

# World War II History



## Introduction

Although Guam is now an island territory of the United States with a significant military presence, the island has not always been an American stronghold. Located in the Western Pacific, about 900 miles north of the equator, Guam's proximity to Japan made its value in World War II immeasurable to both sides. Because of that value, the island played a pivotal role in the war and remains a great place to explore the past. The largest island in Micronesia, Guam has been a possession of the United States since 1898 until the Japanese seized control of Dec. 11, 1941.

## World War II Battle

Guam's role in World War II took a pivotal turn in July 1944, when the United States decided to seize control of the island from Japanese forces.

On July 21, 1944, U.S. Marines landed on both sides of Guam. The 3rd Marine Division landed near Hagatna, to the north of Orote, at 8:28 p.m., while the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade landed near Agat to the south. By 9 a.m., tanks were ashore at both beaches.

By nightfall, the Americans had established beachheads (a military term used to describe the line created when a unit reaches a beach by sea) about 2,000 meters deep. Japanese counter attacks were made throughout the first few days of the battle, mostly at night, using infiltration tactics.

U.S. forces struggled the first few days in battle. Landing ships could not come closer than the reef, several hundred yards from the beach. On July 28, however, forces were able to join the two beachheads, enabling the capture of Orote airfield and Apra Harbor by July 30.

Counterattacks around the American beachheads quickly took their toll on the Japanese. In early August 1944, they were running out of food and ammunition and had only a handful of tanks left. Japanese Lt. Gen. Hideyoshi Obata - a longtime member of the Japanese army - withdrew his troops from southern Guam, and planned to make a stand in the mountainous central part of the island. By that point, U.S. forces controlled the sea and air around Guam, solidifying their trek to victory.



Agat War Guns

## Touring WWII Sites

With more than a dozen WWII sites on Guam, many of which require some time on hiking trails, make sure you wear appropriate light clothing and walking shoes. Plenty of water is also necessary, and you may also want to bring sunscreen to shield yourself from Guam's tropical weather. And don't forget your camera either.

Information about each of Guam's historical WWII sites is listed below. Each offers a unique perspective on the war.



T. Stell Newman Visitors Center

- **War in the Pacific National Historical Park**  
[www.nps.gov/wapa](http://www.nps.gov/wapa)

Authorized in August 1978, War in the Pacific National Historical Park is the only facility in the national Park Service dedicated to the Pacific Theater of WWII. The park itself is comprised of seven separate units and 1,000 offshore acres, located in or near the villages of Asan, Piti, and Agat, on the west side of the island facing the Philippine Sea.

The T. Stell Newman Visitor Center is located near the village of Piti adjacent to the front gate of U.S. Naval Base Guam. Here you'll find museum exhibits and audiovisual programs that tell an in-depth story of Guam's role in WWII - from the recapture of the island by U.S. forces to war experiences of native Chamorros. Programs are available in English, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean.

Through a partnership with the U.S. Navy, the 4,149-square-foot facility is operated by the non-profit group Pacific Historic Parks. Its hours are Sunday - Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with closures on Christmas Day, Thanksgiving Day, and New Year's Day.

- **Asan Beach and Inland**

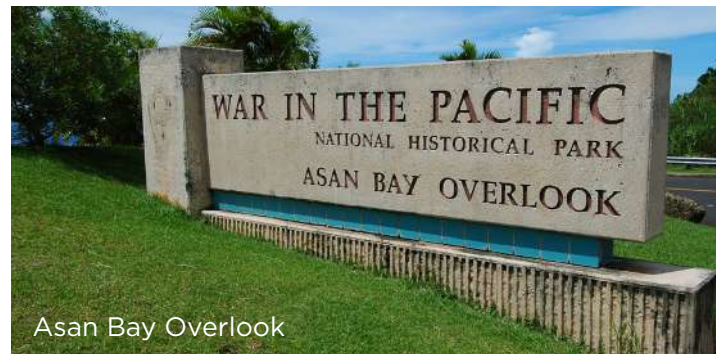
As the focal point of the American invasion in 1944, Asan Beach features several concrete encasements, caves, and pillboxes, as well as 445 acres of reef and relics. A Liberator's Memorial honoring U.S. Armed Forces who participated in the 1944 landing is also featured on the property.

- **Fonte Plateau**

The Japanese naval communications center was once situated on this site. Several concrete tunnels can also be found here as remnants of the establishment.

- **Piti**

As a site facing where U.S. Armed Forces came ashore to retake Guam, Japanese forces housed three coastal defense guns in Piti that possessed a firing range of close to 10 miles. The weaponry, which remains in good historical condition, were never fired however. They stand as a representation of the type of Japanese weapons used on Guam.



