1941 to 1945

The Pacific Theater of World War II involved one-third of the earth's surface but only 1/45th of its total land mass. It involved vast distances and new strategies, 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, among whose homelands and in whose waters the battles were fought. The following chronology focuses 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 Hickson and Wheeler Airfields on Oahu, and within 30 minutes destroy the power of the U.S. Pacific battle fleet—except for aircraft carrier Enterprise. Washington, and Singapore, which were not. Japan declares war on the United States and Great Britain. The Pacific Theater, Washington, the United States suddenly found itself embroiled in a war that began many years before with the attack on Pearl Harbor when Japan, lacking the raw materials for modern industry, looked to the United States and southeast Asia to supply them.

1942

1 January Japanese occupy Manilla.
7 January Siege of Batan begins. MacArthur, head of the Bataan Peninsula, orders the Bataan Peninsula to the center of American-Filipino resistance to the Japanese invasion of the Philippines. But its jungles, swamps, and mountains made it difficult to defend.
15 February Singapore surrenders.
27-28 February Battle of Java Sea results in a major defeat for the Japanese. The Japanese commander, South Pacific Areas (Australia, most of the Indo-China, and the Philippines), Cmdr. Chester W. Nimitz is designated Commanding Officer, Pacific Ocean Area.

1943

13 January U.S. forces begin 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 Solomon Islands.
22 January South Pacific Campaign ends in the final decisive battle of the Japanese
9-10 March Battle of the Coral Sea. This American victory destroys the Japanese carrier-based air force that is critical to its success.
17 March MacArthur, who had left the Philippines six days before, arrives in Australia. Here he utters the phrase "I come through and I shall return.
30 March MacArthur's designated Allied Supreme Commander, Southwest Pacific Area (Australia, most of the Indo-China, and the Philippines), Admiral Chester W. Nimitz is designated Commanding Officer, Pacific Ocean Area.

1944

8 January-23 February Recapture of northern Philippines begins as U.S. forces land on Luzon.
19 February U.S. Marines invade Bougainville and conquer island of two days after bitter fighting.
9-10 March U.S. Marine Corp invades Saipan, captures Japanese air and naval facilities at Rabaul.
4-8 May Battle of the Coral Sea. This Japanese victory destroys the Japanese carrier-based air force that is critical to its success.
6 August Air Force drops atomic bomb on Hiroshima.
6 August Air Force drops atomic bomb on Hiroshima.
6 August Air Force drops atomic bomb on Nagasaki.
9 August U.S. troops land at Okinawa, main island of the Ryukyus.
31 January-4 February American forces capture Rabaul, New Britain.

1945

2 January Japanese occupy Manilla.
7 January Siege of Bataan begins. MacArthur heads Allied forces in the Philippines.
15 February MacArthur returns to anchorage for one-man torpedoes enter Japanese positions during the battle.
16 March MacArthur, who had left the Philippines six days before, arrives in Australia. Here he utters the phrase "I come through and I shall return.
9 April Battle of Midway. The American victory destroys the Japanese carrier-based air force that is critical to its success.
10 April Philippine convoys begin a 60-mile "death march" to Japanese prison camps.
15 April Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle leads sixteen B-25 bombers from carrier Hornet to bomb targets in Tokyo, Yokohama, Yokosuka, Kobe, and Nagoya.
8-9 May Battle of the Coral Sea. This Japanese victory destroys the Japanese carrier-based air force that is critical to its success.
3-5 June Battle of Midway. The American victory destroys the Japanese carrier-based air force that is critical to its success.
7 June Japanese occupy Attu and Kiska in the Aleutian Islands.
27-28 February Battle of Java Sea results in a major defeat for the Japanese. The Japanese commander, South Pacific Areas (Australia, most of the Indo-China, and the Philippines), Cmdr. Chester W. Nimitz is designated Commanding Officer, Pacific Ocean Area.

Cover: US Carrier Yorktown is hit by Japanese bombs during the Battle of Midway, June 1942.
Guam 1941-1944: Conquest and Liberation

The Japanese conquest of Guam began about an hour or more after the initial attack on Pearl Harbor when the first Japanese forces landed on the island. At that time Guam's only protection was a 153-man Marine garrison, an 80-man Insular Guard Force, an armed and trained volunteer naval militia, and 271 regular naval 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 "saw armed resistance anywhere," Father Oscar Calvo, a Catholic priest, said later. But they found no welcoming committee, either. The Guamanians were too poor to oppose war. Not knowing what to expect, or perhaps fearing the threatening sights of Japanese invaders in war attire, they pulled the island's currency, Japanese yen, became the island's currency, for the first four months the island was under Japanese occupation. Japanese coastal defenses were reinforced and the island declared off-limits to Japanese forces.

In early 1944, with the war going badly for Japan and American invasion forces approaching, the Japanese army returned to Guam, bringing with it a new and stricter form of government. In the "Kukachin," Social activities were terminated, schools were closed, and all Guamanian men, women, and children were forced to clear the island of their homes and trade for products they needed. Social activities included parties, Japanese movies, and sports competitions. Mass meetings were held in Agana to reinforce the "Kukachin" (part 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 three 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 1944, Guam was invaded by American forces. The Japanese garrison surrendered on July 22, 1944, after a four-month resistance. Guam was declared secure on September 17, 1944, and the war in the Pacific was won.

 Seeing the Park

With the establishment of World War II on the Pacific front, American troops began to arrive on Guam. In 1941, the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade and the 30th Regimental Combat Team landed on the island. The 1st Provisional Marine Brigade and the 30th Regimental Combat Team were responsible for clearing the island of Japanese forces.

The Guam National Historical Park was established in 1978, and the Guam National Historical Park Visitor Center was opened in 1980. The Guam National Historical Park includes the Guam National Historical Park Visitors Center, the Guam National Historical Park Headquarters, the Guam National Historical Park Headquarters Annex, and the Guam National Historical Park Headquarters Annex Annex.

For Your Safety

Many national parks are located in developing countries and are managed by local governments. National parks can be crowded with tourists, and the noise level can be high. Be prepared for the possibility of crowds.

Do not trespass on protected lands. Private property in the park is protected by law. Please respect these property rights. It is against the law to enter private property without the owner's permission.

Use caution when swimming. Swimming, diving, or boating near the cliffs, kelp beds, or the water's edge is dangerous. Do not attempt to swim near the cliffs, kelp beds, or the water's edge. Be aware of your surroundings, and do not venture into areas that are not safe. Be aware of your surroundings, and do not venture into areas that are not safe. Be aware of your surroundings, and do not venture into areas that are not safe. Be aware of your surroundings, and do not venture into areas that are not safe. Be aware of your surroundings, and do not venture into areas that are not safe.