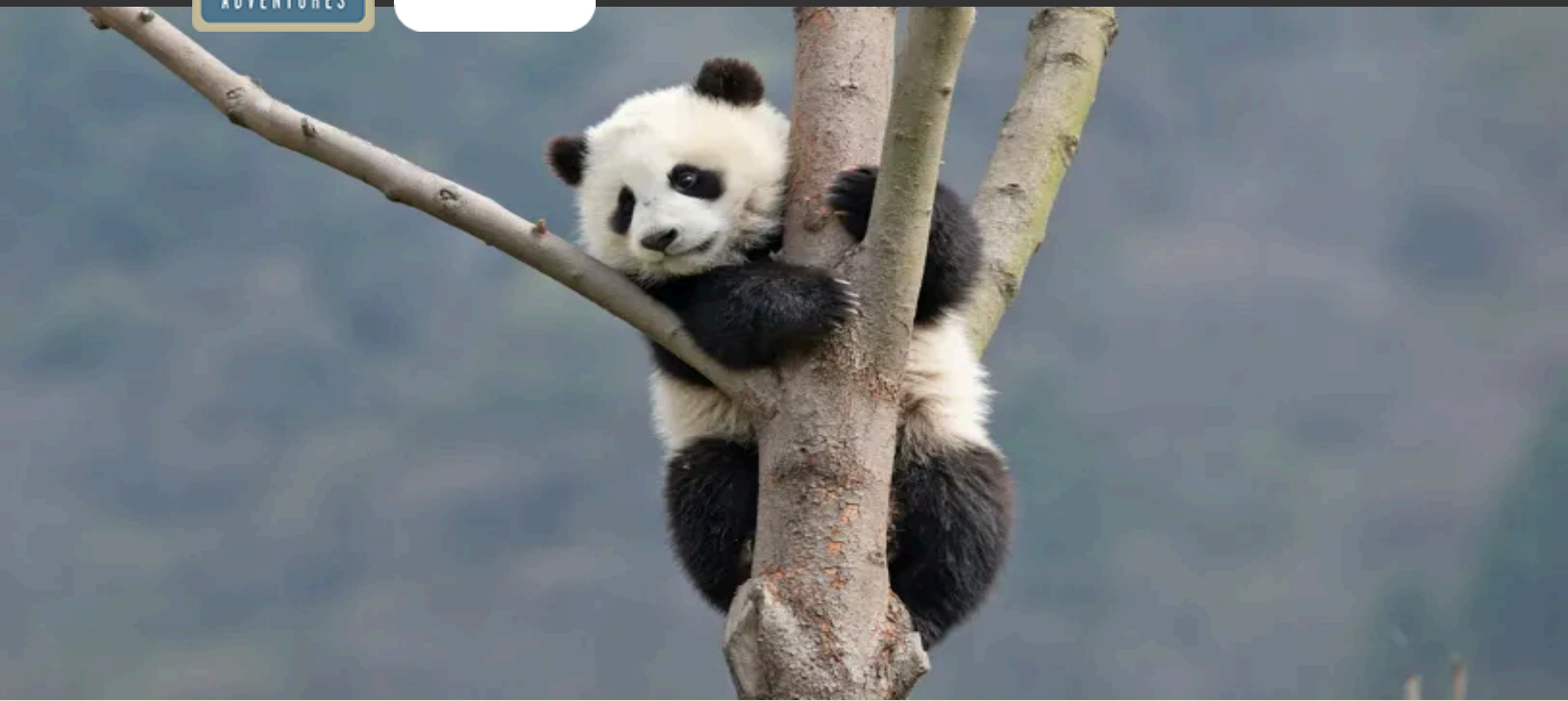




Discovering Our Planet Together



The Wild Side of China: A Nature Odyssey

Meet Pandas Up Close & Search for Rare Wildlife on Remote Nature Reserves



Discovering Our Planet Together

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Trip Details:

Days

12 Days / Mar–
Apr & Oct–Nov

Price

From \$13795

Physical Requirements

Moderate

The Wild Side of China: A Nature Odyssey

Meet Pandas Up Close & Search for Rare Wildlife on Remote Nature Reserves

Deep in the Minshan Mountains of Sichuan province, great rivers and gorges dissect lush forests that shelter some of the world's most endangered wildlife. This is the last wild habitat of the giant panda, which subsists on the bamboo protected within a network of remote nature reserves. Supported by WWF, these little-visited wilderness enclaves also harbor rare moon bears, golden snub-nosed monkeys, shaggy takin, Chinese goral, blue sheep and exquisite birds, including the golden pheasant. Discover a side of China most travelers never experience on our unique itinerary, carefully crafted to reveal Chinese nature at its most entrancing. Enjoy multiple close-up visits with pandas at research and breeding bases, and visit the ancient Silk Road city of Xi'an, where the Terracotta Army has guarded the tomb of China's first emperor for more than 2,200 years.

Trip Highlights

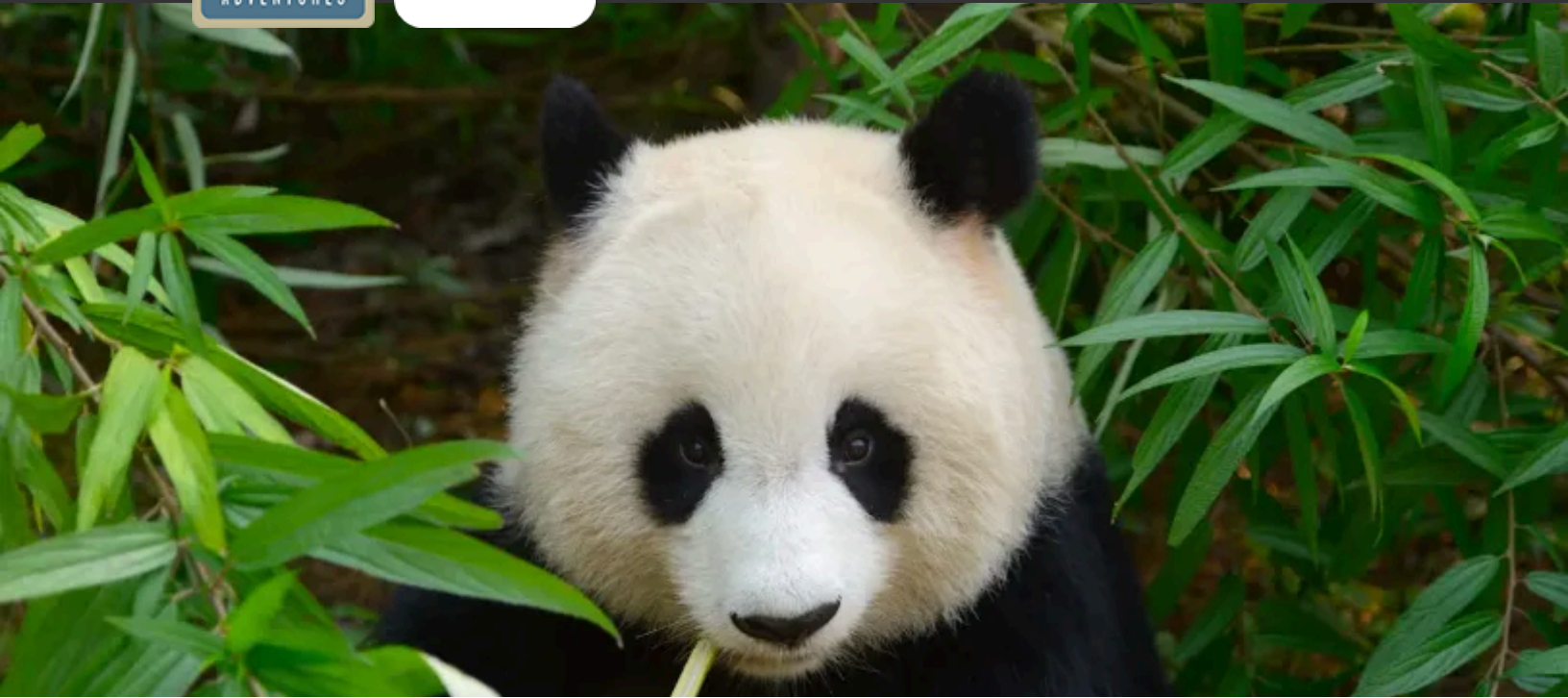
Watch and photograph giant pandas at close range on extended visits to three world-renowned panda research centers—each offering a unique setting and experience

