

Singapore gives VIP welcome to Chinese pandas

September 6 2012, by Philip Lim



Kai Kai, one of two giant pandas on loan from China, looks out from his cage upon his arrival at Singapore's Changi Airport. Singapore on Thursday gave a VIP welcome to a pair of giant pandas loaned by China for 10 years to mark two decades of close diplomatic relations.

Singapore on Thursday gave a VIP welcome to a pair of giant pandas loaned by China for 10 years to mark two decades of close diplomatic relations.

The bears—five-year-old male Kai Kai ("victorious") and four-year-old Jia Jia ("beauty")—will be the stars in a new section of the Singapore Zoo and will make their public debut in December after a quarantine period.

Singapore hopes they will have babies during their stay in the city-state

and has devoted millions of dollars to a climate-controlled enclosure designed to promote breeding in the island's humid tropical climate.

"It is indeed our privilege to be entrusted with two of China's national treasures," a Singapore government representative, Teo Ser Luck, said at Changi airport after the [pandas](#) arrived.

Dai Bing, charge d'affaires of the Chinese embassy in Singapore, called the animals "the friendship ambassadors of China and Singapore."

The pandas were delivered in a chartered [Singapore Airlines](#) Boeing 747 cargo jet that stopped at an exclusive terminal normally reserved for foreign dignitaries, celebrities and wealthy flyers.

Singapore is the ninth country to receive the bears from China since the loan scheme began in 1994, and the fourth Asia-Pacific nation to be given the honour after Thailand, Japan and Australia.



Jia Jia, one of two giant pandas on loan from China, looks out from her cage upon her arrival at Singapore's Changi Airport. Singapore on Thursday gave a

VIP welcome to a pair of giant pandas loaned by China for 10 years to mark two decades of close diplomatic relations.

Other places such as Hong Kong received pandas under a different scheme.

The two pandas will be housed in a custom-built 1,500 square metre (16,145 square foot) enclosure costing Sg\$8.6 million (\$6.9 million) within the zoo's new attraction called the River Safari.

The accommodation will be cooled to between 18 and 22 degrees Celsius (64-72 degrees Fahrenheit). In Singapore the temperature usually ranges from 25 to 32 degrees.

Humidity will be set at 50 to 60 percent to simulate the pandas' natural habitat in southwest China's Szechuan province. Live plants, boulders and waterfalls have also been installed.

State-linked Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS) operates the zoo, which welcomed 1.6 million visitors in 2010.

The River Safari, which is scheduled to open fully next year, expects to attract at least 850,000 visitors annually, WRS said.

WRS director of exhibit design and development Cham Tud Yinn said he had visited panda enclosures all over the world to look at their designs, and learnt most from Hong Kong's Ocean Park.

"We went there and actually we learnt a lot from them, the mistakes that they made especially with the technical aspect of cooling a building," he told AFP.

Should the pandas wish to sample Singapore's tropical temperatures, the enclosure has an outdoor segment where they can laze around.

WRS hopes to use temperature and lighting conditions to stimulate the bears to produce babies.

"In the wild, their breeding behaviour is very much triggered by the change in seasons," Cham said.

A dedicated den and nursery for baby pandas were constructed in advance.

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