

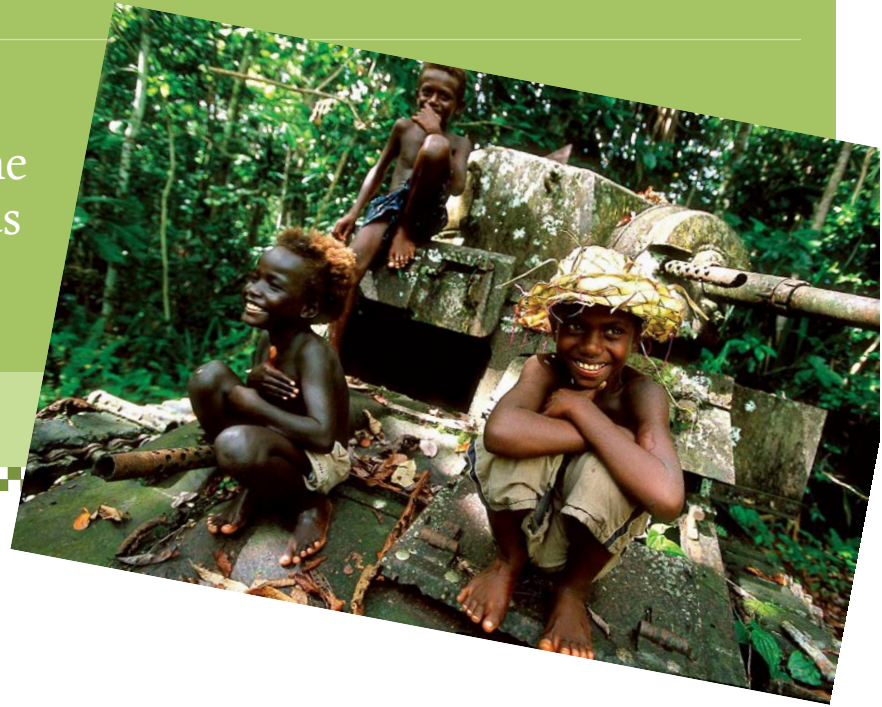
Guadalcanal

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to visit one of the most important battlegrounds in American History

2018 Expedition

Brief Itinerary

- July 7 Arrive at Henderson Field in Guadalcanal and spend the next few days touring the 1942 battlefields
- July 10 Board the MV Bilikiki and enjoy days of snorkeling, diving, and exploring
- July 17 Return to Honiara, Guadalcanal and fly off the island
- July 18 Head home via whatever route you have chosen



Why Guadalcanal?

When US Marines from the 1st Marine Division stormed ashore at Guadalcanal, Tulaghi, and Gavutu on August 7, 1942, the United States remained unsure if it would beat the Japanese in the Pacific any time soon. The US Navy has crippled, but not killed, the Imperial Japanese Navy at the Battle of Midway the previous June, but no nation had been able to defeat the Japanese Army. It had steamrolled across the southwest Pacific, killing and capturing Americans in the Philippines, British Forces in Singapore, and Dutch forces in what is now Indonesia. Australia, alone, stood against this juggernaut. The Japanese understood their opportunity, and launched offensives in New Guinea and began air raids against Australian ports. Their next step was to seize the Solomon Islands, build airbases, and strike east against the supply lines that linked the US with the Aussies. US war planners decided on a bold move: Launch an offensive against Guadalcanal, stop the Japanese, and restore confidence to the nation.

No Sure Thing

At the time, most Americans believed the attack on Guadalcanal would only slow down the Japanese, and most strategists believed the Marines were heading into a bloody sacrifice to buy time.





A Bloody Sea, Air, and Land Battle

The American Offensive Caught the Japanese by Surprise

The initial American air, land, and sea assaults on the Japanese positions overwhelmed the small garrison of combat troops and Korean laborers working on finishing the airstrip at Guadalcanal. Marine raiders and paratroops eliminated enemy strongpoints on Tulagi and Gavutu but the Marines going ashore at Red Beach on Guadalcanal found the going relatively easy. The Japanese, though, would be back.

Striking from their base at Rabaul on New Britain, other bases in the Solomons, and from the fleet anchorage at Truk, the Japanese poured the might of their Navy, Air Force, and Army into a herculean effort to dislodge the Americans. From August 8 to early February, the US Marines, Navy, and, later, Army fended off blows that killed thousands of men, sank scores of warships, and destroyed hundreds of aircrafts on both sides. Battered by this onslaught, the American

troops did their best to hang on. Eventually, American tenacity and timely reinforcements swung the campaign in favor of the US.

By mid November 1942, the Japanese gave up trying to dislodge the Americans. For the next three months, the fighting was about recovering the men that they had landed on Guadalcanal before the US troops wiped them out.

What is left of the battlefields?

Today, most visitors to Guadalcanal don't realize that the principal airport at the capital of Honiara is actually the same Henderson Field that the Marines captured from the Japanese in August 1942 and used against them for the rest of the war. Wrecked aircraft can still be found in the jungles and shallow waters of Guadalcanal.

