

Solomon Is. Freedom

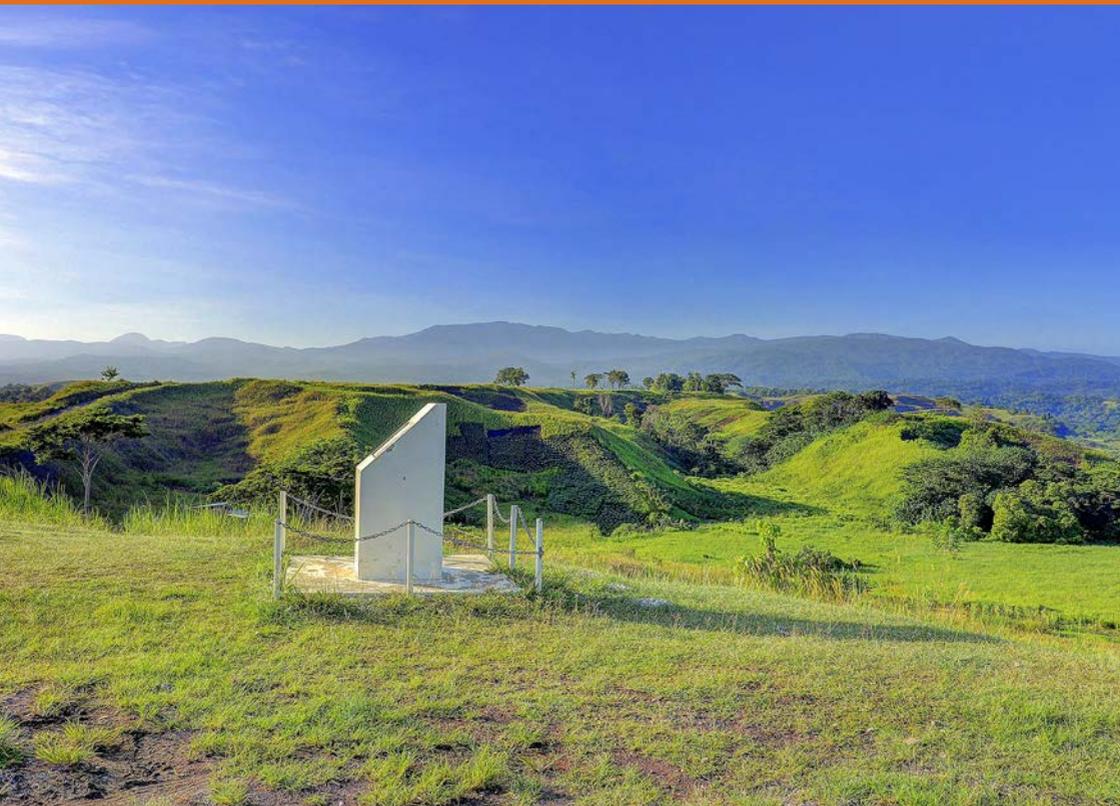




The Ultimate Sacrifice for Freedom

Try for a moment to place yourself in the boots of a soldier, a young man called with honor to serve his country in a foreign land, not knowing if he would ever see home again. Such was the fate of thousands who sacrificed their lives for the greater good. The price for freedom was never more costly than the fierce and intense WW2 battle at Guadalcanal over 75 years ago.

Throughout our islands whether on land or under the sea, war remnants still remain as a stark reminder of the dark and tumultuous chapter in our nation's and our world's narrative. The historic Iron Bottom Sound is one of the many final ocean resting grounds of gunned down planes and sunken ships. Now they serve as the fragment memories and soulful tributes of the men who fought to the end.



Lingering Scars of Time

Despite WW2 occurring decades earlier, war relics left behind have been oddly preserved and those submerged remain untouched and have become popular scuba diving sites. The Vilu War Museum houses open air vestiges such as aircrafts, artillery and various smaller items each with a story of its own.

History sits staring back at you with stories untold... stories that one may not bear to hear or that we'll never know. History is never more real when one perceives the planes that once dominated the Solomon skies and the cannons that reverberated through the air.

Other places of interest include:

Mbonege Beach- a Japanese WW2 shipwreck still partially visible from land.



Betikama School- a US camp area where US1st marines entrenched on the nearby hills. US and Japanese artillery relics can also be found.