Explore a virtually unvisited national wildlife sanctuary where highly elusive wild pandas live and breed freely—we don't expect to see them, but other rare species are on view

Get close-up photos of endangered golden snub-nosed monkeys, charming blue-faced primates found only in a small area of temperate forest in central China



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Trip Details:

Days

12 Days / Mar-Apr & Oct-Nov

Price

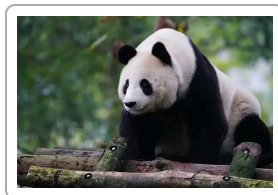
From \$13795

Physical Requirements

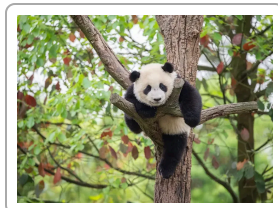
Moderate

The Wild Side of China: A Nature Odyssey Itineraries

Meet Pandas Up Close & Search for Rare Wildlife on Remote Nature Reserves



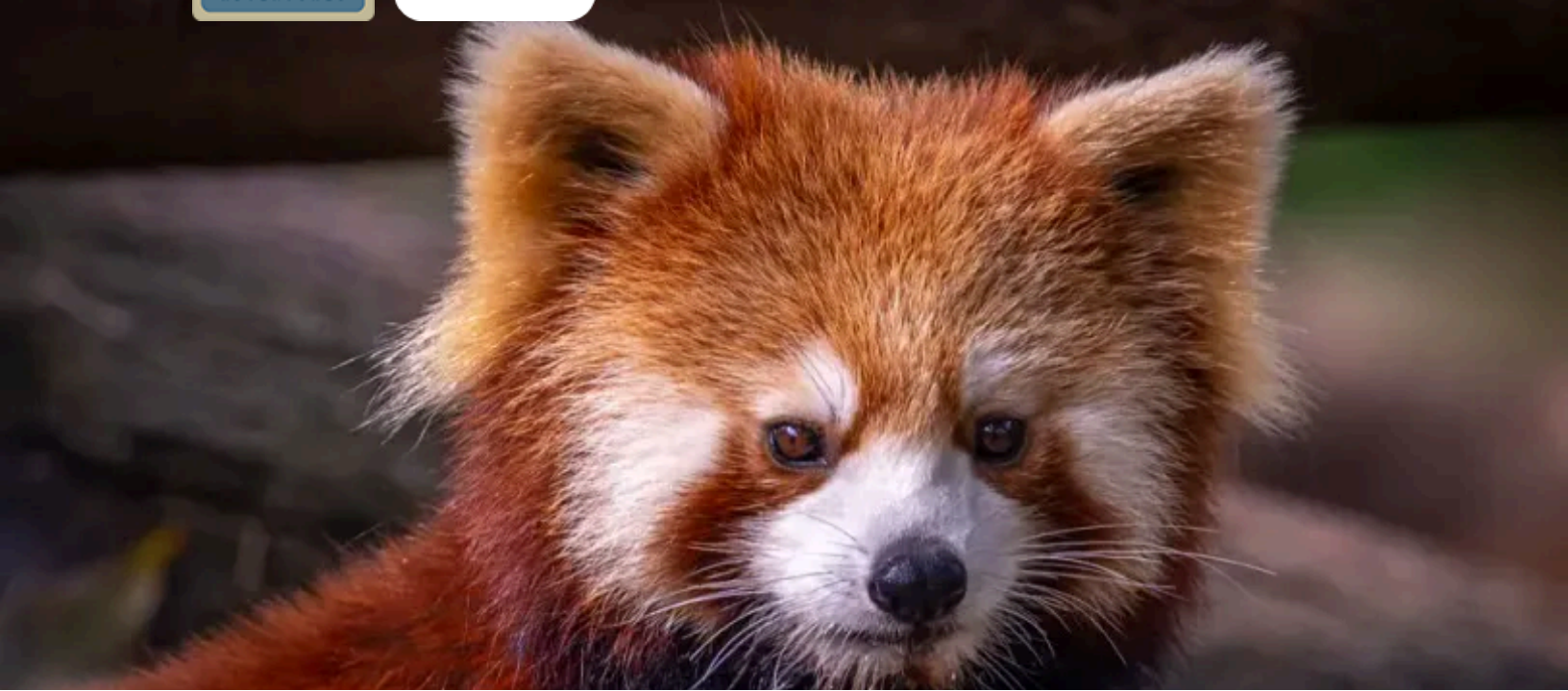
2025 Itinerary



2026 Itinerary



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Itinerary At A Glance

Day 1

Xi'an, China—Ancient City Wall

Day 2

Xi'an—Terracotta Army / Lesser Wild Goose Pagoda

Day 3

Qing Xi Village Visit / Wild Panda Nature Reserve

Day 4

Exploring the Wild Panda Nature Reserve with Exclusive Access

Day 5

Wild Panda Nature Reserve / Pingwu

Day 6

Golden Monkey Nature Reserve

Day 7

Scenic Drive to Dujiangyan

2025 Itinerary

Meet Pandas Up Close & Search for Rare Wildlife on Remote Nature Reserves

Day 1: Xi'an, China—Ancient City Wall

Arrive in the ancient imperial capital of Xi'an, one of China's earliest regions to be settled, and transfer to our hotel in the Yanta District where we find a number of iconic cultural sites including the Wild Goose Pagodas. Xi'an is where China's first emperor united the disparate warring tribes of the vast realm in the 3rd century B.C. to launch one of the world's most extraordinary civilizations. The capital of 13 dynasties, Xi'an's walled city and narrow streets hark back to a time when it was a center for cultural, religious and economic interactions between East and West at the east end of the Silk Road traveled by Persian and Arab traders 1,300 years ago.