The sites of the heaviest land fighting—Edson's Ridge, Alligator Creek, the Galloping Horse, the Maniakau Line—are all close by. The Marine perimeter was small, just a few miles, so seeing most of these dramatic places is relatively easy. There are monuments and museums, too.

Relics of the war remain all over the islands.



Offshore, there are other reminders of the battles of 1942 and 1943. The remnants of two Japanese transports are close to shore, as are the remnants of floatplanes and military equipment bulldozed into the sea when the war ended.

Diving in the Solomon Islands



This Bear Leader Tour is a land and sea adventure, we will spend part of the trip aboard MV *Bilikiki*, a highly recommended live-aboard dive boat

The only way to get a feel for the whole campaign for Guadalcanal is to see it from both the land and the sea. Plus . . . the Solomon Islands have some of the best diving and snorkeling on earth! So we will add a little natural beauty to this history trip.

The Bilikiki is a 280-ton vessel (about the size of a World War II LST, or Landing Ship Tank), 125 feet long and 24 feet in the beam. All cabins are double occupancy and have toilets and showers. There is a great platform for launching whatever aquatic adventure suits your fancy, from scuba diving or snorkeling on the many fantastic reefs, to paddle boarding, or even fishing!



We will have a crew that will see to your every need onboard, from leading the dives, to cooking the meals, to showing us around some of the remote island villages. They will even have

facilities to show the pictures you take every day, above and below the surface.

Travelers may also bring aboard their own liquor and soft drinks, or purchase them from the bar.



The divecrew is amazing, better than most places I've been to. Boat is always clean and organized. Oh and the food was great!

Of course, the best part is diving!

--Don Harry, Australia





To the Other Side of the World

Your Bear Leader Tours Guadalcanal adventure will take you across the Pacific Ocean, across the equator, and across the international dateline. Most travelers will travel from the United States to Sydney, Australia, overnight there, then hop on a plane that connects to Honiara, the capital of the Solomon Islands and the largest city on Guadalcanal.

It will be winter in Sydney, with temperatures ranging from the low 60s to the high 40s! But, if your time allows, coordinate an extension of your adventure with a little time Down Under, either before or after we head to the Solomon Islands.

Up in the tropics at Guadalcanal, the temperatures will be in the low 80s, but may get a little cooler at night.

The Solomon Islands are a developing nation, and travelers will need to seek medical advice regarding tropical diseases a few months before our adventure. Malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases may occur. Precautions against typhus and tetanus should also be taken.

Bear Leader Tours will have a doctor on staff to help ensure the safety and comfort of our travelers, but consult your local physician well in advance of the trip.



Meet the Locals!

The MV *Bilikiki* will take us to the smaller islands close to Guadalcanal where you can interact with the locals.



LEAVE US BY WEDNESDAY, JULY 4, OVERNIGHT + 1 DAY FLIGHT

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| Friday, July 6: | 5:30-7:00 a.m. Travelers arrive in Sydney, look around town or sleep; overnight in Sydney. |
| Saturday, July 7: | 6:00 a.m.–2:15 p.m., travelers head to Guadalcanal; relax |
| Sun-Tues, July 8-10: | Battlefield Tours, East and West of Honiara |
| Tuesday, July 10: | Look around town, board <i>Bilikiki</i> 4 p.m. |
| Wednesday, July 11: | Russell Islands- Reef Dives and White Beach |
| Thursday, July 12: | Mary Island - Amazing uninhabited island with great reef diving |
| Friday, July 13: | Russells - Reef dives, village visit and Pavuvu |
| Saturday, July 14: | Floridas/Russells - Reef diving depending on where is best at the time. |
| Sunday, July 15: | Floridas - WW2 Seaplane base and Tulagi visit |
| Monday, July 16: | Floridas/Boneghi Beach Transport wrecks |
| Tuesday, July 17: | Leave ship 8 a.m., transport to airport and flights out |
| Wednesday, July 18: | 10:00 a.m.-1 p.m., Fly to US |

Prices

\$6,799 (double occupancy)

Dive gear (BCD, Regulator, Computer) is an additional \$180

Mask, Fins, and Snorkel are \$10 a day; Nitrox \$20 a day

Prices include all expenses aboard the *Bilikiki* (except bar drinks, soft drinks, and tips), overnight accommodations in Sydney inbound and outbound from the Solomon Islands, hotels on Guadalcanal.

Does not include airfare, tips, meals on Guadalcanal or in Australia

Be Prepared for an Adventure of a Lifetime

On this expedition, you will have:

- Expert Dive Guides
- Expert Military Historians
- A Trip Physician

Travelers must carry the following insurance:

- Evacuation Insurance for all divers (plus proof of certifications)
- Comprehensive cancellation, accident, medical, and baggage insurance

Get Ready to Have Some Fun

Bear Leader Tours

is a program of the
McWhiney History Education Group
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1 McMurry University #637
Abilene, Texas 79697
(325) 793-4686
www.mcwhiney.org

director@tfhcc.com

