

About El Polín Spring

Located in the heart of the Presidio's largest watershed, [Tennessee Hollow](#), El Polín Spring is central in the area's history. From time immemorial the spring was a source of fresh water for native families. The native Ohlone lived just downstream near today's [Crissy Field](#) in a village they called Petlenuc.

In 1776, the Spanish established their fort or "presidio" within walking distance of the spring. In 1812, colonial families set up a community of adobe houses, making El Polín Spring San Francisco's first suburb. Legendary healer and businesswoman [Juana Briones](#) lived here as a young girl. In the 1850s, the U.S. Army built a dam here, and a century later pushed the creek underground and built housing on top. Through all these periods, birds, butterflies, and other wildlife have found shelter and food in the area's diverse habitats.

Goldsworthy

Standing at 100 feet tall at its tapering peak, *Spire* is a sculpture by world-renowned artist Andy Goldsworthy. In fact it is the first Presidio piece he was inspired to create after he visited the park in 2006. Since then he has gone on to imagine three more – [Wood Line](#), [Tree Fall](#), and [Earth Wall](#) – making the Presidio home to the largest collection of his works on public view in North America.

Spire is a powerful symbol of the rejuvenation of the beloved Presidio forest, first planted by the Army in the 1880s. The aging Monterey cypress are now reaching the end of their life and are being slowly replaced with healthy young saplings.

Working closely with the Presidio Trust forestry crew, in 2008 Goldsworthy selected 37 Monterey cypress trunks from trees felled at the site and meticulously fastened them together. Planted around its 15 foot-wide base are young cypress trees that will ultimately grow to obscure the sculpture – a bit like the old forest welcoming the new.

For now, *Spire* is doing a silent "call and respond" with the other local legends visible from the site – the Transamerica Pyramid, Sutro Tower, and church spires, to name a few.

Goldsworthy's Presidio pieces, most made possible by the non-profit [FOR-SITE Foundation](#), speak to the forest's meaning in some way. Each installation can be visited individually or explored together via a three-mile hiking loop along the Presidio's trails.

Mountain Lake

Mountain Lake is a unique jewel in the Presidio. It's one of San Francisco's last surviving natural lakes and the only natural lake in the entire 80,000-acre Golden Gate National Recreation Area. It's a place where visitors can enjoy a quiet oasis and soak in a bit of natural history.

This lake is where the Presidio's story begins. For more than a thousand years, San Francisco's first people, the Ohlone, were inhabitants. It was here in 1776 that Spanish Captain Juan Bautista de Anza and his small band of explorers ended a 1,500 mile journey from the south, camping on its shores for two days – long enough to scout out exactly where they wanted to build their "presidio" or military fort (they chose the spot where the [Presidio Officers' Club](#) is today).

While explorers may have arrived on horseback, visitors can now reach the lake via the path that celebrates the captain's history – the [Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail](#). It's also easy to bus, walk, or bike in from the nearby Richmond District.

From Run Down to Revival

Mountain Lake experienced rough times during the last 100 years. In 1939, a highway to the Golden Gate Bridge was built next to the lake, dramatically shrinking its size. Pesticides from the nearby golf course and run off from the highway spoiled water quality. Locals thought they were doing something good by releasing their pets into the lake – we've found goldfish, turtles, and even an alligator and a five-foot sturgeon – but these critters forced the native wildlife out and damaged the lake's ecological system.

With help from scientists, academic institutions, and volunteers, today Mountain Lake is rebounding in a big way. In 2013 and 2014, polluted soil and invasive species were removed, creating a healthy new start. Native species are now being reestablished – from underwater plants to the Western Pond Turtle. We're even returning the Pacific Chorus Frog – the one that makes the classic "ribbit" sound you hear in Hollywood films!

De Anza Trail

The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail commemorates the 1776 journey Spanish military commander de Anza led from Sonora, Mexico to the Golden Gate, where colonial settlers first established the Presidio as a military post.

The Presidio section of the Anza Trail was the first established overland route to San Francisco Bay. In fact, you can begin your hike at Mountain Lake, where members of Anza's expedition first camped centuries ago. From here, your journey will provide access to some of the Presidio's most beautiful natural areas and many historic attractions, including the World War II Memorial to the Missing and historic gun batteries.

The Anza Trail has a total of four designated scenic viewing areas dotting its path – the Lobos Valley Overlook, Pacific Overlook, Golden Gate Overlook, and Immigrant Point Overlook. Be sure to take advantage of these resting points for breathtaking views.