



## 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. Caught in the middle were the people of the Pacific islands, upon whose homelands and in whose waters the battles were fought. This chronology tracks significant aspects of the Pacific War as a framework for understanding the people and events commemorated at War in the Pacific National Historical Park.



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

### 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 itself 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 it into direct conflict with western countries that also had economic interests in these areas. By 1941, Japan was committed to a policy of aggression to achieve its goals. Japan's inability to come to diplomatic terms with the United States, which it saw as its most formidable opponent, led to the Pearl Harbor attack. **8 December** Congress declares war on Japan; Japanese bomb islands of Wake and Guam, and



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

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. **23 December** Wake Island is surrendered to the Japanese. **24 December** Gen. Douglas MacArthur, commanding United States Army Forces in the Far East, begins evacuation of Manila and withdraws to Bataan. **26 December** Hong Kong is lost to the Japanese.

### 1942

**2 January** Japanese occupy Manila. **7 January** Siege of Bataan begins. MacArthur, headquartered on Corregidor, proclaims the Bataan Peninsula the center of American-Filipino resistance to the Japanese invasion of the Philippines. But its jungles, swamps, and mountains make supply difficult, and the Bataan Defense Force suffers shortages of food and medicines throughout the three-month ordeal. **1 February** U.S. Navy launches air and surface attacks against Japanese bases in the Marshall Islands. **15 February** Singapore surrenders. **27–28 February** Battle of Java Sea results in most severe U.S. naval losses since Pearl Harbor and leads to the collapse of organized Allied military resistance in that area.



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

**8 March** Japanese land in New Guinea, occupying Lae and Salamaua and threatening Port Moresby, last defensive post protecting Australia. **17 March** MacArthur, who had left the Philippines six days before, arrives in Australia. Here he utters the now-famous words, "I came through and I shall return." **30 March** MacArthur is designated Allied Supreme Commander, Southwest Pacific Areas (Australia, most of the Indies, and the Philippines); Adm. Chester Nimitz is designated Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Area. **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 16 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 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 proves the offensive power of aircraft carriers. **7 June** Japanese occupy Attu and Kiska in the Aleutian Islands.



Japanese kamikaze pilots prepare for a mission, 1944.



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

**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.



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

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



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

**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's Central Pacific offensive to reconquer the Marshall, Gilbert,



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

July 28, 1944: an amphibious tractor or duck loaded with Marines heads for the beach on Guam. A cruiser is visible close to shore.

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

Caroline, Mariana, and Philippine Islands begins with army 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 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** Army Air Corps 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.

# 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



Lt. Commander Homura, Governor of Japanese-occupied Guam, inspects Chamorro workers planting

rice. Chamorro and Korean laborers were forced to work in the fields to produce food, clear runways

for airstrips, and dig hill-side caves, trenches, and other Japanese defense fortifications.



Assault troops of the 3rd Marine Division wade ashore under fire at Asan Beach, July 21, 1944.

Their objective: capture the cliffs and high ground immediately inland and prepare for further operations to the east and southeast.

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Marines take cover behind bomb and shell debris and fallen coconut trees, July 1944.



U.S. Army tanks of the 77th Infantry Division take a few moment's rest to

view the damaged ruins of Agana (now Hagåtña).

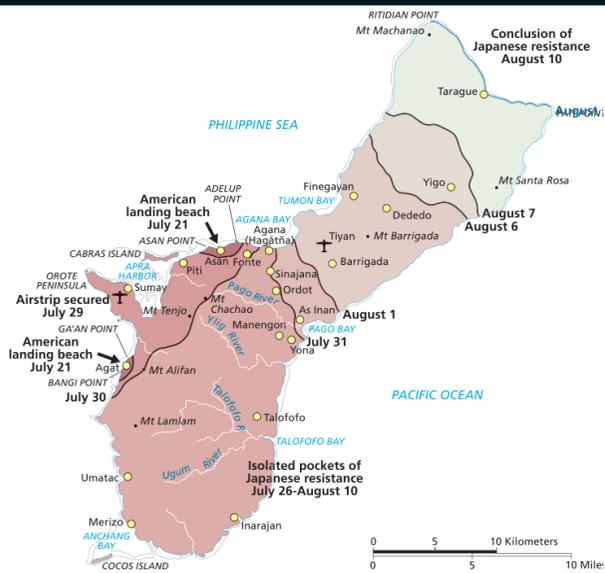


Marines of the III Amphibious Corps Artillery fire one of their 155-mm howitzers in support of the

305th Infantry's attack on the Orote Peninsula, July 22-24, 1944.