After lunch, we visit a portion of the ancient city wall. Xi'an is one of the few cities in China where the old city walls still stand, with most sections carefully restored or rebuilt. Constructed originally in 1370 during the Ming dynasty, the imposing 40-foot-high walls are surrounded by a dry moat and form a rectangle with an 8.6-mile perimeter. Atop the city walls, get a sweeping view over modern-day Xi'an. This evening, we gather for a delectable Chinese meal at our welcome dinner.





Itinerary At A Glance

Day 8

Dujiangyan Panda Base
& Dujiangyan Panda Valley

Day 9

Gengda Wolong Panda Base /
Rilong

Day 10

Siguniangshan National Park

Day 11

Chengdu—Bian Lian "Sichuan
Face Changing" Show

Day 12

Chengdu / Depart

Day 2: Xi'an—Terracotta Army / Lesser Wild Goose Pagoda

Depart early this morning for Xi'an's most famous sight, the Terracotta Warriors. Unearthed in 1974 in the suburbs outside the walled city, the stone army is one of the world's most remarkable archaeological discoveries. Consisting of 8,000 life-size soldiers, 130 chariots and more than 500 horses, none identical, the army was built to guard the massive mausoleum complex of Qin Shihuang (259–210 B.C.), the pivotal leader who became China's first emperor. The figures vary in height according to their rank, the tallest being the generals. The majority of the figures remain in situ in the pits near the mausoleum, while other non-military terracotta figures were found in adjoining pits, including officials, acrobats, strongmen, and musicians. The Terracotta Army was discovered by a group of local farmers who were digging a well near the Qin Emperor's tomb mound in a region laced with underground springs. Subsequent excavation and research via ground-penetrating radar has revealed that the Army is part of a much larger necropolis covering 38 square miles, part of the emperor's imperial palace compound surrounding his tomb.

Next we continue to Lesser Wild Goose Pagoda, the smaller of two impressive towers built in Xi'an in the 8th century during the Tang dynasty. The site was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2014 as part of the Silk Roads Network. The well-preserved Buddhist temple is surrounded by a tranquil park and gardens, which we enjoy wandering through before returning to our hotel. After dinner, we head out to discover Xi'an after dark, with a chance to capture photos of the cityscape lit up at night.

Day 3: Qing Xi Village Visit / Wild Panda Nature Reserve

This morning, board the bullet train to Guangyuan, where we meet our bus and drive to the Wild Panda Nature Reserve. Along the way, we stop in the Muslim village of Qing Xi, with time to wander among scenes of relaxed street life amid the 300-year-old wooden buildings that date from the Qing dynasty. It's a peaceful setting, with a stream coursing through the center of the village. Just beyond the small town lies a secret slice of Chinese wilderness, a chain of nature reserves little known to outsiders and visited by a mere handful of Westerners. As we follow a rushing river up the narrow valley to our destination, keep an eye out for native wildlife. Eventually we arrive at our hotel, tucked away in the forest in a setting that's virtually unknown to tourists, where our nearest neighbors are mostly wild animals that thrive in these protected environs.



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Day 4: Exploring the Wild Panda Nature Reserve with Exclusive Access

Our focus for two exciting days is a remote 100,000-acre sanctuary encompassing a densely forested ecosystem that is among the most diverse and intact in Asia. This national reserve, rated Grade I by WWF as a global biodiversity hotspot, is home to healthy populations of some of the world's most endangered and vulnerable wildlife, including at least 60 giant pandas. Among its 430 different mammal species, the reserve also harbors more than 1,200 takin — a large, shaggy relative of wild sheep and goats — as well as more than 2,400 different kinds of plants. Look for wildlife on morning and evening excursions, stopping to enjoy stunning vistas of waterfalls, boulder-strewn gorges and mist-shrouded limestone peaks. This is prime panda habitat, and although sightings of this famously elusive animal are extremely rare, our exclusive permits allow us into remote areas of the reserve where they freely live and breed, affording us the best possible opportunity to spot signs of them in the wild. Even if we are highly unlikely to spy them in the heavy bamboo understory, just knowing that we're in their midst is exhilarating.

Day 5: Wild Panda Nature Reserve / Pingwu

Spend another day searching for wildlife as we explore more of the reserve's lush recesses. Within the sanctuary, we look for Tibetan and rhesus macaques, golden and Sichuan takin, musk deer, muntjac, serow, wild boar and blue sheep. More rarely, we may also see endangered moon bears and red pandas. Birding is superb, with more than 150 species in the reserve—the elegant golden pheasant is a prize. We can often observe all of these from the many remote roads and trails we explore, although dense vegetation and weather may affect our sightings. Late this afternoon, we depart the reserve and follow the scenic Fujiang River through the Min Mountains, returning to Qing Xi where we stop for an authentic local dinner. Afterward, we drive a short distance to Pingwu in far northwest Sichuan, our destination for the next two nights.

Day 6: Golden Monkey Nature Reserve

This morning we enter the forested nature reserve home to golden snub-nosed monkeys that live in the shadow of Sichuan's tallest mountain. We walk uphill for about 30 minutes on a trail leading into the nature reserve where the monkeys reside, with rest stops en route. The reserve covers 62 square miles of wild terrain filled with alpine forest, waterfalls, lakes, colorful karst formations, glacial rivers and an abundance of animal life. We expect to get excellent sightings of endangered golden monkeys, which have been habituated to humans and are unfazed by our presence. The monkeys live in highly social bands, and their interactions delight us. Covered with a mantle of long, shaggy fur, they are hardy creatures, tolerating winter snow and colder temperatures better than any other non-human primate. On our return journey to Pingwu, we drive through territory home to Baima Tibetans, the descendants of Tibetan soldiers sent here more than 1,300 years ago to conquer the frontier. Keep an eye out for hats sporting white rooster feathers worn only by this group of Tibetan women.



