



**San Diego Zoo**

# **Botanical Tours**



**Fern Canyon**



This tour begins at the bus loading queue and proceeds to the top entrance to Fern Canyon behind the bus ticket booth, down Fern Canyon Trail, ending on Center Street.



### 1. Jacaranda

*Jacaranda mimosifolia*

Jacaranda trees were some of the original plants installed in Fern Canyon, in the 1930s (making it the oldest garden in the Zoo). Panicles of bluish-purple flowers open from late spring to early summer. This tree is now widely planted throughout the world.

#### Fun Fact

With its beautiful flowers and broad canopy, the jacaranda makes a great urban street tree and is found throughout Southern California.



### 2. Bolivian Mountain Coconut

*Parajubaea torallyi*

This thick-trunked palm is endemic to the Bolivian Andes and grows on sharp, rocky slopes in dry forests. It can withstand temperatures down to 10° F and drought conditions, but prefers mild climates and moderate water. Due to habitat loss and lack of seedling regeneration, it is listed as endangered.

#### Fun Fact

Some palm seeds take months to germinate—the Bolivian mountain coconut can take up to two years!



### 3. Bismarck Palm

*Bismarckia nobilis*

This striking fan palm is endemic to the savannas and grasslands of northern and western Madagascar. It is losing habitat due to an increase in fires and clearing of land to expand agriculture, and is harvested for timber. The fronds and pith are harvested for food.

#### Fun Fact

The specific epithet *nobilis* originates from the Latin word for noble. If planting this palm in a landscape, be sure to allow plenty of space for the crown to expand.



#### 4. Brazilian Firetree

*Schizolobium parahyba*

A tall, thin trunk topped with long bipinnate leaves makes this tree an architectural beauty. Clusters of large yellow flowers open before the delicate leaves emerge. The hard seeds are encased in a paper-like covering that acts like a glider, allowing the seeds to float to the ground.

#### Fun Fact

This is one of the fastest growing trees, gaining up to 19 feet per year.



#### 5. Andean Wax Palm

*Ceroxylon alpinum*

Preferring mild climates and moist conditions, this slow-growing, single-trunked palm is native to the cloud forests of Columbia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. It is endangered in the wild due to habitat loss and poor seedling regeneration rate. The large pinnate fronds are dark green with chalky white undersides.

#### Fun Fact

The common name refers to its use as a source of wax to make candles and matches.



#### 6. Kermadec Nikau Palm

*Rhopalostylis baueri* var. *cheesemanii*

The distinctive purplish bulge at the base of its crown-shaft readily identifies this palm. Native to the wet forests of New Zealand's Kermadec group of coastal islands, this palm prefers shade or semi-shade conditions.

#### Fun Fact

Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, use the leaves for roofs and wall coverings, and the leaflets for weaving baskets.



## 7. Swiss Cheese Plant

*Monstera deliciosa*

This epiphytic member of the *Araceae* or arum family is native to tropical rain forests from southern Mexico into Panama. Aerial roots growing out of its thick stems will burrow in once they touch the ground. The large, glossy leaves only develop holes at maturity.

### Fun Fact

It is often called the “fruit salad plant” because its ripened fruit is said to taste like a mix of pineapple, mango, and banana.



## 8. Mexican Horncone Cycad

*Ceratozamia mexicana*

Native to the tropical lowlands and cloud forests of Mexico’s Sierra Madre Mountains, this cycad prefers shade. Plants are either male or female, with relatively large, spiny cones produced at the base of the leaves. New leaves emerge in shiny bronze hues.

### Fun Fact

This cycad is endemic to Mexico, but is threatened in the wild due to loss of native habitat.



## 9. Pacaya Palm

*Chamaedorea tepejilote*

Seven species of *Chamaedorea* palms make their home in Fern Canyon. Characterized by thin, bamboo-like ringed stems, *Chamaedorea* forms one of the largest groups of palms. Found throughout Central and South America, they do best in cool, tropical climates.

### Fun Fact

Tepejilote means “mountain maize” in the Nahuatl language, referring to the resemblance of the developing inflorescence to an ear of corn.





## 10. Australian Tree Fern

*Sphaeropteris cooperi*

In its native habitat, an Australian tree fern may reach 50 feet tall and bear 20-foot-long fronds. It prefers shady conditions and is intolerant of frost or extreme heat. Many types of tree ferns have inhabited Fern Canyon since it was developed.

### Fun Fact

The “trunk” of a tree fern is not hardwood, but a rhizome supported by fibrous roots.



## 11. Queensland Lacebark

*Brachychiton discolor*

Native to southeast Australia’s humid forests where rain is abundant, this *Brachychiton* doesn’t develop a swollen trunk like others. Its deeply lobed leaves vary with age and cultural conditions. The bell-shaped, pink flowers with dark red centers earned it the species name “discolor,” or two-colors.

### Fun Fact

Large canoe-shaped, hairy seed pods occur in clusters of two to four. The hairs are irritating to the touch.



## 12. Firespike

*Odontonema tubaeforme*

Native to semi-forested areas of Central America, this evergreen shrub thrives in the understory. Upright panicles of bright red, waxy flowers bloom from late summer through winter.

### Fun Fact

Firespike grows best in partial shade. Its red flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies.



### 13. Bodhi Tree

*Ficus religiosa*

This fast-growing fig tree is native to India, Southeast Asia, and China, but has naturalized in other regions. The heart-shaped leaves have distinctive drip tips that channel heavy rain off the surface. The tree is incredibly long-lived, and some are over 1,000 years old.

#### Fun Fact

This species is sacred to Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism; it is believed the Buddha received enlightenment sitting under one.



### 14. Kāhili Ginger

*Hedychium gardnerianum*

The ginger family *Zingiberaceae* contains more than 1,600 species. Kahili ginger has fragrant yellow flowers with red stamens. Throughout Fern Canyon, you will also find the *Hedychium coronarium* and *Alpinia zerumbet*.

#### Fun Fact

The pungent rhizome of *Zingiber officinale* is the ginger commonly used in cooking. Native to Southeast Asia, it was widely imported to Europe by the 11th century.



### 15. Staghorn Fern

*Platycerium bifurcatum*

This epiphytic fern produces two kinds of fronds: a round, flat basal frond that appears to anchor the plant to the tree and a second type that is branched and grows out away from the trunk. The structure of this second frond gives this plant the name of staghorn or elk fern.

#### Fun Fact

The antler-shaped fronds produce cinnamon colored spores (sori) on the underside. The fronds grow larger as the plant matures.



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