

A BGES' World War II
Field University Program:
**Nimitz's 1944 Central Pacific Campaign
With Optional Philippines Add-on**
Presented by Len Riedel
February 1-15, 2024; from Honolulu, Hawaii

Following the Japanese surprise attacks in 1941 that severely damaged the United States Pacific Fleet, captured her territory of Guam, invaded and captured the Philippines, and crippled British influence based in Singapore, an American response was inevitable. Supporting operations in both Europe and the Pacific, the Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Ernest King, assigned Adm. Chester Nimitz as the commander-in-chief of Naval Forces in the Pacific. Juxtaposed against the legendary, general Douglas MacArthur, a powerful former Army chief of staff who had been squired off the island of Corregidor to Australia, Nimitz was expected to support Army land operations commanded by MacArthur in the Southwest Pacific while taking away Japanese lines of supply and communications.

American industrial capacity soon swelled the Pacific fleet to one of the most powerful war machines in the history of the world, and soon Nimitz had the capacity vested in the United States 3rd/5th Fleets and the 7th Fleet to control the massive ocean. By 1944, strategic concerns required secure basing options for strategic bombing missions against the Japanese homeland. The result was Operation Forager, a combined arms operation to capture the Mariana Islands chain just 1,500 miles from both Manila and Tokyo.

This tour will tell the story of that operation and show you sites long forgotten or overgrown as we visit Guam, Saipan, and Tinian. Originating in Honolulu, we will see the sites and understand the story of the attack on Pearl Harbor and its subsequent importance in offensive operations from 1942 to 1945. An optional tour at the end to the Philippines makes this a "Bucket List" destination for every student of World War II.

After visiting Honolulu, we will make our first of two stops in Guam to cover the capture of the island by the Japanese in December 1941 and its occupation until 1944 by the Japanese. We will go to Saipan for the major operation in June and July 1944 and will spend a day on Tinian, following the operations to capture that island. We will then transition to the strategic bombing campaign of 1945. Returning to Guam, we will follow its invasion and capture in 1944 and then will close the loop with the strategic bombing campaign, visiting some of the old airfields created for that purpose.

With the end of the core program, we are offering a chance to get a four-day key sites tour and discussion of the capture of the Philippines in 1941–1942, the imprisonment of Filipinos, Americans, and American nurses, the Bataan Death March, the surrender and recapture of Corregidor, and the redemption of Manila in 1945. MacArthur returned!

Thursday, February 1, 2024

Arrive in Honolulu at your leisure and check into the Ala Moana Hotel in Waikiki. If you are up to it after the long flight, meet in front of Starbucks Coffee in the lobby at 6 p.m. and we will go over to the pub and enjoy a drink before calling it a night.

Friday, February 2, 2024

Respecting jet lag, have breakfast on your own, and let's meet at 7:30 a.m. to start our day. The focus of the day is to circumnavigate the island, visiting the different military sites that were attacked, such as Bellows Field, Kaneohe Sea Plane Base, Haleiwa Field, Wheeler Field, and Schofield Barracks. We can't get to Opana Radar Site, but we can point it out. Ewa Field has been completely built over and no trace remains.

Hotel and lunch are provided.

Saturday February 3, 2024

A strong narrative today with much to see. Let's leave at 6:15 a.m. (we're counting on the time zone difference), when we will head to the Pacific Fleet Submarine Museum and view the U.S.S. *Bowfin*—a World War II submarine. We will spend the remainder of the morning visiting the U.S.S. *Arizona* Memorial and the visitor center displays and movie. Len will intersperse various monologues throughout the day.

Following lunch, we will visit the historic areas of the Naval Station Pearl Harbor, Hickam Field, and the attack on Ford Island. We will then go to U.S. Army Museum of Hawaii, which is a World War II shore battery. The museum is exceptionally well laid out. From there, we will head over to the Hale Koa Armed Forces Recreation Center and enjoy their luau dinner and show. Dinner is at 6, and the show is over by 9 p.m.

Dinner and hotel are included.

