NEW WORLD DESERT GARDEN

Start your tour at the New World Desert Garden, adjacent to the north-western corner of the main parking lot.

Desert Plants FACTS

Desert plants are adapted to low rainfall. They store water in their bodies, roots, and often have few or no leaves, which reduce water-loss through transpiration.

Desert plants often have spines and thorns for shade and protection against animals. They also have a waxy skin to seal in moisture.

Cactus, yucca, and agave are desert plants of America.
Walk up the slope and turn left at the driveway. Go down the hill and enter the Bamboo Garden on your left side.

Try to find the Giant Bamboo right at the entrance to the Bamboo Garden.

**Bamboo FACT**

Bamboo are giant members of the grass family. There are more than 1000 species of bamboo.

Bamboo provides food, paper-pulp, construction and decorative material. It is used in landscaping, and even offers religious and artistic inspiration.

**Beechey Bamboo FACT**

The Giant Pandas at the San Diego Zoo like to eat the leaves and canes of this large bamboo.

Bamboo comes in many different sizes and colors. **Explore the Bamboo Garden and try to find the...**

**Painted Bamboo**

**Black Bamboo**
Turn south and visit the pond in the Bamboo Garden.

Can you find a bull frog on the edge of the pond, or little guppies hiding in the algae?

Do you see other animals that live around the pond?
From the Bamboo Garden, turn north and cross the driveway to enter the Subtropical Fruit Garden.

The trellis at the entrance to the fruit garden is overgrown with a dragon fruit plant. The flesh of the fruit of this cactus plant can be eaten raw.

Sometimes you can find flowers and fruits on a tree at the same time. Fruits develop out of flowers.

**Citrus FACTS**

The ancestors of citrus came from Southeast Asia, China, and Malaysia, probably more than a thousand years ago. Christopher Columbus brought citrus plants to America. Oranges, lemons, limes, tangerines and grapefruits are all examples of citrus plants.

**Fig FACTS**

Fig trees are one of the first fruits cultivated by humans. Figs can be eaten raw or dried.

In 1769, Figs were introduced into California at Mission San Diego de Alcala, about 25 miles south of here.
Avocado FACTS

Avocados are native to the region from southern Mexico to northern South America. Incas and Aztecs were growing avocados before Europeans arrived.

Rose Family FACTS

Many edible fruits come from the Rose Family. These include apples, apricots, plums, cherries, peaches, pears, raspberries, strawberries, and almonds.

Plants of the Rose Family have a worldwide range, but are most diverse in the northern hemisphere.
Head east and visit the “Banana Blvd”

Try to find banana fruits

Banana FACTS

Banana plants are native to tropical Southeast Asia, and are likely to have been first domesticated in Papua New Guinea. Today, they are cultivated throughout the tropics. They are grown in at least 107 countries, primarily for their fruit.

Bananas are non-woody plants and are best described as an herb – there is no such thing as a “banana tree”.

Banana fruit develop from the banana heart, in a large hanging cluster, made up of tiers (called hands) with up to 20 fruit to a tier.
From the Banana Boulevard head east and cross the driveway to visit the Herb Garden.

Explore the herb garden and try to find a couple of different herbs. Rub a rosemary and lavender leaf between your fingers and smell their fragrance.

**Herb FACTS**

An herb is a plant that is valued for flavor, scent, medicinal or other qualities other than its food value. Herbs are used in cooking, as medicines, and for spiritual purposes.

Examples of culinary herbs are thyme, lavender, rosemary, parsley, dill, basil, and cilantro.

Examples of medicinal herbs are Echinacea, foxglove, chamomile, ginger, and peppermint.
From the Herb Garden turn north to visit the Coastal Sage Scrub and Overlook.

Coastal Sage Scrub

While you cross the walkway you will be above a remnant of California’s Coastal Sage Scrub. The Coastal Sage Scrub contains plants and animals originally found nowhere else in the world.

It is characterized by low-growing drought-resistant shrubs adapted our climate. Characteristic plants include California sagebrush, black sage, white sage, California buckwheat, coast brittle-bush, golden yarrow, lemonade berry, along with grasses, and in some places, cacti and succulents.
The upper pond of the waterfall can be seen at the entrance to the overlook walkway.

