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Dive Truk Lagoon: The Japanese WWII Pacific Shipwrecks



Synopsis

Truk Lagoon is quite simply the greatest wreck diving location in the world. Scores of virtually intact large WWII wrecks filled with cargoes of tanks, trucks, artillery, beach mines, shells and aircraft rest in the crystal clear waters of the Lagoon – each a man-made reef teeming with life. Truk was the main forward anchorage for the Japanese Imperial Navy and merchant fleet during the early days of WWII. The lagoon had been fortified by the Japanese in great secrecy during the 1930s – the Allies knew little about it. In total secrecy Operation Hailstone was prepared: nine U.S. carriers holding more than 500 combat aircraft steamed towards Truk – supported by a screen of battleships, cruisers, destroyers and submarines. Before dawn on 17 February, Strike Groups of 12 Hellcat fighters swept in low towards Truk under Japanese radar and immediately began strafing Japanese airfields. Soon, hundreds of aircraft were involved in one of the largest aerial dogfights of WWII which was over within an hour. This is the amazing story of Truk Lagoon and the turning of the tide in the Pacific War.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

After finishing this review, I noticed another posted on .co.uk which I duly read. Ordinarily I would ignore anything said by other reviewers - be they broadly in agreement with my own sentiments or not. On this occasion, however, the author (Rod Macdonald) had appended his own comments to that review in which he admitted to being in agreement with the criticisms made about the book's artwork. Consequently, I made suitable amendments to the following. In the early hours of 17 February 1944 Operation Hailstone was launched. The immediate objective was to establish air

superiority in and around Truk Lagoon by destroying Japanese airfields and aircraft. From 0440 hrs, fighters and fighter-bombers from 5 US Carriers continued to attack. Whereas surprise was complete, the Japanese Cruiser Katori, two Destroyers and the Akagi Maru escaped - although the latter was lost soon after. By 1800 hrs US Admiral Spruance had achieved total air superiority and, although he found the Japanese naval fleets absent, he was then able to concentrate on destroying whatever vessels were in the lagoon. Altogether 45 ships were sunk, a further 27 damaged, some 275 aircraft destroyed, 90% of the Japanese fuel supplies set on fire and both the submarine and seaplane pens put out of action. The Japanese death toll was never published but was said to be the worst-ever for a two day engagement. By comparison, the US lost 25 aircraft, 29 aircrew and 11 sailors. Another four Japanese ships were also sunk in later engagements and IJN submarine I-174 was sunk by depth charges. In brief, that is how one of the greatest fleets of sunken ships found anywhere in the world was created. The wrecks of Truk Lagoon (now called Chuuk) have continued to attract divers ever since the advent of scuba diving.

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