Sunday–Monday, February 4–5, 2024

Bags out at 7:15 a.m. for the doorman to hold—we will leave at 7:30. We will return to Ford Island to visit the U.S.S. *Missouri*, where we will take the surrender tour and

then release you for an hour to look around the ship. We will then head over to the Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum at 10:15 a.m.—there is much to see there.

Departing at 11:45 a.m., we will head to the Honolulu International Airport to check in for our United Airlines flight to Guam. You will be able to find plenty to eat at the airport and, if you have access to an airline lounge (United's overlooks our plane being serviced for the trip), you will enjoy a leisurely few hours until we board.

We will arrive in Guam around 6:50 p.m. the next day (it is an 8-hour flight). The arrival will likely give you a profile of Guam as we come in if you are on the right side of the airplane. At the top of the island are the dual runways of Andersen Air Force Base, which were B-29 World War II runways as well. If we loop around the island to land toward the northeast, you will see the assault beaches Hågat and the Orote Peninsula, scene of heavy fighting. We will clear customs and head for our included hotel—The Guam Plaza.

Tuesday, February 6, 2024

Allowing for jet lag, we will have two looks at Guam, and these first couple of days will focus on the Japanese capture of Guam in December 1941. Departing at 9:30 a.m., we will circumnavigate the island. We will look at the three Japanese landing points and the unsuccessful defense of the island, concluding with a walk around the capital city of Hagåtña, where we will discuss the street fighting. Stories of prewar Guam, the occupation, and Japanese governance will fill the day.

Lunch and hotel are included.

Wednesday February 7, 2024

Today, we will head back to the south to visit Orote Point on the Orote Peninsula and discuss the Japanese capture of Orote and the marine barracks. Along the way, we will see the prewar infrastructure and the defensive improvements the Japanese forced labor built to defend Apra Harbor and the blockhouses and pillboxes to defend the shores. We will finish the day with a visit to the National Park Service's T. Stell Newman Visitor Center.

Lunch and hotel are included.

Thursday February 8, 2024

Today, we check out at 6 a.m. and head for the airport to check in for our short flight to Saipan. The B-737 will not likely go much above 15,000 feet, as we will be descending almost as fast as we go up—once again, you should get good views of Anderson Field out of the right side of the aircraft and perhaps, depending on his course, you can see Rota on the left and Tinian as we align ourselves to land straight

in at Saipan International Airport (known as Aslito during the Japanese South Seas Mandate).

After clearing customs, we will transport our luggage to the hotel and, after allowing for a late breakfast (included), we will head out to land the American forces on the southwestern beaches. Our day ends with the establishment of the beachhead by the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions. Len will then discuss the Japanese Plan “Operation A-Go” that results in the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

Brunch and the hotel are included.

Friday, February 9, 2024

Enjoy your breakfast overlooking the landing beaches. We will start our program at 10 a.m. on the beach as we bring the 27th Infantry Division ashore. We will take Aslito Airfield before lunch—you will be amazed at the number of Japanese bunkers and other structures still extant.

The afternoon will see us with the 27th as it moves against the Japanese who have fallen back into the deep Nafutan Point, densely forested with thick vegetation. The Army falls behind the timetable set by the Marine commander, Gen. Holland Smith—nicknamed “Howlin’ Mad.” Army commander Gen. Ralph Smith is relieved amid controversy that eventually involves the chief of staff, Gen. George Marshall, and Admiral Nimitz.

We will discuss Purple Heart Ridge and ascend Mount Tapochau, where you can appreciate the command the Japanese defenders had of the combat area. The day ends with the street-to-street fighting and capture of the capital city of Garapan. We will select a restaurant in Garapan, and you’ll enjoy a Dutch treat dinner.

Lunch and hotel are included.

Saturday, February 10, 2024

We will leave at 9 a.m. While the fighting had been intense, it was now to enter a new dimension in which the heavy vegetation and the extensive coral formations proved the perfect network for a new level of Japanese dedication and fanaticism. We will move to the north of the island. In this last phase, the Americans fought off counterattack after counterattack, including the largest Banzai Charge of the war. In an army whose greatest honor was to die for the emperor, the Japanese died in the tens of thousands. So, too, did the civilians. The commanders committed suicide rather than suffer the dishonor of surrender. Civilians jumped off cliffs, and soldiers held grenades against their bodies to blow themselves up. This fanaticism would play a significant role in the decision to drop the atomic bombs.