## 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 dive bombers launched the first in a series of raids on the island. At that time Guam's total protection consisted of 153 Marines, 271 U.S. Navy personnel, 134 civilian construction workers, and 247 members of the local Chamorro Insular Force Guard and the Naval Militia. (Chamorros are the indigenous people of Guam.) The garrison had no artillery, only a few .30-caliber machine guns, and various small arms. For two days the Japanese bombed and strafed the island. Early on December 10, a special Japanese naval landing party of about 400 men from the 5th Defense Force based on Saipan began landing at Dungca's Beach in Agana Bay. At the same time, a Japanese Army unit known as the South Seas Detachment landed on the beaches of Aporguan, Tumon, Togcha, Agat, and other areas. The Insular Guard made a gallant attempt to stop the Japanese advance at the Plaza de España in Agana but was soon driven back. By 5:45 a.m. Capt. George J. McMillin, USN, the island's governor, realized that his tiny command was no match for the invasion force and began to surrender his post and the island.



The map at left shows the 1944 liberation of Guam. It 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, and the hard jungle fighting against well-entrenched Japanese forces.

The only questions were how long the campaign would last and how many lives it would cost. The black lines and dates on the map signify the stages in which the Americans occupied the island and cleared it of its Japanese defenders.

Guam remained in Japanese hands for two and a half years, and Chamorros were forced to endure a military occupation in a war not of their making. For the first four months the island was controlled by army troops, who were housed in schools and government buildings in Agana. The island was renamed Omiya Jima (Great Shrine Island) and Chamorros were required to learn the Japanese custom of bowing. Japanese yen became the island's currency, and civilian affairs were handled by a branch of the army called the min-seisho. Cars, radios, and cameras were confiscated and food was rationed until supplies became exhausted. Chamorros suspected of hiding family members wanted by the Japanese, or of aiding the few Americans that did not surrender, were harassed, beaten, or tortured, and, in some instances, executed by order of the authorities.

Control of the island came under the Imperial Japanese Navy in March 1942. The keibitai, as it was known, governed the populace for about 19 months. Chamorros 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 and Chamorros were required to learn the Japanese language and customs. English was forbidden.

In early 1944, with the war going badly for Japan and an American invasion threatening, the Japanese Army returned to Guam, bringing with it a new and stricter form of government—the kaikontai. Social activities were terminated, schools were closed, and Chamorro men, women, and children over the age of 12 were forced to work long hours in the fields, repair or build airstrips and defense installations, and dig hundreds of Japanese shelter caves, many of which are within the boundaries of today's park. Chamorros, laboring at bayonet point, were mistreated and, in some cases, executed after completing defense installations. Without warning, 10,000-15,000 Chamorros, young and old, were forced to march with only the belongings they could carry to concentration camps in Guam's central and southern jungles. With inadequate shelter, little food, and no sanitary facilities, life in these camps was miserable. Despite the hardships, however, incarceration proved to be a blessing in disguise:

Had they not been moved, many Chamorros would have been killed by the American pre-invasion bombardment and the Japanese crossfire.

On the morning of July 21, 1944, after one of the longest and heaviest pre-assault naval bombardments of the war, the American recapture of Guam began with simultaneous landings at Asan and Agat beaches by 55,000 men of the 3rd Marine Division, 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, and 305th Regimental Combat Team of the 77th Army Infantry 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 Orote Peninsula and secured Fonte Plateau. They then moved north toward Agana, Barrigada, Mount Santa Rosa, and on to Ritidian Point, where the island was declared secure. The recapture of Guam cost more than 7,000 American and about 17,500 Japanese casualties. Japan's grip on the Marianas was broken and the end of the war was now just slightly over a year away.

## Seeing the Park

War in the Pacific National Historical Park, authorized on August 18, 1978, 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 . . . .”



The park contains World War II relics including three Japanese coastal defense guns in the Piti Guns Unit (far left) and the remains of American military equipment sunk offshore during the July 1944 landings.

