

Australian battlefield pilgrims drive demand for new Mat McLachlan WW2 History Cruise to Papua New Guinea

Mat McLachlan Battlefield Tours, Cruiseco and P&O Cruises join forces

Launched in response to demand from intrepid, history-loving Australians, the 10-night Mat McLachlan WW2 History Cruise will take place aboard P&O Pacific Dawn as part of her round-trip Brisbane sailing on 26 August 2020.

Designed to be an exclusive and immersive experience featuring a tailor-made program of keynote presentations, panel discussions, workshops, and shore excursions to key Papua New Guinea World War Two sites – all hosted by acclaimed historians and led by Mat McLachlan – numbers for the inaugural are limited to two hundred cabins.

Discussing the new cruise, leading historian and founder of Mat McLachlan Battlefield Tours, Mat McLachlan, said: “No other nation embraces its war-time history like Australians. The Anzac legend inspires across generations, and we are seeing a growing interest to learn about and visit lesser known and harder to reach battlefields, such as those in Papua New Guinea.”

Cruiseco CEO, Amanda McClelland, said: “Cruise holidays have opened up new destinations and new holiday experiences for travellers. Themed cruises in particular are growing in popularity and we are very excited to partner with Australia’s leading battlefield tour company to launch the Mat McLachlan WW2 History Cruise, which we expect to be very popular among cruisers and non-cruisers alike!”

Onboard, the immersive war history itinerary includes a cocktail welcome party, three special group dinners, and three sea days of informative and engaging conferencing as well as free time to enjoy Pacific Dawn amenities and services. The conference program includes keynote presentations, panel discussions, Q&A’s, and, more relaxed interactive workshops covering subjects such as how to research a lost relative.

“We are focused on providing a personalised and enriching conference-cruise experience. Our historians will be on board for the cruise duration, providing plenty of opportunities for one on one time. We are also inviting all guests with ancestors who fought in New Guinea to advise us, so that our historians can identify sites of personal significance – such as the battlefield where a grandfather fought, or a grave where a loved one is buried,” said Mat McLachlan.

On shore, the WW2 History Tour includes two incredible highlight tours:

The Battle of Milne Bay Tour: Located on the south-eastern tip of the island of New Guinea with a deep natural harbour, Milne Bay was a key strategic point for World War Two in the Pacific. Australian troops arrived in Milne Bay in June 1942 and began work alongside American comrades carving roads and three airstrips out of jungle and swamp. For the Japanese, it was essential to claim this region back to progress their takeover of the island and Port Moresby. During the night on 25 August 1942, 2000 Japanese marines attacked the Allied base. The ensuing battle lasted three weeks, with the Allies claiming victory. Today, remnants of Japanese landing barges used in the battle can still be seen.

“The Battle of Milne Bay was a turning point in the Pacific War as it was the first time the Allied forces decisively defeated a Japanese offensive on land. This battle largely marked the beginning of the end for World War Two in the Pacific,” said Mat McLachlan.

War and Colonial History Tour in Rabaul: Rabaul was famous in both world wars - it was the scene of Australia’s first battle of the First World War (the Battle of Bitia Paka) and during the Second it was captured by the Japanese and, in 1942, turned into a fortress. The massive military complex served over 97,000 soldiers and thousands of accompanying personnel. To guard against air bombardment, the Japanese dug 800 kilometres of tunnels to house their command centres, barracks, storehouses, and a hospital. These tunnels remain today snaking beneath the island.

Rabaul was the main Japanese base in the South Pacific and was considered so impregnable that the Allies never attempted to capture it, simply bypassing it as they advanced towards Japan. Rabaul did not fall until the Japanese surrender in 1945, and today there are numerous war sites to see in and around the town.

Fares start from \$2599 per person, twin share, interior room. All official Mat McLachlan WW2 History Cruise events are included in the holiday package price.

To book phone Mat McLachlan Battlefield Tours on 1300 880 340 or visit battlefields.com.au/papua-new-guinea-ww2-history-cruise/

HISTORIANS presenting conference sessions and leading shore excursions include:

Mat McLachlan: leading battlefield historian, acclaimed war history author and founder of Mat McLachlan Battlefield Tours who has spent more than two decades following in the footsteps of Australian troops around the world. He is an authority on the battlefields of the Western Front, Gallipoli, World War Two in the Pacific, the Vietnam War and the Normandy landing beaches.

Dr Karl James: Historian and Head of Military History at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Karl's research focuses on Australia's involvement in the Second World War.

Gary McKay: Vietnam Veteran and recipient of the Military Cross for gallantry, Gary is now a battlefield guide and celebrated war history author who has travelled widely through the Pacific.

David Howell: Army Reserve Officer, historian, author and tour guide, David grew up listening to stories of the war in New Guinea told by his grandfather and has made over 50 crossings of the Kokoda Track as well as visiting the major battlefields in Papua New Guinea.

MASTER of CEREMONIES for the cruise conference:

Chris Masters: one of Australia's best-known, most successful and most influential investigative journalists in the second half of the 20th century. Over 25 years he won five Walkleys and filed 100 investigative reports, mostly for Four Corners.

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