Asan Bay Overlook

- **Mount Tenjo/Mount Chacho**

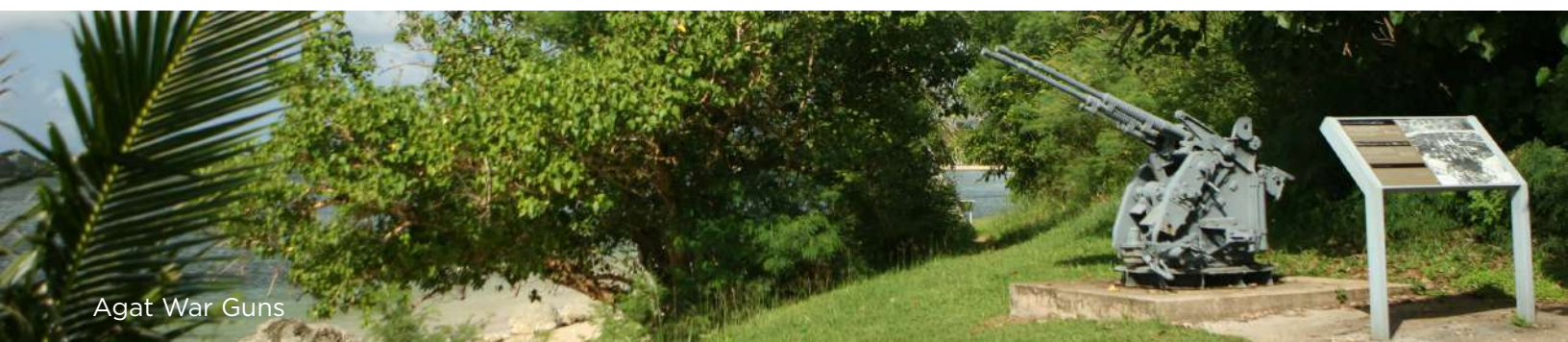
These remote hilly areas were where thousands of Japanese soldiers dug trenches in preparation for the American invasion.

- **Mount Alifan**

Although this area is extremely difficult to hike and inaccessible to many visitors, it remains home to several historic sites and debris.

- **Agat**

Home to several caves, bunkers, and more than 10 pillboxes, some points of interest in Agat include Ga'an Point, Bangi Point, Apaca Point, and Bangi Island.



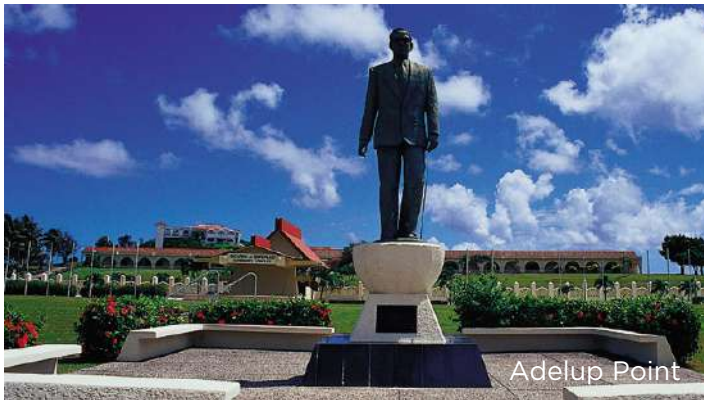
Agat War Guns



Plaza de España

#### • Plaza de España

Located in the capital city of Hagåtña, Plaza de España is the most visited historic site on Guam. It served as the seat of government for the Spanish, American, and Japanese administrations. In WWII, it was defended by Chamorro volunteers of the Insular Force Guard comprised of 120 men tasked with aiding in the island's defense. Then-Gov. George McMillan surrendered the island to Japanese forces on Dec. 11, 1941. Most of the original walls at the former Spanish complex were destroyed, but there are still remnants from the 333 years of Spanish occupation at the site. Located near the Plaza, visitors will find Japanese caves, the Sen. Angel L.G. Santos Latte Memorial Park, and the Insular Force Guard Monument.



Adelup Point

#### • Adelup Point

Originally occupied by the Japanese, Adelup became an American command post once U.S. Armed Forces arrived on the island. The "Latte of Freedom" Museum and Hall of Governors opened on the site in April 2010, offering a place to showcase current and former Guam leaders and a historic view of the island's coast.

#### • South Pacific Memorial Park

Located in the village of Yigo, where Japan's General Hideyoshi Obata constructed an underground command post, the South Pacific Memorial Park serves as a solemn reminder of the 50,000 Japanese, American, and Pacific Islander casualties suffered during the war. A 15-meter tall monument depicting hands clasped in prayer stands on the site, sheltering remains of Japanese soldiers who lost their lives in the final days of the battle. To the right of the monument, visitors will find a shallow canyon where Obata held his command post among caves and bunkers.

#### • Andersen Air Force Base

The U.S. Air Force Base and Heritage Room Museum can be toured with valid military identification or through a sponsor. The facilities, showcasing Pacific aviation and the Atomic Age, provides visitors with a number of displays and films to fully experience the exhibits. For tours without military identification, submit requests at least three weeks prior to your visit.