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Day 7: Scenic Drive to Dujiangyan

A spectacular mountain road journey is in store as we make the full-day journey south to Dujiangyan. As we travel through this mountainous region, we pause periodically along our route to admire dramatic landscapes, rural villages and Buddhist temples. Along our path, we pass through Mianyang, known as Fujun in ancient times, with a 2,200-year history that spans the Qin and Han dynasties. We also stop to visit a local market in Jiangyou that gives us a taste of small-town life and showcases the bounty of fruit and vegetables that are harvested locally in the Sichuan Basin. Enjoy a traditional dinner this evening, then rest in Dujiangyan at an elegant new resort hotel.

Day 8: Dujiangyan Panda Base & Dujiangyan Panda Valley

Today provides chances for close-up views of China's beloved giant pandas on a visit to two panda facilities in Dujiangyan. Opened in 2013 with the arrival of 10 pandas, Dujiangyan Panda Base focuses on rescue, disease control and prevention, and rehabilitation of injured and ill wild pandas. It has expanded its mission, and its numbers, to encompass care for senior and disabled pandas as well as healthy pandas that are part of the preventive research program. We dedicate a portion of our time here to volunteer in the care of the pandas, though this opportunity is not guaranteed and depends on the status of the pandas at the time of our visit. Conditions permitting, we enjoy a behind-the-scenes look at caring for pandas and may have the chance to assist their keepers with tasks such as preparing their food.

After lunch, we visit Dujiangyan Panda Valley. This is a newer facility that is both a panda research and breeding base and a center for conservation education. In natural environs, pandas are gradually habituated and returned to the wild. Reintroduction training experts from around the globe gather here for collaborative research. This quiet research base is landscaped with beautiful flowers and we may see pandas in transitional "dens" that are learning to live on their own in the natural surroundings. We're likely to see many red pandas here as well.



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Day 9: Gengda Wolong Panda Base / Rilong

Setting out from Dujiangyan, we head for the newly rebuilt Gengda Wolong Panda Center in the Wolong Nature Reserve, a base that integrates scientific research, captive breeding and reintroduction of pandas into the wild. More than 30 pandas reside at the center, which includes a 680-acre bamboo forest. Get close-up photos of giant pandas in this natural habitat that features a striking mountain backdrop. Traveling west, we continue to Rilong, a Tibetan village known famously as a base camp for climbing 20,505-foot Mount Siguniang. Translating to Four Sisters Mountain, this imposing massif encompasses four separate peaks, Daguniangshan, Erguniangshan, Sanfeng and Yaomeifeng, and is often referred to as the "Chinese Alps." In Rilong we are immersed in Tibetan culture, with traditional architecture on display and yak butter tea for sale by local vendors. This high-altitude village, which sits over 10,000 feet above sea level, is the center of the Jiarong Tibetan culture, found only in this region of Sichuan province. The rural Jiarong people are known for their intricately embroidered costumes and agricultural lifestyle.

Day 10: Siguniangshan National Park

Early risers may catch the sunrise behind the peaks in Rilong, a vista acclaimed for its singular beauty. We spend the full day exploring the dramatic scenery of nearby Siguniangshan National Park. Entering the 25-mile-long Shuangqiao Valley, we view snowcapped peaks in every direction, with Four Sisters Mountain towering above. The valley floor is 10,000 feet above sea level, and the highest mountains nearly double that. Explore the colorful geological features and mirror-like lakes of this subalpine terrain, following boardwalk trails that weave among occasional pagodas and prayer flags. Highlights include the Yin-Yang Valley, Willow Bridge, Sun-Moon Mirror Mountain and Five-Colored Mountain with its rocks that glow red, yellow, green, blue and white. These high-altitude forests are native habitat for the endangered red panda, too. Deeper into the valley, we reach the Ginsenguo flatland, with a viewing deck overlooking highland swamps and snowy peaks, and Jiujia Lake, which is actually a group of four seasonal lakes and nine perennial ones—the legendary bathing pools for the "four sisters."

Day 11: Chengdu—Bian Lian "Sichuan Face Changing" Show

Today we make a relaxed full-day drive back to Chengdu, spending the night at a hotel near the international airport for convenient departures tomorrow morning. At this evening's festive farewell dinner, enjoy a demonstration of Bian Lian, or "Sichuan face changing," a mesmerizing opera element where performers rapidly switch colorful masks to portray different characters and emotions. Only about 200 people practice this secretive art form that can entail changing up to 10 masks in less than 20 seconds, and we marvel at the mystery and the mastery as we reflect on the adventures we've shared.



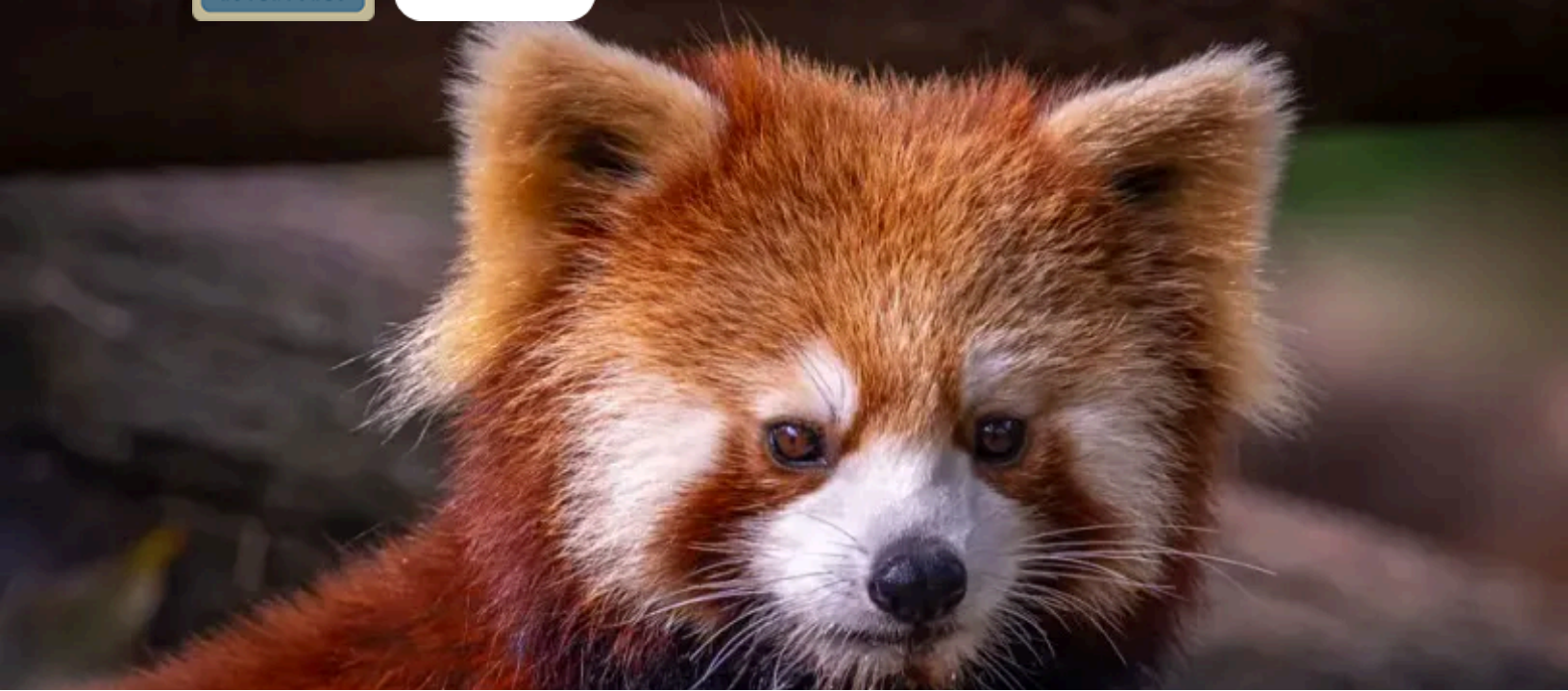
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Day 12: Chengdu / Depart

