to take shelter.

For Your Safety

War in the Pacific National Historical Park is a new and developing area and your safety and enjoyment are our main concern. You can ensure both by observing the following:

Please stay off all structures and guns, and do not disturb any of the historic ground features, such as foxholes, bombs, and craters. Do not enter any of the caves. Some may contain hidden explo-

sives. You are especially cautioned not to try to open sealed caves; it is both illegal and dangerous.

Do not trespass on private property. Some land in the park are privately owned. Please respect these property rights. If in doubt, check with the ranger at the information desk in the visitor center.

Use caution when swim-