After lunch, we will revisit the now conquered island, returning to Aslito and a new airfield, both built to accommodate the new B-29 strategic bombers arriving. The complexion of the airfield has changed but unmistakable relics remain, and you will even find another long lost B-29 runway right under our noses.

Lunch and the hotel are included.

Sunday, February 11, 2024

Today, we fly over to Tinian, perhaps the most famous of the Mariana Islands. Largely overgrown, its two major businesses are harvesting super-hot red peppers and a casino. The only regular form of interisland transportation is small commercial aircraft that seat between 5 and 8 passengers—the flight is 3 miles over the straits between the two islands of Saipan and Tinian. We will leave at 7 a.m. to be ready to fly at 8 a.m., arriving about 8:15 a.m. We will then grab a vehicle for our one-day study.

We will start at San Jose, where the Japanese expected the assault, and then we will head to the small landing beaches that the Americans actually used. The Japanese had built an airfield with communications complexes that are still extant. The north side of Tinian was heavily shelled from the south shore of Saipan, and areas are still closed nearly 80 years later because of the volume of unexploded ordinance. While at that end of the island, we will visit the American airfields that housed the 509th Composite Air Wing, which existed solely to deliver the atomic bomb, and runways A, B, C and D—A made most famous, as that where the atomic bomb missions were launched. You will see the munitions areas and loading pits specially built for Little Boy and Fat Man.

Following lunch, we will follow the Americans as they pushed the Japanese to the island's south end, where once again the Japanese chose death over dishonor. We will head back to the airport, which also was the site of B-29 runways, and fly back to Saipan.

Lunch and hotel are included.

Monday, February 12, 2024

This morning we will return to Guam on United and, arriving at 10:40 a.m., we will clear customs again and take our bags to the Guam Plaza Hotel. After lunch on your own, we will meet at 1 p.m. and go to Asan Beach, where we will spend the rest of the day with the American landing and the fight for Asan Point, Adelup Point, Bundschu Ridge, and Fonte Plateau.

Dinner and hotel are included.

Tuesday, February 13, 2024

The second landing on Guam was conducted by the 1st Marines and portions of the 77th "Statue of Liberty" Division at Agat, some 7 miles south of the Asan Beach landing. The landing zone was south of Orote Point, which the Japanese had fortified and which had been a land base, along with the island of Rota, for Japanese fighter support defending the islands. The airfield was considered essential for the support of operations up the island and, like Aslito on Saipan, the airfield had to be seized. The two American landings were independent, with Orote obscuring the view of each other. Guam had suffered the most intense surface-to-shore bombardment of any landing, primarily because the Battle of the Philippine Sea disrupted the naval support for the Guam operation. Once ashore, the two American landing forces would link at the base of the Orote Peninsula before driving up and into the peninsula.

We will return to Orote and the naval base to discuss that fighting and the capture of the airfield. Once again, we have sleuthed out the original World War II runway, enhanced by the Navy Seabees. You will get to visit the Working Dog Cemetery; on Guam, dogs played a critical role in bringing Japanese soldiers out of the man-made caves they had constructed on the island.

Following lunch, we will move north through what has now become a highly developed and population-dense center of the island toward Mount Santa Rosa—site of the Japanese last stand on Guam. Many treasures of the war are still extant. We will see where the Japanese Guamanian commander committed suicide and consider the singular story and legend and legacy of Navy Seaman George Tweed.

Lunch and hotel are included.

Wednesday, February 14, 2024

Our last day on Guam starts with a trip to Andersen Air Force Base and the Northwest Field. These two airfields carved out of the jungle accommodated Gen. Curtis Lemay's command of the 20th Air Force. It is from the Northwest Field that the last missions of World War II were flown. A trip down to Tarague Beach will show the extreme terrain that composed the island's northern end.