After a sumptuous buffet breakfast at our luxury hotel next to the airport, transfer the short distance to meet departing flights.



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Itinerary At A Glance

Day 1

Chengdu, Sichuan, China

Day 2

Chengdu / Qing Xi / Wild Panda Nature Reserve

Day 3

Exploring the Wild Panda Nature Reserve

Day 4

Wild Panda Nature Reserve / Pingwu

Day 5

Golden Monkey Nature Reserve

Day 6

Scenic Drive / Dujiangyan Panda Valley

Day 7

Gengda Wolong Panda Base / Rilong

2026 Itinerary

Meet Pandas Up Close & Search for Rare Wildlife on Remote Nature Reserves

Day 1: Chengdu, Sichuan, China

Arrive in Chengdu, the vibrant capital of Sichuan province. Over a group lunch, get to know your Expedition Leader and our local Chinese naturalist guide, and enjoy your introduction to the renowned cuisine of Sichuan that will be a highlight of our travels together—in 2011, Chengdu was recognized by UNESCO as a City of Gastronomy. Chengdu is also famed for its association with the giant pandas of Sichuan and is home to the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding. Learn more about the city as we discover some of its highlights with our Expedition Leader this afternoon. Founded in 4th century BC, Chengdu is unique as the only major Chinese settlement that has maintained its name unchanged throughout the imperial, republican and communist eras for more than 2,000 years. Chengdu is an important center for higher education in China and one of the world's top 25 cities for scientific research. We take a walk through serene Bamboo Park on the Jin River, a leafy enclave where locals enjoy strolling, playing mahjong and practicing tai chi. After time to relax at our luxury hotel in the city, gather for a welcome dinner and an orientation to all the nature adventures that lie ahead.





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Itinerary At A Glance

Day 8

Rilong—Siguniangshan National Park

Day 9

Baoxing Valley / Labahe Nature Reserve

Day 10

Labahe Nature Reserve

Day 11

Labahe / Bifengxia Panda Base / Chengdu

Day 12

Chengdu / Depart

Day 2: Chengdu / Qing Xi / Wild Panda Nature Reserve

The bustle of the city is soon behind us as we depart this morning on a drive north into the Minshan Mountains, an enclave of lush peaks and deep gorges that protects an abundance of rare and endangered Chinese wildlife. En route, we stop in the Muslim village of Qing Xi, with time to wander its narrow lanes enjoying scenes of relaxed street life amid 300-year-old wooden buildings that date to the Qing dynasty. It's a peaceful setting, with a stream coursing through the center of the village. Just beyond the small town lies a secret slice of Chinese wilderness, a chain of nature reserves little known to outsiders and visited by a mere handful of Westerners. Our destination is a national sanctuary that harbors a vital population of wild pandas. We don't choose to name it, as it is virtually undiscovered by tourists, and we are likely to be the only visitors there. As we follow a rushing river up the narrow valley to reach the reserve, keep an eye out for nocturnal wildlife starting to emerge as dusk descends. Eventually, we reach our hotel, tucked away in the forest along the river, in a setting where our nearest neighbors are mostly wild animals that thrive in these remote protected environs.

Day 3: Exploring the Wild Panda Nature Reserve

Our focus for two exciting days is a remote 100,000-acre sanctuary encompassing a densely forested ecosystem that is among the most diverse and intact in Asia. This national reserve, rated Grade I by WWF as a global biodiversity hotspot, is home to healthy populations of some of the world's most endangered and vulnerable wildlife, including at least 60 giant pandas. Among its 430 different mammal species, the reserve also harbors more than 1,200 takin — a large, shaggy relative of wild sheep and goats — as well as more than 2,400 different kinds of plants. Look for wildlife on morning and evening excursions, stopping to enjoy stunning vistas of waterfalls, boulder-strewn gorges and mist-shrouded limestone peaks. This is prime panda habitat, and although sightings of this famously elusive animal are extremely rare, our exclusive permits allow us into remote areas of the reserve where they freely live and breed, affording us the best possible opportunity to spot signs of them in the wild. Even if we are highly unlikely to spy them in the heavy bamboo understory, just knowing that we're in their midst is exhilarating.



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Day 4: Wild Panda Nature Reserve / Pingwu

Spend another day searching for wildlife as we explore more of the reserve's lush recesses. Within the sanctuary, we look for Tibetan and rhesus macaques, golden and Sichuan takin, musk deer, muntjac, serow, wild boar and blue sheep. More rarely, we may also see endangered moon bears and red pandas. Birding is superb, with more than 150 species in the reserve—the elegant golden pheasant is a prize. We can often observe all of these from the many remote roads and trails we explore, although dense vegetation and weather may affect our sightings. Late this afternoon, we depart the reserve and follow the scenic Fujiang River through the Min Mountains, returning to Qing Xi where we stop for an authentic local hot pot dinner. Afterward, we drive a short distance to Pingwu in far northwest Sichuan, our destination for the next two nights.

Day 5: Golden Monkey Nature Reserve

Rise early this morning to follow the scenic Fujiang River into the forested nature reserve that is home to golden snub-nosed monkeys living in the shadow of Sichuan's tallest mountain. We walk uphill for about 30 minutes on a trail leading into the reserve where the monkeys reside, with rest stops en route. The reserve covers 62 square miles of wild terrain filled with alpine forest, waterfalls, lakes, colorful karst formations, glacial rivers and an abundance of animal life. We expect excellent sightings of endangered golden monkeys, which have been habituated to humans and are unfazed by our presence. The monkeys live in highly social bands, and their interactions delight us. Covered with a mantle of long, shaggy fur, they are hardy creatures, tolerating winter snow and colder temperatures better than any other non-human primate. On our return journey to Pingwu, we drive through territory home to Baima Tibetans, the descendants of Tibetan soldiers sent here more than 1,300 years ago to conquer the frontier. Keep an eye out for hats sporting white rooster feathers worn only by this group of Tibetan women.

