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Papua New Guinea Wreck Special

Search for three missing WWII B25 bombers

11-day/10-night New Ireland and New Hanover

30 August to 9 September 2016

In 1944 Kavieng, on the western tip of the island of New Ireland, was an important supply base for the Japanese military. One of the many American attacks took place on 15 February 1944, which resulted in major damage to Japanese installations. Unfortunately, the American Air Force also had some losses. On the night of February 15th, four B25s of the 345th Bomb Group went down around Kavieng. They were 'Gremlins Holiday', 'PissOnIt', 'Stubborn Hellion', and an unnamed plane known as 'Lt. Cavoli's' after its pilot.

For years the resort owners have researched the possible location of the wrecks and have narrowed the area down. With the assistance of modern sonar equipment we have a decent chance of locating the wreck and once found, dive on it!

We are planning to start by diving for five days mornings in the Kavieng area, followed by the wreck search every afternoon. The diving will be a mix of WWII wrecks as the area was an important float plane base for the Japanese, including a Japanese 'Pete' biplane, a Jake, and a Kate bomber. We will also spend at least a couple of dives watching the pelagic action on the walls and channels. Obviously, when we find something on our afternoon scanning runs, we will be jumping in to investigate.



To top it all off, we will stay for two nights at 'Clem's Place' on Tunnung Island off the north coast of New Hanover and dive some fantastic sites up there. Weather depending, these may include Chapman's Reef, the wreck of the 'Sanko Maru' with her accompanying Midget Submarine as well as a couple other shipwrecks from WWII including a Sub Chaser, all sunk by the 345th the day after the four B25s went down. Chapman's is well known for its resident family of Giant Groupers and the 'Sanko Maru' is probably the most beautifully overgrown shipwreck in the Pacific.

Inclusions:

- 8 nights' accommodation in a double/twin room with private facilities at Lissenung Island Resort
- 2 nights' accommodation in a double/twin room with share facilities at 'Clem's Place' on Tunnung Island, New Hanover
- Return air fares between Port Moresby and Kavieng
- Return airport transfers
- Return boat transfers to Tunnung Island
- All meals
- 5 days with 3 boat dives per day and half-days of sonar searching
- 4 days with 2 boat dives per day
- Tanks, weights, dive guide, snacks onboard dive boat
- Shore diving on Lissenung's house reef

Cost:



Total cost per person in a double/twin room is €2985 euros, min. 4 divers, max. 6 divers. Single supplement at Lissenung 350 euros.

Itinerary:

Day 1: Arrival at Kavieng and transfer to Lissenung Island and overnight at Lissenung Island Resort

Day 2: 2 boat dives on some of Lissenung's famous dive sites such as 'Deep Pete' Biplane and Japanese 'Kate Bomber'. Afternoon sonar search and dive. Shore diving is possible in the evenings at Lissenung Island. Overnight at Lissenung Island Resort.

Day 3: 2 boat dives on some of Lissenung's famous dive sites such as Albatross Passage and the B25 'Stubborn Hellion', sonar search and afternoon dive and overnight at Lissenung Island Resort.

Day 4: 2 boat dives on some of Lissenung's famous dive sites such as the wreck of the 'Tenryu Maru' and a Japanese Jake, sonar search and afternoon dive on a Catalina PB-Y flying boat and overnight at Lissenung Island Resort.

Day 5: 2 boat dives on some of Lissenung's famous dive sites such as 'Peter's Patch' and 'Matrix', sonar search and dive. Overnight at Lissenung Island Resort.

Day 6: 2 boat dives on some of Lissenung's famous dive sites such as 'Helmut's Reef' or 'Baudisson Bay' and sonar search and afternoon dive and overnight at Lissenung Island Resort.

Day 7: Depart for northern New Hanover in the Pacific. The boat ride over will take approx. 2.5 hours. 2 boat dives around Three Islands Harbor where we will explore some rarely dived wrecks, including the 'Sanko Maru' with an accompanying and extremely rare Midget Submarine, both victims of the 345th Bomb Group on 16th February 1944. Overnight at 'Clem's Place' on Tunnung Island.

