

Bye Bye, Bao Bao: Panda leaves Washington for China

February 21 2017



The National Zoo's giant panda Bao Bao will stay in quarantine for about a month, before entering Chengdu's special breeding program

One of Washington's most popular residents left town on Tuesday: Bao Bao, the National Zoo's uber-popular young female panda, headed to her new home in China.

Bao Bao left Dulles International Airport outside the US capital on a

specially outfitted cargo plane for a 16-hour nonstop flight to the Chinese city of Chengdu, home to a special research base for giant panda breeding.

Two zoo personnel will travel with the panda—along with about 30 kilos (65 pounds) of food—mainly bamboo, but also apples, cooked [sweet potatoes](#) and special biscuits.

Once in China, the 3.5-year-old Bao Bao—born in August 2013 at the National Zoo—will stay in quarantine for about a month, before entering the breeding program.

About 60,000 panda lovers visited the zoo over the weekend to say farewell to Bao Bao, some of them traveling long distances. Her departure was shown on Facebook Live on Monday.

Most [giant pandas](#) around the world are on loan from China. Any panda cubs born abroad, like Bao Bao, are sent back to China before they turn four.

The National Zoo has played host to pandas since the early 1970s.

An estimated 1,800 pandas live in the wild, mainly in China's Sichuan province.

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