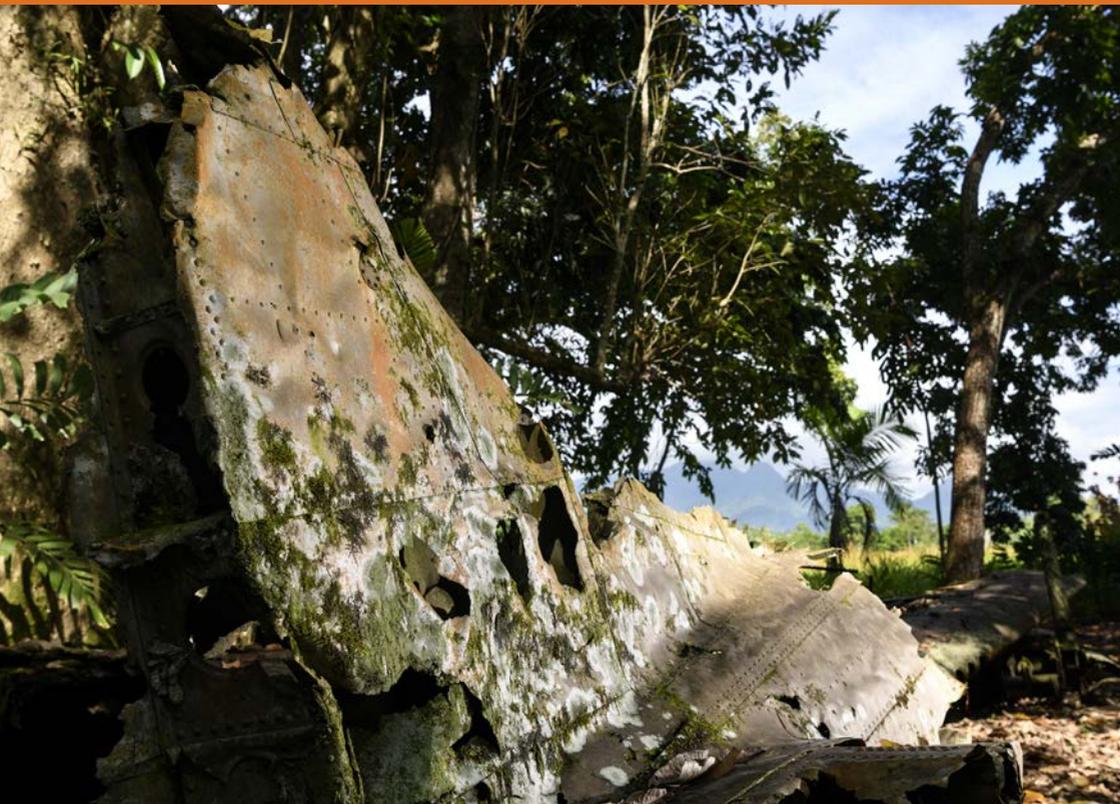
Henderson Airfield- a Japanese Zero propeller on the airport lounge room wall and a Japanese 75mm AA gun located outside the terminal.

Thin Red Line- foxholes, and Japanese and American fighting positions are evident.

Bloody Ridge- the scene of probably the most famous battle in the Guadalcanal Campaign. Fighting positions and foxholes can be seen with barbed wire still in place.

Alligator Creek- battlefield location where the Japanese attempted to win back the airfield.

The Matanikau River- both sides of this river saw heavy fighting for several months. Many US wooden footbridges were constructed to assist assaults across the river.



New Georgia- an island in the Western Province was the scene of heavy fighting and Seghe became the base for a small group of guerrilla fighters. Fighting was also particularly heavy around the Japanese air base at Munda and at Mbaeroko Bay.

Kennedy Island- on the night of 2nd August 1943, an American motor-torpedo boat PT109 commanded by John F Kennedy, was rammed and cut in half by a Japanese warship. The eleven survivors of the 13-man crew spent the next ten days marooned on Olasana Island better known as Plum Pudding Island near Gizo. John F Kennedy later became President of the United States of America from 1960 – 1963.



The Legacy that Lives On

The war will and always be an important part of our history. Despite being a small South Pacific island, the Solomons had a large role in the WW2 campaign. As a result, war historians, veterans and history enthusiasts hold our islands very close to their hearts, with commemorative events being held annually for the fallen and all those involved in the pivotal warfare.

Erected in remembrance are the American and Japanese war memorials that pay respect to both sides that clashed and lost comrades. Flags fly high in the sky as a sign of the mutual respect established between the three nations, and to recognize all the brave souls who valiantly heeded the call of their country to defend their fellow men and the future generations. A memorial garden is also constructed outside the Honiara International Airport.



WW2 was significant in that freedom was won not only for Solomon Islanders but also for the rest of the South Pacific. Its impact continues to be felt by all and one can only stand in silence and offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the heroic men.



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