#### • Apra Harbor Shipwrecks

Dive enthusiasts can get up close and personal with WWII artifacts below the surface. Enjoy the calm waters of Apra Harbor while experiencing one of the world's most unique wreck sites - the German cruiser SMS Cormoran at 130 feet, lying perpendicular to the Japanese Tokai Maru at about 60 feet. The two ships represent two wars and two different countries at the same site.



Kitsugawa Maru

Nearby, divers may also discover the 1,900-ton Kitsugawa Maru at 120 feet below, a favorite among divers because of its upright position on the sea floor.



South Pacific Memorial Park

#### • Naval Station

Historic Sites like Andersen Air Force Base, access to Naval Base Guam is granted with a valid military identification or through a sponsor. Visitors can find a series of highlighted events and structures from WWII, including cave complexes built by Chamorros at the direction

of the Japanese military, Japanese re-fueling piers, the War Dog Cemetery, remnants of the Trans-Pacific Cable Station, and an amphitheater built by Japanese prisoners. The historic Sumay village, which was destroyed during the war,



was formerly located on Naval Base Guam as well. A cemetery stands as a reminder of the village's existence.

- **War Dog Cemetery**

Located on Naval Base Guam, the War Dog Cemetery honors canines who flushed out the enemy's hiding spots during Guam's liberation by American forces. Previously located in Yigo, the cemetery was moved to the base in 1994. Breeds primarily used to scout out enemy hiding spots included Doberman Pinchers and German Shepherds.



St. Joseph Catholic Church, Inarajan

- **Inarajan Village**

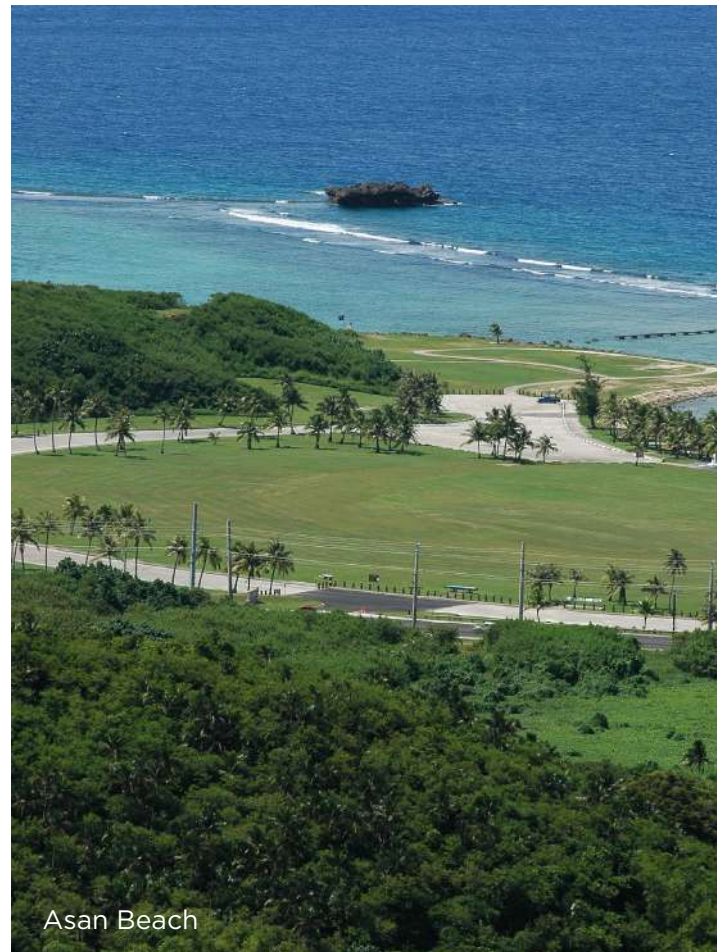
A traditional Chamorro village on the southern end of Guam, Inarajan holds many historical sites including many pre-war homes as well as St. Joseph Catholic Church. The church houses the burial site of Father Jesus Baza Duenas, a Chamorro priest executed by the Japanese.

## A Snapshot of Guam

Guam is home to a tropical climate, with average yearly temperatures of 85°F. Evening temperatures rarely fall below 70°F and daily highs rarely exceed 90°F. Chamorro and English are the primary languages spoken on the island, although many businesses employ multilingual staff.

Guam is 10 hours ahead of Greenwich Meridian Time. The local currency is the U.S. dollar and most major credit cards are widely accepted. The electrical current is the same as the U.S. mainland - 120 volts/60 cycles.

Guam has become a state-of-the-art destination with luxuries the rest of the world enjoys. High-speed Internet and mobile service make it easy to stay in touch and brand name hotels line the island's shores.



Asan Beach



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