



San Diego Zoo

Botanical Tours



Aloes



The tour begins at the top of Africa Rocks, in Ethiopian Highlands, then heads downhill, ending before the Cape Fynbos penguin habitat.



1. Malagasy Tree Aloe

Aloe vaombe

Native to Madagascar, this aloe is a small tree reaching heights of 12 feet, with distinctive white teeth along reddish leaves. It produces vibrant orange-red flowers, starting in January.

Fun Fact

The color of aloe leaves can change dramatically from deep shades of green to light pink and bright red, depending on climatic and other abiotic factors.



2. Quiver Tree

Aloidendron dichotomum

The common name “quiver tree” is due to local people cutting and hollowing out branches to use as quivers for arrows. This species takes many years to flower, and when it does, the blooms are a striking bright yellow.

Fun Fact

Even though tree aloes are referred to as trees, they are in fact arborescent succulents, since they don't have secondary growth.



3. Maiden Quiver Tree

Aloidendron ramosissimum

In Latin, *ramosissimum* means very much branched. This aloe is definitely the most highly branched of any aloe, forming a dense, rounded crown. It blooms during our winter season, with beautiful yellow flowers.

Fun Fact

Aloes are widely distributed in Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Socotra, Madagascar, and other western Indian Ocean islands.



4. Fan Aloe

Kumara plicatilis

Unlike most aloes, which have fairly thick succulent leaves, this unique species has thin, fanlike leaves, earning its common name.

Fun Fact

Kumara was an older genus within the Aloe family, and was only recently revived due to DNA studies. As DNA studies bring clarity to plant taxonomy, plant names and families will most likely change to better classify them.



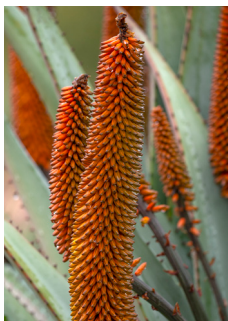
5. Tree Aloe

Aloidendron barberae

The tallest and largest of the South African tree aloes, this one can reach heights up to 50 feet. It is found in subtropical coastal forests and dry valleys, where summer rainfall encourages the plant's rose-pink, salmon-colored flowers. These striking flowers are pollinated by short-beaked weaver birds.

Fun Fact

Until the 1990s, this plant was known as *Aloe bainesii*. However, it was renamed after the discovery that it had actually been discovered by Mary Elizabeth Barber, hence the "last name" change.



6. Stone Aloe

Aloe petricola

The stone aloe's bicolor flowers change hues as the buds start to open. There are two distinct patterns: red to orange-yellow blossoms and red to white flowers.

Fun Fact

The specific epithet *petricola* means "inhabitant of rocky places"—a hint to the kind of well-draining habitat this aloe prefers.



7. Yemen Tree Aloe

Aloidendron sabaeum

A small tree aloe from Yemen reaching up to 9 feet tall, it is one of 17 species found in the Yemen region.

Fun Fact

This aloe stands out from the rest because of its lime-green leaves, which also grow long and bend gracefully along the trunk.



8. Mountain Aloe

Aloe marlothii

Most aloe flower stalks are upright, but this species' grows upward, then branches horizontally. The orange-red to yellow or bright red flowers are a boon to birds and insects.

Fun Fact

The flowers of the more than 450 known species of aloes display a range of shape (conical to cylindrical) and color (red, yellow, green, and white).



9. Fynbos Aloe

Aloe succotrina

This aloe tends to form a succulent shrub with rosettes potentially growing up to five feet but usually stopping around three feet. It can be easily identified by its old leaves that turn purple.

Fun Fact

This plant was given the specific epithet of *succotrina* because it was thought to be native of Socotra, but in the 1900s was discovered to be native to the Cape of Africa.



10. Weeping Aloe

Aloe flexilifolia

In its native habitats, this aloe is usually found along cliffs, where its long pendulant stalks of recurved leaves drape over the edge.

Fun Fact

Aloes have adapted to survive, thrive, and flourish in harsh, arid climates and even worse soil conditions, with some growing right out of rocks and little to no soil.



11. Hercules Aloe

Aloidendron 'Hercules'

This is a hybrid of two tree aloes, *A. barberae* and *A. dichotomum*. It is fast growing, with a stout trunk, thick leaves and peeling bark, characteristics of both “parents.”

Fun Fact

Human-made aloe hybrids seek to combine characteristics of individual species to make one that is more desirable for enthusiasts and collectors.



12. Medusa Aloe

Aloidendron tongaense

Originally thought to be a coastal form of *A. barberae*, which was given the name “Medusa,” this specimen was recently given species status in 2010.

Fun Fact

There are over 500 species of aloes including six genera *Aloe*, *Aloiampelos*, *Aloidendron*, *Aristaloe*, *Gonialoe* and *Kumara* (a genus first introduced in 1786 and now revived).



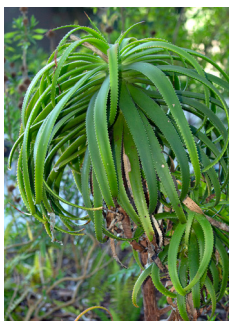
13. Suzanne's Tree Aloe

Aloestrela suzannae

In its native habitat, this slow-growing tree aloe from Madagascar can reach up to 12 feet over the course of a few decades. Its flower spike can reach up to five feet tall, but flowering is rare in Southern California.

Fun Fact

This plant was named in 1921 after Raymond Decary's daughter Suzanne. Decary was a French naturalist who lived and worked in Madagascar most of his life.



14. French Aloe

Aloe pluridens

While most aloes are adapted for harsh, arid climates, some—like this one—do well under dense canopy trees with rich soil, in regions that get more than enough water to rot their dry-loving relatives.

Fun Fact

Translated from Latin, *pluridens* means “many teeth,” a reference to the many whitish “teeth” covering the leaf edges.



15. Zimbabwe Tree Aloe

Aloe excelsa

Usually found on rocky outcrops and hillsides, this tree aloe can grow to heights of 15 feet. Its orange to deep crimson blossoms are clustered on stalks held high above the leaves.

Fun Fact

In some aloe species, young plants have leaves covered with spines. Once they reach a height where grazing is less common, they lose the spines.



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