

Sofia Gardenswartz
Olivia Carey
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Presidio Park, San Diego

Presidio Park is located in the San Diego area and is a well-maintained, city-owned park. In researching this area, we hypothesized that the park would show little signs of drought damage and little evidence of wildlife due to its frequent maintenance and proximity to suburban settlements.

Our photos show what appears to be about 90% deciduous trees and 10% coniferous trees. We found no evidence of mistletoe or fire damage. It is in a heavily settled area (mostly residential) and we saw a wedding taking place while there. We estimated the nearest settlement to be about 5-50 feet away. We also saw evidence of invasive species like palm trees.

Based on our photos, we can infer that the forest is in relatively good condition, though in need of increased water supply. There is also evidence of littering, probably due to the forest's classification as a public park. We can also infer from the litter that Presidio Park is well-frequented by visitors.

Data collected from Global Forest Watch indicates that Presidio Park has greater than 30% tree cover, and that the land cover is mostly settlement areas. Additionally, Presidio Park is a biodiversity hotspot and BirdLife Endemic Bird Area, so while we saw little wildlife on our field investigation, there is a lot of ecological biodiversity in the area, especially in terms of bird species.

Other sources indicate that Presidio Park was once dry and treeless. During the late 1880s, imported water helped contribute to making Presidio Park and the rest of San Diego green. In the late 1700s, Spanish Missionary Father Junipero Serra chose this hill to found his first mission because he could see the harbor for incoming ships. However, since then, trees have grown there to block the view. Today, Presidio Park is mainly used by tourists wanting to see the beautiful native and non-native species along the two-mile trail.

Based on our field investigation and information collected from Global Forest Watch and other sources, we conclude that Presidio Park is in fair to good condition, though could still use a better water supply after the intense California droughts. It appears to be relatively well-maintained, as most of the deadwood that we encountered as clustered in areas to allow for visitors to navigate the park with ease. However, we did see signs of litter and other misuse apparent in the area. Presidio Park is clearly impacted by the urbanization of the surrounding area and it's proximity to nearby settlements. We saw little evidence of wildlife (with the exception of some beautiful butterflies), probably due to the human impact on the area. Overall, our hypothesis was partially true, because while we did see little evidence of wildlife due to the nearby settlements, there was definitely evidence of drought damage. Despite being a well-managed area, it is very difficult to combat the harsh effects of drought on the environment. Still, Presidio Park is a great example of a relatively well-managed forest, and provides ample opportunity for visitors to engage with local San Diego History at the iconic San Diego Presidio—one of the first settlements in what is now the Western United States. Equally

important, Presidio Park is a great area for visitors to experience nature and better appreciate the environment around them.

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