Day 6: Scenic Drive / Dujiangyan Panda Valley

A spectacular mountain drive is in store as we make the journey south to Dujiangyan. Winding through this mountainous region, we pause periodically along our route to admire dramatic landscapes, rural villages and Buddhist temples. Along the way, we pass through Mianyang, known as Fujun in ancient times, with a 2,200-year history that spans the Qin and Han dynasties.

This afternoon, visit Dujiangyan Panda Valley, a new facility that is both a panda research and breeding base and a center for conservation education. This quiet research base is landscaped with beautiful flowers, and in natural environs, pandas are gradually habituated and returned to the wild. Reintroduction training experts from around the world gather here for collaborative research. We may see pandas in transitional concrete block "dens" that are learning to live on their own in the natural surroundings. We often see many red pandas here as well.



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Day 7: Gengda Wolong Panda Base / Rilong

Setting out from Dujiangyan, we head for the newly rebuilt Gengda Wolong Panda Center in the Wolong Nature Reserve, a base that integrates scientific research, captive breeding and reintroduction of pandas into the wild. More than 30 pandas reside at the center, which includes a 680-acre bamboo forest. Get close-up photos of giant pandas in this natural habitat that features a striking mountain backdrop. Then, traveling west, we continue to Rilong, a Tibetan village known famously as a base camp for climbing 20,505-foot Mount Siguniang. Translating to Four Sisters Mountain, this imposing massif encompasses four separate peaks and is often referred to as the “Chinese Alps.” In Rilong, we are immersed in Tibetan culture, with traditional architecture on display and yak butter tea for sale by local vendors. This high-altitude village, 10,000 feet above sea level, is the center of the Jiarong Tibetan culture, found only in this region of Sichuan province. The rural Jiarong people are known for their intricately embroidered costumes and agricultural lifestyle.

Day 8: Rilong—Siguniangshan National Park

Early risers may catch the sunrise behind the peaks in Rilong, a vista renowned for its singular beauty. We spend the day exploring the dramatic scenery of nearby Siguniangshan National Park. Entering the 25-mile-long Shuangqiao Valley, snow-capped peaks rise in every direction, with Four Sisters Mountain towering above. The valley floor is 10,000 feet above sea level, and the highest mountains nearly double that. Explore the colorful geological features and mirror-like lakes of this subalpine terrain, following boardwalk trails that weave among occasional pagodas and prayer flags. This high-altitude forest is also native habitat for the endangered red panda. Deeper into the valley, we reach the Ginsenguo flatland, with a viewing deck overlooking highland swamps and snowy peaks, and Jiujia Lake, which is actually a group of four seasonal lakes and nine perennial ones—the legendary bathing pools for the “four sisters.” After a full day of exploration in the park, we travel back down the valley to spend a second night in Rilong.



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Day 9: Baoxing Valley / Labahe Nature Reserve

Depart this morning for Labahe Nature Reserve located southwest of Chengdu in the Hengduan Mountains. En route, we travel through another Jiarong Tibetan region, the Baoxing Valley separating the plains of Sichuan from the Tibetan Plateau. Here we visit Dengchigou Catholic Church where Father Pere Amand David stayed in the mid-19th century, introducing the giant panda to the Western world for the first time. The priest, who was also a natural historian and researcher with the National Museum of France, is credited with finding 68 new bird species, more than 100 insect species, and many mammal species including golden monkeys and Milu deer in addition to giant pandas, which he revealed to the wider world in 1869.

Once we reach the Labahe Reserve, we check in to our hotel, then head out to start exploring. Labahe is one of China's top spots for finding the elusive and endearing red panda, and while sightings are never guaranteed, we often spy them. As the day draws to a close, we may see water deer coming down to a salt lick just outside our hotel.

Day 10: Labahe Nature Reserve

A full day is dedicated to searching for wildlife, especially red pandas, in the Labahe reserve. Although giant pandas also live here, we are less likely to see them. Comprised of mixed forests and pockets of dense bamboo, the reserve's diverse vegetation and altitude create ideal habitat for the red panda, which is adapted to environments above 7,000 feet. A wide variety of other mammals and birds thrives here, too, and we look for Tibetan macaque, Chinese leopard cat, hog badger, serow, sambar deer, golden takin, and red and white giant flying squirrels. Notable birds include the golden-breasted fulvetta, Lady Amherst's pheasant, crimson-breasted woodpecker and three-toed parrotbill. In our private vehicle, we have the freedom to explore different parts of the reserve, including opportunities for stunning landscape photography from higher mountain locations.

Day 11: Labahe / Bifengxia Panda Base / Chengdu

Early this morning, we depart for Bifengxia Panda Base, a branch of the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda opened in 2003. Previously, as the program at the main Wolong Panda Center continued to grow, it becoming crowded, and the threat of an outbreak of disease or infection was of great concern. If an epidemic were to occur among the captive giant pandas at Wolong, it could destroy the entire population. Splitting it into two separate populations, with a second panda group located at Bifengxia, was planned to prevent this from occurring. We'll see plenty of pandas roaming within large enclosures filled with lush vegetation, including their favored food, bamboo. Afterward, we visit scenic Bifengxia Gorge and have lunch before continuing to our hotel at Tianfu Airport for convenient departures tomorrow. This evening, we celebrate our adventures at a farewell dinner.



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Day 12: Chengdu / Depart

After breakfast at our hotel, transfer to the nearby airport terminal to meet departing flights.



Accommodation Details:

Shangri-La Chengdu

Wild Panda Reserve Hotel

Jiuzhou Jindu Hotel

Balan International Hotel

Jiarong Tibetan Qingcheng Hotel

JoyHub Air Hotel

For detailed descriptions, visit nathab.com/asia-adventure-travel/wild-china-panda-tour/accommodations

The Wild Side of China: A Nature Odyssey Accommodations

Meet Pandas Up Close & Search for Rare Wildlife on Remote Nature Reserves



Shangri-La Chengdu

This gleaming luxury high-rise enjoys views over the Jinjiang River and glittering Chengdu skyline; spacious rooms and the serene Chi Spa offer quiet spaces to retreat from the urban bustle.



Wild Panda Reserve Hotel

The sole lodging within this remote national nature reserve offers modern accommodations in chalets along a river, and a large dining room for family-style meals.