Day 8: 2 boat dives at Chapman's Reef off the western-most point of New Hanover. Please be aware that these dives might be in some very strong current. Overnight at 'Clem's Place' on Tunnung Island.

Day 9: 2 boat dives around New Hanover, possibly the 'Sanko Maru' and the Subchaser #39 sunk by the B25s of 345th Bomb Group on February 16th 1944. In the afternoon, return to Lissenung Island Resort and overnight at Lissenung Island Resort.

Day 10: 2 dives on Lissenung's reefs and wrecks. We can dive sites you haven't seen yet (there are 40 in total) or revisit some favourites.

Day 11: Fly to Port Moresby. End of services

This is a sample itinerary only and it is subject to change without notice, depending on weather conditions. Satellite phone, Oxygen and First Aid equipment and spare parts kit are on board the dive boat. Please note that the guest house visited might be quite basic. However, the experience you will gain during this trip will be very much worth the effort!

Conditions:

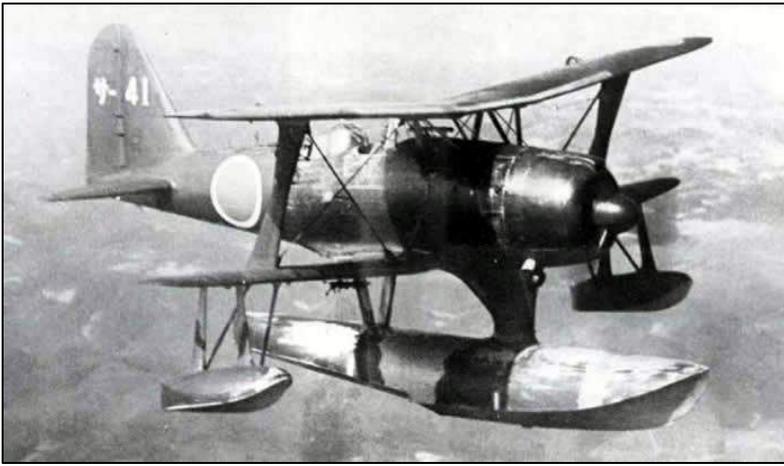
- Minimum group size 4 divers, maximum 6 divers
- Divers should hold a minimum of Advanced Open Water plus 50 dives, or Open Water plus 100 dives. Please present logbook for verification. The sites around New Hanover are virtually unexplored and subject to strong currents.
- Divers must hold dive accident insurance.
- Divers have to pay an Environment & Safety Fee of K 12.00 / € 4.00 per person / dive day

Lissenung Island

<http://www.bestofpng.com/pages/lissenung-island.php>

Deep Pete

<http://www.indopacificimages.com/index.php/papua-new-guinea-2/diving-papua-new-guinea-new-irelands-world-war-ii-wrecks-deep-pete/>



<http://www.indopacificimages.com/index.php/papua-new-guinea-2/diving-papua-new-guinea-new-ireland-bismarck-sea-dive-sites/>

Jake and Kate planes



<http://www.indopacificimages.com/index.php/papua-new-guinea-2/diving-papua-new-guinea-new-irelands-world-war-ii-wrecks-the-kate-and-pete-wrecks/>

Catalina



<http://www.indopacificimages.com/index.php/papua-new-guinea-2/diving-papua-new-guinea-new-irelands-world-war-ii-wrecks-the-catalina/>

New Hanover

<http://www.indopacificimages.com/index.php/papua-new-guinea-2/diving-papua-new-guinea-new-ireland-diving-new-hanover/>



mini-sub



sub chaser

Gremlin's Holiday

Hit by intense anti-aircraft fire that set the right engine and turret tank on fire. Ditched four miles north-west of Kavieng, 400 yards from shore.

Rescue: The entire crew was rescued by PBV "Arkansas Traveler" 08139 piloted by Lt(jg) Nathan G. Gordon which landed despite rough seas and Japanese fire. Gordon earned the Metal of Honor for this action.

