



San Diego Zoo

Botanical Tours



Palms



This tour begins at Reptile Walk and continues past Galápagos tortoises, wrapping back to the north side of the Reptile House and to the Zoo exit.



1. Date Palm

Phoenix hybrid

This palm is a cross between a *Phoenix reclinata* (Senegal date palm) and *Phoenix canariensis* (Canary Island date palm). The Senegal date palm is native to the southern half of Africa and Madagascar, and is a suckering species that grows 40 to 50 feet tall.

Fun Fact

The edible date palm *Phoenix dactylifera* is the second-most economically important palm in the world. The coconut palm takes first place.



2. Thatch Palm

Coccothrinax inaguensis

This coastal species is native to the Bahamas, and Turks and Caicos Islands. Palm leaves, called fronds, are compound and evergreen. Palms are a diverse group of about 2,600 species and can grow as vines, solitary or clustering trees and shrubs, or as stemless ground-hugging plants.

Fun Fact

Turks and Caicos Islands rock iguanas enjoy eating the fruits of this palm. In fact, the seed of this plant came from scientists studying iguanas in native habitats, and recovered it from iguana droppings.



3. Carnaúba Wax Palm

Copernicia prunifera

Native to the savannas and open forests of Brazil, this species gets its name from the valuable heat-resistant wax harvested from the thin coating of the undersides of fronds. Take note of its characteristic fan-shaped fronds and long petioles, which top a gray trunk covered with spiraling frond bases.

Fun Fact

The wax is scraped from the fronds. It takes 100 to 200 leaves to obtain 2 pounds of wax.



4. Overtop Palm

Syagrus amara

Found in the dry, coastal forests of the West Indies, this solitary palm reaches heights of up to 60 feet tall, with a long slender trunk and dark green fronds. It is in the same genus as the queen palm, *Syagrus romanzoffiana*.

Fun Fact

This is the only species of the *Syagrus* genus that is not native to South America.



5. Pondoland Palm

Jubaeopsis caffra

This clumping palm is from coastal regions in South Africa, where it grows along river banks. It is threatened in its native habitats by deforestation and by the removal of fruits for food and the ornamental palm trade. It is a slow-growing palm that needs a sunny, well-drained location.

Fun Fact

The fruit, resembling a miniature coconut, is enjoyed by baboons and other animals. Weaver birds also utilize the palm, gathering its fibers for nesting material.



6. Champagne Palm

Hyophorbe indica

This species is listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. It is only found on Reunion Island, about 420 miles east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. Habitat loss is the primary threat to native populations of this species.

Fun Fact

A close relative of this palm is the critically endangered bottle palm, *Hyophorbe lagenicaulis*. The bottle palm is native to Round Island, where only 10 mature trees remain.



7. Mexican Silver Palm

Coccothrinax readii

Found from the Yucatan Peninsula of southeastern Mexico down to northeastern Belize, this solitary, small palm only reaches about seven feet in height. It is a common understory tree in the coastal lowland rainforests.

Fun Fact

The waxy, whitish undersides of the fan-shaped fronds gives this species its common name.



8. Yarey

Copernicia berteroana

This species is native to several islands in the Caribbean. This specimen was grown from seed collected in the Dominican Republic by Zoo horticulture staff. It is a slow-growing fan palm that can reach 30 feet in height.

Fun Fact

Due to its hard trunk, this species is harvested for timber, while its fronds are used for making hats and covering shelters.



9. Loulu Lelo Palm

Pritchardia hillebrandii

The genus *Pritchardia* consists of 27 species native to the tropics, 24 of which are endemic to Hawaii. They are single-trunked palm trees with fan-shaped leaves. This particular species is endemic to the island of Moloka'i.

Fun Fact

Loulu (pronounced low-loo) is the Hawaiian name for all *Pritchardia* species in Hawaii. Loulu means “umbrella,” and indeed, its leaves were used as cover from rain and sun.



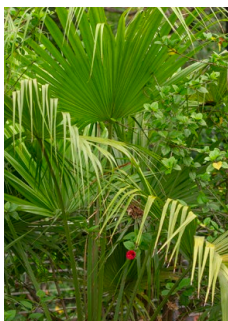
10. Seashore Palm

Allagoptera arenaria

Endemic to the Atlantic coast of Brazil, this palm has a subterranean, or underground trunk. Because of this, its crown is at ground level, where the swirling, graceful fronds can be appreciated. It is tolerant of the extreme coastal conditions of sun, wind, and salt spray.

Fun Fact

This palm is widely cultivated as an ornamental plant throughout South America. Its fruit can be eaten fresh or used in a drink.



11. Bonin Islands Fan Palm

Livistona boninensis

This solitary palm is native to the Bonin Islands off the coast of Japan. It was discovered in 1844 by Friedrich von Kittlitz, a Polish naturalist.

Fun Fact

This species is closely related to *Livistona chinensis* and was once considered a subspecies of this species.



12. Jelly Palm

Butia capitata

Native to Brazil, this palm grows to 26 feet tall. Its feather-like pinnate fronds recurve back toward the thick trunk. The cherry-sized golden fruits are sweet and tart, and make a good jelly or wine.

Fun Fact

The jelly palms surrounding the Reptile House were brought to the Zoo in 1935 as a donation. Milton Leeper (the Zoo's first garden supervisor) dug them up from a nursery in Los Angeles's Griffith Park.



13. Princess Palm

Dictyosperma album

Found only on the Mascarene Islands east of Madagascar, this palm is almost extinct in the wild. However, it is a popular landscape plant that does best in coastal areas. It can reach over 30 feet in height.

Fun Fact

This tree is also known as a hurricane palm, because of its ability to withstand strong hurricane force winds.



14. Butterfly Palm

Dypsis lutescens

A popular houseplant and landscape plant in semitropical areas, this palm is endangered in its native range. Found only on Madagascar, it reaches heights of 20 feet. The curving, upright fronds resemble butterfly wings, hence the common name.

Fun Fact

The group this plant belongs to, *Dypsis*, is the largest genus of palms, containing over 150 species—all found only on Madagascar.



15. Cuban Royal Palm

Roystonea regia

This palm is known for its lush and beautiful, feathery fronds on a massive, white-gray smooth trunk that flares out at the bottom. Widely imported into Florida in the 1920s and 1930s, this species is now one of the most common ornamental palms in the state.

Fun Fact

This tree is the national tree of Cuba, and the fronds are used as roosting sites by the Florida bonneted bat.