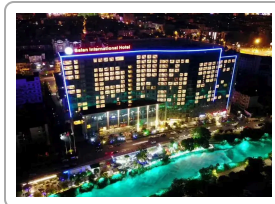


Jiuzhou Jindu Hotel

Located near the Bao'en Temple in Pingwu, this hotel offers comfortable modern rooms with opportunities to relax in the outdoor pool or retreat to the serene teahouse.



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Balan International Hotel

With its prime location in Balan Square and close proximity to scenic and natural areas near Dujiangyan, this contemporary hotel is an ideal base for exploration.



Jiarong Tibetan Qingcheng Hotel

Offering a rare glimpse into authentic Tibetan culture and rural mountain life, this simple, cozy and charming local hotel provides a comfortable stay with big views.



JoyHub Air Hotel

Enjoy exceptional convenience and deluxe view rooms at this sleek new luxury hotel offering first-class airport accommodations for international departures into and out of Chengdu.



We Show You the Natural Side of China Most Visitors Never See

Google “China tours” and you’ll find plenty that will take you to Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City and the Great Wall. Yet virtually no one offers nature adventures, and no one else takes you to the remote, rarely visited wildlife reserves that we do. Nat Hab holds special permits that grant us access into a nature sanctuary that few Westerners—and very few local tourists—ever see. When you visit China with us, leave behind crowds, traffic and polluted city air for wild mountain terrain.

1

See Giant Pandas Up Close on Visits to Three Different Sites

Compare China itineraries—we don't think you'll find another that offers this in-depth panda immersion, with unhurried visits to three different panda research bases: Dujiangyan Panda Base, which focuses on rescuing injured and ill wild pandas and disease control; the newly rebuilt Gengda Wolong Panda Center, which integrates scientific research, captive breeding and reintroduction of pandas into the wild; and Dujiangyan Panda Valley, a new facility that is both a panda research and breeding base and a center for conservation education.

2

Exclusive Access to Search for Pandas & Other Rare Wildlife

This is a genuine Nat Hab privilege: We have secured special permits to visit remote sectors of a totally untouristed nature reserve deep within the Minshan Mountains, a global biodiversity hotspot that's home to some of the world's most endangered wildlife. We'll search for giant pandas and moon bears that inhabit the park, though we won't expect to see them, as both are highly elusive. We have better chances to find other rare Chinese animals like takin, goral, serow and golden pheasant, within a completely natural habitat that few tourists have ever laid eyes on—and only a handful of Westerners (mostly other Nat Hab travelers). The terrain is steep and heavily forested, and animals are often sheltered, camouflaged or seen at a distance—but just being in their midst in such a quiet, wild place is a moving experience.

3

Get Close to Golden Snub-Nosed Monkeys

Visit a golden monkey nature reserve where we're sure to have close-up encounters with a habituated family group of these entertaining primates. It's a rare opportunity to see and photograph this endangered species that is endemic to a very limited part of central and southwest China.

4

Our Small Groups Go Places Larger Groups Can't

Because we limit this trip to approximately 12 guests, we're able to take you where larger bus tours cannot go, including a remote national park where we have exclusive permits to search for wild pandas (though they are exceptionally elusive and rarely seen).



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5

Travel with Two Guides for Exceptional Expertise

Our China trips benefit from the leadership of two guides: a native English-speaking Nat Hab Expedition Leader accompanied by a warm and hospitable Chinese naturalist guide who is highly trained in natural history and interpretation, not to mention being our cultural and linguistic "go-between." It's an optimal combination of interpretive guiding, cultural knowledge and personalized attention.

6

Experience Traditional Tibetan Culture Our travels include an overland traverse along the edge of the vast Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, where small villages, prayer flags and chortens dot the landscape. Learn more about the deeply traditional Tibetan Buddhist culture, which offers a dramatic counterpoint to the urban setting of Chengdu.

7

Savor Outstanding Sichuan Cuisine

While nature may be your primary interest, food lovers will be thrilled by the culinary delights this trip offers. Sichuan is famed for its piquant cuisine, and we get to sample a wide selection of restaurants and dishes, with items carefully chosen by our local guide to appeal to Western palates. Since food is typically served family-style at a large round table, multiple tastes and dietary preferences can be catered for at every meal (though be sure to make special needs known to us ahead of time). And you won't be eating only in hotels or touristy restaurants: we choose locations popular with local people, for a truly authentic Chinese dining experience that Western visitors will also enjoy.

8

A Rare Opportunity to Volunteer with Panda Care When Conditions Permit

At Dujiangyan Panda Base, we may have an optional opportunity to help with aspects of the pandas' care. This could involve preparing their food or other tasks that place us directly into the daily activities of the pandas' caregivers at this research base. *Please note that this volunteer opportunity is intermittent and depends on the pandas' situation at the time, and it will not always be available.*

9

Our Accommodations Offer the Best in Location and Comfort From a 5-star luxury hotel in Chengdu to a quiet mountain inn where other travelers are few, our comfortable lodgings place you in close proximity to famous Chinese landmarks and remote and wild natural settings. Each offers a regional experience of China with plenty of amenities.



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10

Travel with Expert Expedition Leaders Our Nat Hab Expedition Leaders are outstanding North American naturalist guides who are passionate about China and its wildlife. In addition, you'll travel with a Chinese tour guide who is a nature expert, ensuring an optimal balance of scientific knowledge, authentic cultural insight and attentive personal service. Furthermore, our Expedition Leaders have the benefit of additional training and resources from WWF's renowned scientists and researchers. **See Expedition Leader bios** and traveler comments regarding the quality of our leaders.

11

Our Quality-Value Guarantee Ensures Your Outstanding China Tour With Natural Habitat Adventures, you receive our exclusive guarantee that clearly states that we will meet the high expectations we set forth in our promotional materials. To our knowledge, this is the most ambitious guarantee made by any adventure travel company.

12

Feel Good About Your Carbon-Neutral Journey We care deeply about our planet, as we know you do. When you travel with us, the carbon emissions from your trip are 100% offset—including your round-trip flights from home. Natural Habitat Adventures has been the world's first carbon-neutral travel company since 2007.

13

Natural Habitat Adventures Is WWF's Travel Partner

Because of our commitment to environmentally friendly travel, as well as the exceptional quality of our small-group nature adventures, World Wildlife Fund, the world's leading environmental conservation organization, has named Natural Habitat Adventures its worldwide travel partner—a designation that makes us exceedingly proud!



Make It Private with Your Family or Friends

Travel privately, exclusively with your immediate family, multi-generational family or group of friends. And when you choose a private departure, you're assured the most exclusive and authentic Wild Side of China adventure on offer. Request your private departure by completing the form below.

Please note that on China Make It Private departures we require a minimum group size of 6 travelers.

Also, please be aware that your per-person cost on a Make It Private trip will vary depending on the number of travelers in your group and may be as much as 10%-30% higher (ship-based trips may be even higher) than our normal trip cost unless you fill the trip.

