



A guide to the:  
*Panda Volunteer Experience in China*





# *The Panda Volunteer Experience in China*

**Focus:** Pandas  
**Location:** China

**Start Date:** Select Sundays  
**Arrival & Starting Point:** Chengdu

Despite the Giant Panda's shift from the "endangered" to "vulnerable" category on the IUCN Red List, the panda population still faces an uncertain future. Thanks to comprehensive conservation initiatives across China, the panda population has increased to an estimated 2,000 individuals, with reserves playing a pivotal role in the recovery. Yet, habitat loss and fragmentation, climate change, and illegal hunting remain a prevalent battle for, arguably, the world's most iconic bear.

This project combines a fascinating cultural exchange with an opportunity to peer behind the curtain of one of the largest panda conservation and research centres in existence. The Bifengxia panda base, originally designed to house sub-adult and senior pandas outside the breeding program, became a refuge for over 40 pandas evacuated from the sister reserve after a devastating earthquake decimated the site in 2008. Today, the panda base, covering nearly 400 hectares, contains a breeding centre, research and education centre, hospital, kindergarten & nursery and huge enclosures with indoor and outdoor areas.



As a volunteer, you will have the unique opportunity to shadow a panda caretaker and witness firsthand all it takes to care for this unique bear species. Tasks will include food preparation, enclosure cleaning, assisting with simple behavioural research, and even making panda cakes. You will play a small, yet important, part in ensuring the well-being of the pandas by contributing to every aspect of their care. You'll have the chance to learn the individual personalities of the pandas at the reserve and gain valuable insight into the world of panda conservation.

Beyond the opportunity to learn about and connect with these 'yin-yang' bears, you'll have a chance to immerse yourself in the rich Chinese culture, engaging in city tours in Chengdu, attending Chinese language and handwriting lessons, and embracing the opportunity to master the culinary arts and the ancient game of Mahjong. These experiences will enable you to absorb the essence of China.

For an all-encompassing trip where wildlife preservation and cultural appreciation go hand-in-hand, the Panda Volunteer Experience in China offers a chance to learn, help and explore, all while creating memories that will last a lifetime.



## City Tour & Panda Breeding Centre Visit

To book-end your experience, you'll have ample opportunity to explore Chengdu. You'll start with a city walk, calling by the Taiguli shopping area and heading over to Chengdu's Conservation and Research Centre for Giant Pandas; here you'll see the incredible ongoing scientific research and conservation working to stabilise the panda population. You'll also see an abundance of pandas, including endangered red pandas, which contrary to popular belief, are not related to giant pandas. Later in the week, you'll visit the Chengdu Museum and explore the famed spots of the People's Park, Kuanzhai Alley, Tianfu Square, and the Panda Post Office! Along the way, you'll have the chance to try Chengdu's famous food, Huo Guo - or hotpot.

## Food Prep & Panda Cakes

Giant pandas spend approximately 10-16 hours a day feeding on a diet consisting mainly of bamboo, of which they need around 12-38kg each day due to its low nutritional value. The panda's diet is 99% vegetarian, so you'll get stuck in helping the caretakers prepare apples, carrots and of course, various species of bamboo. You'll also help to make panda cakes! These cakes are packed full of nutrition and are a source of carbohydrates and protein to help keep the pandas' energy levels up.



## Enclosure Cleaning

Pandas are particularly messy eaters and struggle to digest their food effectively, so consistent cleaning is a key part of a panda caretaker's day. Be ready to roll up your sleeves and contribute to creating a clean, homely environment for the pandas to thrive! While the pandas are safely tucked away, you'll also distribute fresh bamboo around their enclosures.

## Scientific Research

One of the aims of this reserve is to learn more about the behaviours of the giant panda and how they can be supported to survive back in the wild. On occasion volunteers are asked to assist the research team in observing and taking notes on the panda's general behaviours and health. This research will help in extending crucial knowledge about these national treasures and will hopefully benefit the future of these bears.





## Bifengxia Valley Walk

Bifengxia stands as a renowned national 5A-level scenic destination, celebrated for its breathtaking views. Your group will embark on a 2-3 hour walk into the valley, where you'll journey along cliff-hugging plank roads and stand in awe of the stunning mountain scenery and many cascading waterfalls.