Nathan G. Gordon recalled:

"After taking off, we got a call from a B-25 that was spotting from the air, and was radioing us instructions and coordinates of ditched planes. He called in the position of a B-25 that had ditched. [The B-25 spotted from the air was piloted by Major Chester A. Coltharp, C.O. of 498th BS]. I made another stall landing to pick up this crew. All six were in the water. When we landed, we realized that we would have to cut the one engine when we picked up the crew. The swells were so high, they were right up to the engines which as you know are on the top edge of the wing of the PBV.

- Pilot 1st Lt. Edgar R. Cavin (rescued)
- Co-Pilot 2nd Lt. Elmer J. Kirkland (rescued)
- T/Sgt Fred E. Arnett (rescued)
- S/Sgt Lawrence Herbst (rescued)
- T/Sgt Michael J. Chorney (rescued)
- T/Sgt Robert E. Cross (rescued)



Lt Cavoli's plane

Took off as part of the second wave of bombers over Kavieng. Over the target, experienced heavy anti-aircraft fire. After dropping their bombs and flying thru heavy smoke, this B-25 was hit, setting the right wing on fire. Cavoli prepared to ditch the plane into Kavieng Harbor, without any hydraulic pressure or airspeed indicator.

Ditching, the B-25 came to rest about half a mile off shore, all the crew survived and took to their emergency raft. Radio operator Freeman's arm was broken and gunner Murphy had been sucked under the plane but both joined them. In the water, Japanese gunners fired at the wreckage and raft. The crew would be in the sea for 85 minutes.

Rescue: Spotted by PBV "Arkansas Traveller" 08139 piloted by Nate Gordon, rescuing his crew would be the final and most difficult as it would require to circle just offshore in order to land for them. After successfully landing, he cut the engines to allow the crew to be rescued after 85 minutes in the water. Japanese fire hit around them and rough seas caused a long takeoff run. Gordon earned the Congressional Medal of Honor for this action.

Nathan G. Gordon recalled:

"We would have to land closer to shore this time. I did not consult with the crew, there was no time for making decisions, I just did it, and nobody complained. That is what had to be done, there was no time to discuss things.

We made our final landing, only 600 yards from shore. We had to make our approach over the town, where later I was told some of the heavies AA fire was coming from. There was a lot of fire coming at us from the shore. Small arms and machine guns as well as larger stuff. Again, none hit us. The swells helped us here, as the plane would disappear to anyone trying to shoot at us from the shore when we were behind a crest. We did the same thing, and took the five of them in through the waist hatch."

Pilot Captain William J. Cavoli (rescued) Philadelphia, PA
Co-Pilot 2nd Lt. George H. Braun (rescued)
Navigator 1st Lt. Robert E. Lewis (rescued) KS
Engineer Sgt Weldon Isler (rescued)
Radio T/Sgt Thomas B. Freeman (rescued) Spartanburg, SC
Gunner S/Sgt John A. "Zero" Murphy (rescued)
Ditched February 15, 1944

Pissonit

The B-25 "Pissonit" had Disney's Big Bad Wolf caricature on the nose. After sustaining an AA hit on the crew's 27th mission, the plane's first, they lost an engine and their gear fell out. The plane caught fire. Smith ditched about a mile from the shore 2-3 miles west of the North Cape of Kavieng, and he and 2 others got away from the burning plane, which quickly sunk. The radioman, J.C. Healan, was swept out a lower hatchway on the impact (by the suction) of the plane hitting the water. This was merciful as Healan was behind the fire and had been hideously burned. The tail gunner, Albert Gross, died when he tried to parachute at low altitude to escape the fire. Their life raft was on fire, so Smith threw out his parachute and the two pilots and navigator clung to it.



Pilot 1st Lt Eugene E Benson, O-735510
Co-Pilot 1st Lt. William Joseph Smith, O-742619
Navigator 1st Lt Hollie Rushing, O-803152
Radio T/Sgt James C. Healan, 34350583 (MIA / KIA) GA
Gunner Sgt Harold J. Gross, 39244301 (MIA / KIA) OH

The rescue missions

<http://www.pacificwrecks.com/aircraft/pby/08139.html>

And the Catalina pilot

<http://www.pacificwrecks.com/people/veterans/gordon.html>

Detailed survivor accounts available on request.