Having completed the World War II combat operations, we will have lunch and then review and visit Guam: the supply depot of the Pacific, Nimitz's forward base for overseeing the conclusion of WWII, and its readaptation to life under American governance postwar. We will talk about Guam's emerging importance, its role in the Vietnam War, the evacuation of refugees from Vietnam, and its increasing military importance in the history of our operations in the Indian Ocean.

Lunch and hotel are included.

Thursday, February 15, 2024

We depart for Honolulu at approximately 7:30 a.m. on United Airlines flight 200.

For those going on the OPTIONAL Philippines add-on, be at leisure for the remainder of the day. We will head to the airport at 5:30 p.m. to catch our flight to Manila. Arriving at 9:50 p.m., we will transfer to the Manila Hotel in downtown Manila.

Friday, February 16, 2024

The Philippines campaigns cover massive amounts of land and sea. The Battle of Leyte Gulf preceded MacArthur's much touted return. The land battles inland are beyond our range for this sampler tour, in which we want to help you understand the overlooked aspects of the occupation of the island of Luzon in 1941–1942 and the redemption of MacArthur's timeless promise of liberation.

Let's start the day with the Manila Hotel's sumptuous buffet breakfast, and we will, if available, visit the restored apartment of the MacArthur family in the hotel. We will have a talk before walking over to Intramuros—the historic walled city—to visit Fort Santiago, whose prisons and dungeons the Japanese used for hundreds of prisoners. We will then go to the American Military Cemetery—been to the Omaha Beach cemetery? That has 11,000 American graves; here, more than 17,000 Americans enjoy eternal rest.

Breakfast and hotel are included.

Saturday, February 17, 2024

Early departure today as we head for Clark Field* and the Japanese air attack in December 1941. This former U.S. air base also was used by the Americans and emerging Filipino military at the time of the war.

We will then head to the Bataan Peninsula and Mount Sumat, where a memorial shrine commemorates the "Battling Bastards" of Bataan. Here, indigenous forces fought fiercely to defend their homes. History tells us the Philippines fell on April 9, 1942. We will go visit a moving, life-sized sculptural presentation of the surrender negotiations outside Balanga Elementary School. We will then take a quick hop over to Mariveles and pick up one of the two starting points for the infamous Bataan Death March. We will track our way back to Manila along the route where we will see regular sets of markers for the Death March to its ending point at Fernando Station. We will then return to the Manila Hotel.

*The trip to Clark Field is pending arrangements with the transportation company to determine if they can do both Clark and the Bataan Peninsula in the same day. Further information coming.

Lunch and hotel are included.

Sunday, February 18, 2024

Perhaps the most iconic destination is tiny Corregidor Island.* The Rock was a bastion of defiance in which the Filipino government operated until it fell in the first week of May 1942—long after MacArthur had fled on President Roosevelt's orders. It was redeemed in March 1945 when American forces recapture the island.

We will head to the docks and board a boat for the two-hour ride to the island. Once there, we will board a tram for a narrated tour of the multiple and meaningful ruins of the 1942 and 1945 battles. After an included lunch, we will go to the Malinta Tunnel, which epitomizes the drama of the era. A progressive and haunting light show will accompany you as the story of the fall of Corregidor is told. Afterward, you will have time to wander around the lower level near the docks and enjoy the interpretative signs and various monuments.

Lunch and hotel are included.

*Since COVID, regular service and tours of Corregidor have not been fully restored. A reopening in 2022 failed for lack of support. A scaled-back schedule for 2023 limited trips to Wednesdays and Thursdays. Service shut down in the summer, and nothing about 2024 is yet available.

If we cannot arrange to go to Corregidor, we will rework the schedule to go to Clark, Camp O'Donnell POW Camp, Baguio, and maybe Lingayen Gulf, where Japanese and American forces both landed in their invasions of Luzon.

