

First Taiwan-born panda to be unveiled to public

January 4 2014



Yuan Zai, the first Taiwan-born baby panda, climbs inside an enclosure at the Taipei City Zoo on January 4, 2014

The first Taiwan-born giant panda cub was unveiled to the media on Saturday in a warm up for her highly-anticipated public debut next week.

Yuan Zai agilely climbed up and down for most of her 30-minute media preview inside an exhibition enclosure, as mother Yuan Yuan sat lazily aside munching bamboos.

"Yuan Zai is growing bigger and bigger. She is very robust and is gaining strength. After evaluation she can meet the public in two days," Taipei Zoo spokesman Chao Ming-chieh said.

Yuan Zai, who weighed 180 grams (6.35 ounces) at birth, now weighs about 14 kilograms. She will turn six months old on Monday, the day set for her public debut.

More than 7,000 people have made reservations so far for a 10-minute viewing of Yuan Zai, while others will have to queue for a glimpse at the cub, Chang said.

The zoo will increase the daily visitor quota of the panda hall to 24,000 from 19,200 during the Lunar New Year period starting January 31 in anticipation of big crowds.

Panda mania swept Taiwan after the cub was delivered on July 6 following a series of artificial insemination sessions after her parents—Tuan Tuan and Yuan Yuan—failed to conceive naturally.



Yuan Zai, the first Taiwan-born baby panda, lies inside an enclosure at the Taipei City Zoo on January 4, 2014

Zookeepers had to separate tiny Yuan Zai from her mother Yuan Yuan a few days after birth. They raised her in an incubator with round-the-clock monitoring after she was slightly injured in the leg.

The mother and daughter were reunited for the first time on August 13, an encounter that saw the [giant panda](#) licking and cuddling her baby before they fell asleep together inside a cage. Footage was broadcast around the world and made waves on the Internet.

Tuan Tuan and Yuan Yuan, whose names mean "reunion" in Chinese, were given to Taiwan by China in December 2008 and have become star attractions at Taipei Zoo, as well as a symbol of warming ties between

the former bitter rivals.

Fewer than 1,600 [pandas](#) remain in the wild, mainly in China's Sichuan province, with a further 300 in captivity around the world.

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