

Chinese pandas leave for France

January 15 2012



A FedEx Boeing 777 aircraft taxis on the runway carrying two giant pandas bound for France at Chengdu airport, on January 15. Yuan Zi and Huan Huan left early Sunday to their new home at the Beauval zoo in France.

Two Chinese pandas left their breeding centre in southwestern China Sunday destined for a 10-year stay in France, in a loan sealed after years of top-level negotiations.

Huan Huan ("happy") and Yuan Zi ("chubby") left the centre in the city of Chengdu and were put on a cargo flight bound for the French zoo

they will call home under an agreement reached between Paris and Beijing.

Hou Rong, head of the breeding centre, said the main issue for the pandas on their long journey was likely to be the same as that of their human companions on the "Panda Express", a Boeing 777 specially decorated with a panda motif.

"It is possible that they will suffer jetlag," the professor said.



Yuan Zi (left) and Huan Huan, seen here in their quarantined enclosure at the Panda Research Base in Chengdu, Sichuan province. The pair left their breeding centre on Sunday, destined for a 10-year stay in France, in a loan sealed after years of top-level negotiations.

Huan Huan and Yuan Zi are the first pandas sent to France since 1973,

when Yen Yen -- who went on to live until 2000 -- was given to then president Georges Pompidou along with another panda, which died shortly after arriving.

The latest furry ambassadors, who have been specially selected for their breeding potential, are bound for the leading Beauval zoo in the Loire region of central France.

But the French public will have to wait until February 11 to get their first glimpse of the bears in their specially built 2.5 hectare (six acre) enclosure adorned with Chinese-style pagodas and marble lion statues.

A deal on the [endangered animals](#), famous for their reluctance to breed, was to have been announced at the [G20 summit](#) in the French resort of Cannes last November, but had to be delayed due to the eurozone crisis.

China is famed for its "panda diplomacy", using the bears as diplomatic gifts to other countries. Just 1,600 remain in the wild in China, with some 300 others in captivity worldwide -- mostly in China.

David Algranti, who was named a "pambassador" in 2010 and spent several weeks as the bears' official guardian in Chengdu, was one of a handful of people given privileged access to the quarantined [pandas](#).

"France is lucky to be getting these two, they are particularly lovable, and very good-looking," he said. "Huan Huan sticks out her tongue a lot and Yuan Zi loves to climb, he's quite sporty."

(c) 2012 AFP

Citation: Chinese pandas leave for France (2012, January 15) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-01-chinese-pandas-france.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.