Monday, February 19, 2024

Bags out to be held until our ride to the airport tonight. Let's meet for breakfast about 7:30 a.m. As should be, our last day will be spent on the liberation of Manila in 1945. There are a number of key sites, with the culminating battle fought within a stone's throw of the hotel and Intramuros. We will visit the grounds of Santo Tomas University—a Japanese internment camp, where Allied civilians were held and which was involved in a dramatic liberation spearheaded by MacArthur on the evening of February 3, 1945.

We will then track MacArthur in Manila at Malacañang Palace, the official residence of the Philippine president, as he surveyed the south side of the Pasig River. From there, we will proceed to the Jones Bridge, which was the main crossing point of the Pasig River and the last line for the Japanese holding the city—a central feature being the rebuilt post office, a Japanese strongpoint destroyed but rebuilt after the war to its prewar appearance.

We will continue to move along the American front lines as we go to Rizal Memorial Baseball Stadium. Here, Americans fought in one of the most unique battles of the war—advancing across the field against the embedded Japanese, using the stadium infrastructure for their defenses. We will then follow the retreating Japanese to De LaSalle University, where the Japanese massacred members of the faculty and a number of the Catholic laity and some students.

We will finish this tour in Intramuros, the final line of defense. We will see the breaches in the walls and hear of the massacre in San Augustin Church, ending at Fort Santiago, which was one of the last places to fall in the battle for Manila. There we will summarize, have an early dinner at the Manila Hotel, and then gather our bags and head to the airport.

Breakfast and dinner are included.

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

We arrive in Guam at 4:40 a.m. to connect to United Airlines flight 200 to Honolulu. The flight recrosses the International Dateline, and you arrive in Honolulu on Monday night, February 19, scheduled around 6:50 p.m. For those of you not connecting later that night, you will need to get a hotel on your own. If you find it difficult or need assistance, we will help situate you in Honolulu until your departure flight.

About the Faculty:

Len Riedel is the Executive Director of the Blue and Gray Education Society. A retired Air Force officer who served as the Chief of Air Traffic Operations on Guam in 1980 and 1981, he is a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute and holds a Master's Degree in History with a certificate in Policy and Strategy from Old Dominion University. Riedel has been in charge of the BGES since 1994 and has led multiple tours that include the Central Marianas. He is the editor of the best-selling [*The Civil War: A Travelers Guide*](#) (National Geographic, 2016). He also leads tours of the European Theater, the Civil War, and the American Revolution.

Hotel Information:

You have prepaid reservations on February 1, 2, and 3 at the Ala Moana Hotel, 410 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu (it is in Waikiki), about 20 minutes from the airport.

In Guam, you will be staying at the Guam Plaza Hotel, 1328 Pale San Vitores Rd., Tumon (it is in the Tumon Beach Resort Area) on February 5, 6, 7, and again on February 12, 13, and 14. On the 15th you will either be heading home or on to Manila.

In Saipan, you will be staying at the Surfrider Resort Hotel on February 8, 9, 10, and 11. It is a beachfront hotel with a spa at Brigada Street Beach Road, Chalan Kanoa. We will be staying on one of the landing beaches.

Transportation:

You must make your own reservations to and from Honolulu. Your hotel will be available from February 1. We will travel as a group to Guam on United Airlines flight 201, leaving Honolulu on February 4 and crossing the International Dateline, arriving on February 5 at 6:50 p.m. If you return to Honolulu on February 15, we leave from Guam at 7:35 a.m. and again, crossing the International Dateline, arrive the day before we left, which is February 14 at 6:50 p.m. Given your 8 hours flying time, you should consider getting a hotel and returning to the States on February 15. If not, please note you would be hard-pressed to connect on any flight leaving before 10 p.m. There are many redeye flights from Hawaii.

Special Travel Requirements:

You must have a current passport. Although Guam and Saipan are U.S. territories, customs between islands is focused upon two very important concerns that carry over to Hawaii as well. First is agriculture. Because of the unique flora and fauna on these Pacific Islands, all luggage is scanned and often inspected, so bring no plants or meats with you. Entering Guam, you will fill out a landing card and, once you collect your bags, will go past a customs agent. Before arriving, we will ask you to execute paperwork online through United Airlines that will expedite your entry to Guam. Coming from Saipan to Guam, you will clear U.S. Border Patrol with your passport before being permitted into the boarding area.