Like many other Pacific islands, Guam contains historical features associated with World War II, especially the 1944 American liberation. The park itself has seven separate units. They are located in or near the villages of Asan, Piti, and Agat, and on the west side of the island facing the Philippine Sea.

The **Asan Beach Unit** is the site of the northern landing beach. 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 are located at Asan Point and Adelup Point. The remains of some American military equipment and coral-encrusted ordnance lie underwater.

Park headquarters is located in Hagåtña, the island's capital. The T. Stell Newman Visitor Center is located in the village of Piti, on Marine Corps Drive (adjacent to the front gate of Naval Base Guam). Here you will find museum exhibits and audiovisual programs telling the story of the Pacific Theater of World War II, the recapture of Guam by American forces, and the war experiences of the Chamorros (the indigenous people of Guam). Programs are available in English, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean. Uniformed rangers at the information desk will answer questions and assist you.

## Things You Should Know

Guam's warm climate, (80°F) and the ocean temperature 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, although they are more common during the rainy season. But don't worry; typhoons

Fishing, hiking, picnicking, and (for those with experience) snorkeling and diving are among the many recreational opportunities available in the individual park units and around the island.

The year-round temperature averages 27°C

At Asan Point is the Liberators' Memorial, installed during the Liberation of Guam 50th Anniversary ceremonies. It honors armed forces veterans who participated in the 1944 landing. The Guam Combat Patrol is also honored. Funding was provided by the Guam Chapters of the National Association for Uniformed Services and the Third Marine Division Association, and by the people of Guam. Discover hidden Japanese fortifications and historic sites along the Asan Ridge Trail.

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 landing forces met heavy resistance. Today, thick jungle growth or swordgrass savannah covers the area, making hiking fairly difficult.

Asan Bay Overlook, on Route 6, features the memorial wall. The wall honors the American servicemen who died liberating the island from a two-and-a-half-year Japanese occupation. Also honored are the Chamorros who died or suffered atrocities in the battle for Guam.

The **Piti Guns Unit** is on the ridge behind the village of Piti. After a steep ascent, the 0.25-mile trail leads to three Japanese coastal defense guns.

give ample warning of their coming, and there is plenty of time to take shelter.

**For a Safe Visit**  
Park historic structures and military equipment are over 50 years old and are very fragile. Do not disturb any of the historic ground features, such as foxholes, trenches, and bomb craters.

It is unlawful to disturb or remove artifacts from

public lands. Please do not remove or mar the historic or natural objects beneath the water's surface. They too are protected by law.

Do not enter any caves or tunnels. Some may contain hidden explosives. • Do not open any sealed caves; it is illegal and dangerous.

Do not trespass on private property. Some lands in the park are

The **Mt. Chachao/Mt. Tenjo Unit** provided the Japanese defenders with a view of United States troops landing at Asan Beach and a scenic overview of Apra Harbor and Orote Point. The unimproved trail leads to foxholes, trenches, and a World War I American gun emplacement.

The **Agat Unit** is the site of the southern landing beach. It was here that the First Provisional Marine Brigade and the 305th Regimental Combat Team of the 77th Army Infantry Division came ashore, met by the Japanese 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry. The beach and offshore area here provide a good impression of how they looked in 1944. Several pieces of American military equipment still lie underwater near the edge of the reef.

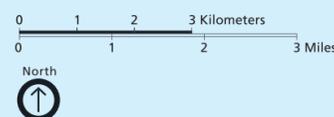
The **Mt. Alifan Unit**, site of a Japanese command post, has bomb craters, foxholes, and trenches. The slopes of these hills saw intense battles between United States Marines and the defending Japanese forces. Access to this undeveloped area is difficult.

The **Fonte Plateau Unit**, site of a former Japanese naval communications center, is currently undeveloped.

privately owned. Please respect these property rights. If in doubt, check with the ranger at the information desk in the visitor center.

**More Information**  
War in the Pacific National Historical Park one of more than 380 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about National Park Service programs visit [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov).

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Use caution when swimming, snorkeling, or diving along the reefs. Use the buddy system and be aware of your surroundings. There are several species of poisonous marine life on the reef. The strong, unpredictable currents also can be hazardous.



Caution: Do not disturb any ammunition that you may find on or off shore. It is extremely dangerous and may detonate at any time. Report its location to a ranger, who will have it removed by qualified personnel.