## Cultural Activities

Throughout the week, you will have the opportunity to participate in various cultural activities that will help you learn more about China and its unique customs and traditions. You will have Chinese language and handwriting lessons, learn how to make yummy dumplings and play the ancient Chinese game of Mahjong. By taking part, you'll be able to take a little piece of China home with you and share it with your family and friends!





# Itinerary

## Day 1

After arriving at Chengdu International Airport, you will be met by a project representative and transferred to a local hostel. After arrival, you are free to explore the city and take in the sights and sounds of China, perhaps visiting a street market or enjoying an authentic Chinese dish!

## Day 2

Today, you'll head off on a walking tour to enjoy the local sights before heading to the Chengdu IFS and Taiguli shopping area. After lunch, you'll grab your bags and transfer by bus to the Bifengxia panda base (approx. 2.5 hours drive). You'll enjoy a welcome dinner and get to know your fellow travellers and the panda reserve staff.

## Day 3-4

These days are pure pandemonium as you engage in all things panda care-related. Preparing food, cleaning enclosures, and undertaking simple research tasks will fill up these days, alongside learning about the intricacies of giant panda conservation and delving into cultural cooking and games after hours.

## Day 5

Today, you'll embark on an adventurous walk through the stunning Bifengxia Valley. After lunch, your group will transfer back to Chengdu with time to rest before heading out to dinner to try the city's famous dish, the hotpot.

## Day 6

After breakfast, you'll make your way to the Chengdu Museum, where you'll explore fascinating exhibitions on ancient puppetry, shadow puppets, and wood carvings. In the afternoon, you'll tour the city's famous spots, such as People's Park, Kuanzhai Alley, Tianfu Square, and the Panda Post Office.

## Day 7

It is time to say your goodbyes as you transfer back to Chengdu International Airport to return home or begin your onward travel plans, forever cherishing the memories you've made!



## Accommodation

While you are in Chengdu, you will be staying at a local hostel in the heart of the city. You will be sharing a dorm room with up to six other people. This place is ideal for exploring the city because of its central location. As for the Bifengxia site, you will stay at the cosy reserve hostel. The rooms here are twin-share and lockable, with hot water, a squatting toilet, and a television. All the necessary amenities are available in one place. You'll also have access to a common room, perfect for socialising and watching movies.

There is an opportunity to upgrade the accommodation, so please let us know if you wish to do so.



*Chengdu Hostel*



*Panda Reserve Hostel*

## Food & Drink

On the day of your arrival, you will need to purchase your own food, but for your remaining stay, meals are provided. The meals you will receive will be in the traditional Chinese style, comprising mainly of rice, noodles, vegetables and some meat. The project is able to cater for vegans, vegetarians, and people with allergies if informed in advance, so please let us know if this is the case. Drinking water, Chinese tea, and coffee may be available throughout the day (depending on location). Soft or alcoholic drinks are not included but are purchasable for a small cost.





## What's Included

- All meals (apart from on your first day)
- Accommodation
- Full orientation from the project staff
- Tea, coffee, and water at Bifengxia
- A donation to the project itself
- English speaking facilitator

## Not Included

- Travel insurance
- Return transfer to the airport
- Food on your first day
- Soft or alcoholic drinks and extra snacks
- Any additional trips or purchases outside of the itinerary

## Volunteer Reviews

### Emma

"I'd like to thank the whole team for their help in the lead-up to the trip, and the in-country team for making me feel welcome! I would highly recommend this project."



### Mayumi

"It was a great experience! More than I expected. Also, my family and friends are so glad I did it. I would like to do it again!"



### Sarah

"I think the itinerary was just right, you spent a lot of time with pandas but you also had a good amount of free time to explore and complete the group activities."







## What Next?

Becoming a volunteer at the Panda Volunteer Experience in China is simple, and you can help make a difference to wildlife conservation efforts in just a few simple steps...



Visit the website to select your start date and how long you would like to volunteer for.



Secure your place online by paying a deposit of £195. You'll have up to 60 days before your start date to pay your remaining balance.



Prepare for your trip and ask your dedicated travel expert any questions before packing your bags and heading off to China!



Finally, have an incredible time and don't forget to send in or tag us in your photos!

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