If you are going on to the Philippines, you will need a passport to enter the country, but no VISA is required.

Climate and Clothing:

All destinations are tropical. When it rains, and it does often, it is warm and usually evaporates rapidly. You may want to bring a portable umbrella and/or lightweight raincoat.

The temperature is tropical year-round, with average temperatures in the upper 70s to mid-80s. Walks into the jungle sometimes must go through tall grass and heavy vegetation. We will not do it often, but there will be opportunities. Len prefers shorts, but long pants or cargo-type pants would be recommended.

You can bring swimming trunks, but if you intend to enter the lagoon areas in Guam and Saipan, you will want tennis shoes because of sharp stone, lion fish that cause powerful stings, and exposed coral that can cause nasty cuts and secondary infections.

Saipan and Tinian are rebuilding after Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018. Guam was hit in 2023 by Super Typhoon Mawar, with winds approaching 200 mph, and there is still considerable damage that has yet to be cleaned up. These are the two strongest tropical systems ever recorded on Earth. Water, however, is very drinkable. Bottled water is readily available.

Your hotels in Hawaii and Guam are both part of large shopping malls. Saipan has fewer options. Medicines are readily available. If you are susceptible to sunburn, bring sun block.

Recommended Reading:

You will be provided with maps upon arrival. The following books are suggested to enhance your readiness for the program.

Harold Goldberg: [*D-Day in the Pacific, The Battle of Saipan*](#)

Barbara Noe Kennedy and Leanne B. Noe: [*MacArthur Came Back: A Little Girl's Encounter with War in the Philippines*](#)

Roger Mansell: [*Captured, The Forgotten Men of Guam*](#)

E. B. Potter: [*Nimitz*](#)

Gordon W. Prange: [*At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor*](#)

Nathan Prefer: [*The Battle of Tinian: Vital Stepping Stone in America's War Against Japan*](#)

James Scott: [*Rampage: MacArthur, Yamashita and the Battle of Manila*](#)

Ronald Spector: [*Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan*](#)

Barrett Tillman: [*Clash of Carriers, The True Story of the Marianas Turkey Shoot of World War Two*](#)

Ian Toll: [*Pacific Crucible: War at the Sea in the Pacific, 1941-1942; The Conquering Tide: War in the Pacific Islands, 1942-1944; Twilight of the Gods: War in the Western Pacific, 1944-1945*](#) (Volumes 2 and 3 are of particular use)

Registration Form
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Field University Program
Presented by Len Riedel
February 1–15, 2024; from Honolulu, Hawaii

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes 13 nights lodging and 2 breakfasts, 8 lunches, a Hawaiian luau, and 1 dinner, a map package, the academic program, support of a professional historian, airfare from Honolulu to Guam and return, airfare from Guam to Saipan and return, airfare from Saipan to Tinian and return, all admissions and van transportation. Transfers in Honolulu, Guam, and Saipan to the airport.

_____ \$8,400 single occupancy

_____ Double occupancy \$7,500 per person double occupancy

Optional Registration for Philippines Post Tour, February 15–19, 2024, includes 4 nights lodging at the Historic Manila Hotel, airfare from Guam to Manila and return, transfers to and from Nimoy International Airport, a map package, the academic program, support of a professional historian and local experts, the boat to and from Corregidor, 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 1 dinner, tour transportation, and all admissions, including the Malinta Tunnel.

_____ Philippines registration: \$2,595 single occupancy

_____ Philippines registration: \$2,200 per person double occupancy

_____ I am sending a deposit of \$1,000 per person (\$1,500 per person if doing the Philippines program). Total enclosed is \$ _____. I will pay the balance due before the event.

_____ Check enclosed

Charge my (circle one) MC VISA AMEXP Discover \$_____

#_____

Exp: _____ CVV: _____

Signature: _____

Mail to BGES Seminars, P.O. Box 1176, Chatham, VA 24531; or fax credit cards to 434-432-0596. You can also register online at *blueandgrayeducation.org*.