To visit the middle ponds of the waterfall, cross the herb garden and go down the stairs.

Rainforest FACTS

Tropical rainforests are forests with tall trees, warm climate, and lots of rain. In some rainforests it rains more than one inch every day!

Rainforests are found in Africa, Asia, Australia, and Central and South America. The largest rainforest in the world is the Amazon rainforest.

Tropical rainforests support the greatest diversity of living organisms on Earth. Although they cover less than 2% of Earth’s surface, rainforests house more than 50% of the plants and animals on Earth. Many well-known animals including monkeys, frogs, lizards, birds, snakes, sloths, and small cats are found in the canopy. Many of the largest rainforest animals are found on the forest floor. Some of these include elephant, tapir, and the jaguar.

Plants that grow on the rainforest floor usually have large leaves to catch as much light as possible.
Turn to the left and walk around the lawn area and Gazebo to reach the waterfall.

Explore the lush rainforest surrounding the waterfall.

**Epiphytes FACTS**

Competition at ground level for light and food has lead to the evolution of plants which live on the branches of other plants, or even strangle large trees to fight for survival.

The aerial plants often gather nourishment from the air itself using ‘air roots’. The humidity of the rainforest encourages such adaptations which would be impossible in other forests with their much drier conditions.

Epiphytes grow everywhere but can be found mainly on the branches, trunks, and even the leaves of trees.

The name ‘epiphyte’ comes from the Greek word ‘epi’ meaning ‘upon’ and ‘phyton’ meaning ‘plant’.

Different types of epiphytes may grow on the same tree, including orchids, cacti, bromeliads, aroids, lichens, mosses, and ferns. They begin their life in the canopy from seeds or spores transported there by birds or winds.
To visit the lower ponds of the waterfall go down the stairs.

**Bromeliad FACTS**

Bromeliads are related to the pineapple family. Their thick, waxy leaves form a bowl shape in the center for catching rainwater. Some bromeliads can hold several gallons of water and are miniature ecosystems in themselves providing homes for several creatures including frogs and their tadpoles, salamanders, snails, and beetles.

Having the stream on your left, continue south on this path. The stream ends in a pond on your left hand side. Note the papyrus plants growing inside this pond.

**Papyrus FACTS**

Papyrus plants belong to a family of flowering plants known as sedges. The ancient Egyptians produced a thick paper-like material from the pith of the papyrus plant which was once abundant in the Nile Delta of Egypt.
Cork Oak Trees

From the papyrus pond continue south on this path until you reach the driveway. Turn right at the driveway and walk up the slope.

To visit the Cork Oaks turn left into the narrow walkway across from the Lawn Area.

Cork Oak Tree FACTS

Cork oak is a type of oak tree native to the Mediterranean. The tree has adapted to problems of fire by growing thick bark as a protective layer. This cork layer has many industrial uses. Cork oak trees are not felled, the bark is stripped by hand, using a special axe. This layer slowly re-grows, creating a sustainable crop. Trees are harvested every 9 to 12 years. A tree will be approximately 50 years old before its bark can be used for a wine stopper and may live to be 200 years old.

Can you find some acorns on the ground? They are the seeds of the oak tree.
From the cork oaks, continue on the same path and the Canary Island Garden will be on your left.

**Dragon Tree FACTS**

*Dracaena draco*, the Canary Islands Dragon tree is native to the Canary Islands, Cape Verde, Madeira, and western Morocco.

Dragon trees do not display annual rings, so the age can only be estimated by the number of branches. Some Dragon trees are believed to be up to 650 years old.

When the bark or leaves are cut they secrete a reddish resin, which is also known as Dragon’s blood. Resin is used to stain wood, such as for violins.

Try to find traces of the Dragon Tree’s red sap on the stem of the trees, or find some old leaves on the ground. The bases of the leaves are also stained red by the resin.

This concludes our self guided tour through San Diego Botanic Garden. The path that you are on will bring you back to the parking lot.