This **Make It Private** option is available on nearly every Nat Hab trip for family and friend groups. Call an Adventure Specialist at 800-543-8917 or look for the "Make It Private" icon in the **pricing section** of a trip online at nathab.com to see prices based on your specific group size.



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Dates & Pricing Summary:

Prices:
From \$13795

Group Size:
Limited to 12
Travelers

Physical Requirements:
Moderate

The Wild Side of China: A Nature Odyssey Dates, Pricing & Info

Meet Pandas Up Close & Search for Rare Wildlife on Remote Nature Reserves

2025 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Oct 11, 2025	Oct 22, 2025	Habitat Club Pricing Available Fall Foliage Season
Oct 18, 2025	Oct 29, 2025	Fall Foliage Season
Oct 25, 2025	Nov 5, 2025	Habitat Club Pricing Available Fall Foliage Season
Nov 1, 2025	Nov 12, 2025	Fall Foliage Season

2026 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Mar 23, 2026	Apr 3, 2026	Wildflower Season
Apr 7, 2026	Apr 18, 2026	Wildflower Season
Apr 14, 2026	Apr 25, 2026	Wildflower Season



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Departure	Return	Notes
Oct 10, 2026	Oct 21, 2026	Fall Foliage Season
Oct 12, 2026	Oct 23, 2026	Fall Foliage Season
Oct 24, 2026	Nov 4, 2026	Fall Foliage Season
Nov 2, 2026	Nov 13, 2026	Fall Foliage Season



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Pricing

2025 Prices

Mouse over or tap dates above to view prices for specific departure dates.

➤ **Trip Price**
\$13795 to \$13995



Single Occupancy: For a single room add \$1995. **Click here** to learn how you can avoid the single supplement.

Deposit: \$500 per person (nonrefundable)

Make It Private: **View pricing** to take this trip privately with just you and your select travel companions on our Wild Side of China adventure.

Trip prices are per person based on double occupancy and are given in U.S. dollars.

Please read our Payment & Refund Policy here.

2026 Prices

Mouse over or tap dates above to view prices for specific departure dates.

➤ **Trip Price**
\$13795 to \$14095

Single Occupancy: For a single room add \$1995. **Click here** to learn how you can avoid the single supplement.

Deposit: \$500 per person (nonrefundable)

Make It Private: **View pricing** to take this trip privately with just you and your select travel companions on our Wild Side of China adventure.

Trip prices are per person based on double occupancy and are given in U.S. dollars. **Please read our**

Payment & Refund Policy here.

Included

Trip price includes: Accommodations, services of Nat Hab's professional Expedition Leader(s) and local guides, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on final day, some alcoholic beverages, some gratuities, still camera fees, airport transfers on Day 1 and final day, passage aboard the bullet train from Xi'an to Guangyuan, all activities and entrance fees, all taxes, permits and service fees.

Not Included

Travel to and from the start and end point of your trip, some alcoholic beverages, some gratuities, passport and visa fees, optional activities, items of a personal nature (phone calls, laundry and internet, etc.), required medical evacuation insurance, optional travel protection insurance.



Physical Requirements

Moderate

In order to participate in this trip, you must be able to walk unassisted (without the use of walking aids) at a steady pace for a minimum of two miles over uneven terrain. While this is the minimum consecutive distance, you must also be prepared for a daily cumulative total of up to five miles per day. On a couple of these active days we will be at altitudes exceeding 10,000 feet above sea level. Our itinerary involves daily walks or hikes of varied lengths over pavement, boardwalks and dirt forest trails that can be muddy, slippery and uneven with roots and rocks (note that all walks can be more difficult to navigate during inclement weather). Some activities involve walking up and down hills, including our visits to the panda bases and the golden monkey nature reserve. Our excursions in Wild Panda Nature Reserve and the Rilong area may require climbing multiple sets of stairs, many without handrails. The trip also involves several walking transfers through crowded train stations, many very early morning starts and long, full days of activities with little down time, all of which can be tiring. Some drives between locations are long (6-7 hours or longer depending on local conditions) and occur on winding roads that are often somewhat rough. During outings, while we will stop at the cleanest and most modern bathroom facilities available, there will often be times when Asian-style squat toilets in basic (and sometimes dirty) local facilities are our only option. Our local assistant will carry a portable toilet seat on legs for those guests who have difficulty squatting.

Important Information About This Trip

Among many travelers, China tends to be known more for its history and culture than its nature. But we focus on the natural treasures most visitors miss, including an in-depth experience with the pandas of Sichuan province and a remote, rarely visited wildlife reserve where wild giant pandas live and breed, as well as a host of other rare animals and birds. Our staff who helped create the itinerary commented: "This itinerary trades time spent in polluted air, traffic, crowds and airports for beautiful, pristine mountain country. But we don't always have 5-star restaurants or services, and English-speaking locals and hotel staff do not exist in many areas. Parts of the trip are more rustic, but the nature rewards are so worth it!"

That said, however, **it's important to note that there is a fundamental difference between the wildlife experience in China and what you would experience on a typical African safari**, for instance. Terrain here is heavily forested, and while wildlife abounds in natural areas, animals are not always easy to see or photograph. Many are expertly camouflaged or hidden within the vegetation, making them challenging to spot. To date, we have never seen a giant panda in the wild, as they are exceptionally elusive. But rangers have seen them, and we have seen signs of them, including chewed bamboo and scat. Guests should not come to China *expecting* to see wild pandas, but it is exhilarating nonetheless to know we are in their midst. Weather can also affect wildlife sightings, and when it is inclement, animals may be more likely to take cover in the deep forest. However, our itinerary is carefully designed to capitalize on the very best opportunities to see rare Chinese wildlife, maximizing your chances. Our seasoned Expedition Leaders and local guides are experts at locating wildlife—and we encourage our guests to understand that the privilege of stepping into a wild, untouched world inside China is a reward in itself.

We do have multiple opportunities to see giant pandas up close, though—a highlight of our trip. These encounters occur not in the wild, but at China's panda research bases where the pandas live within a constructed setting that contains or mimics elements of their natural habitat. While the environment is more zoo-like, it provides a rare chance for hours of observing many pandas at close range, a privilege very few people get to enjoy. It's a moving opportunity not available anywhere else but Sichuan.



Mandatory Insurance

Since the areas we travel to on this trip are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we require medical evacuation insurance for our guests' safety. If you decline the medical evacuation insurance coverage offered by Natural Habitat, we request that you send us documentation of the independent coverage you have selected. We will add the cost of a medical evacuation policy to your tour invoice until you provide our office with proof of coverage including your insurance company's name, contact number and your individual policy number. Thank you for understanding that our policy exists exclusively in the interest of our guests' safety.

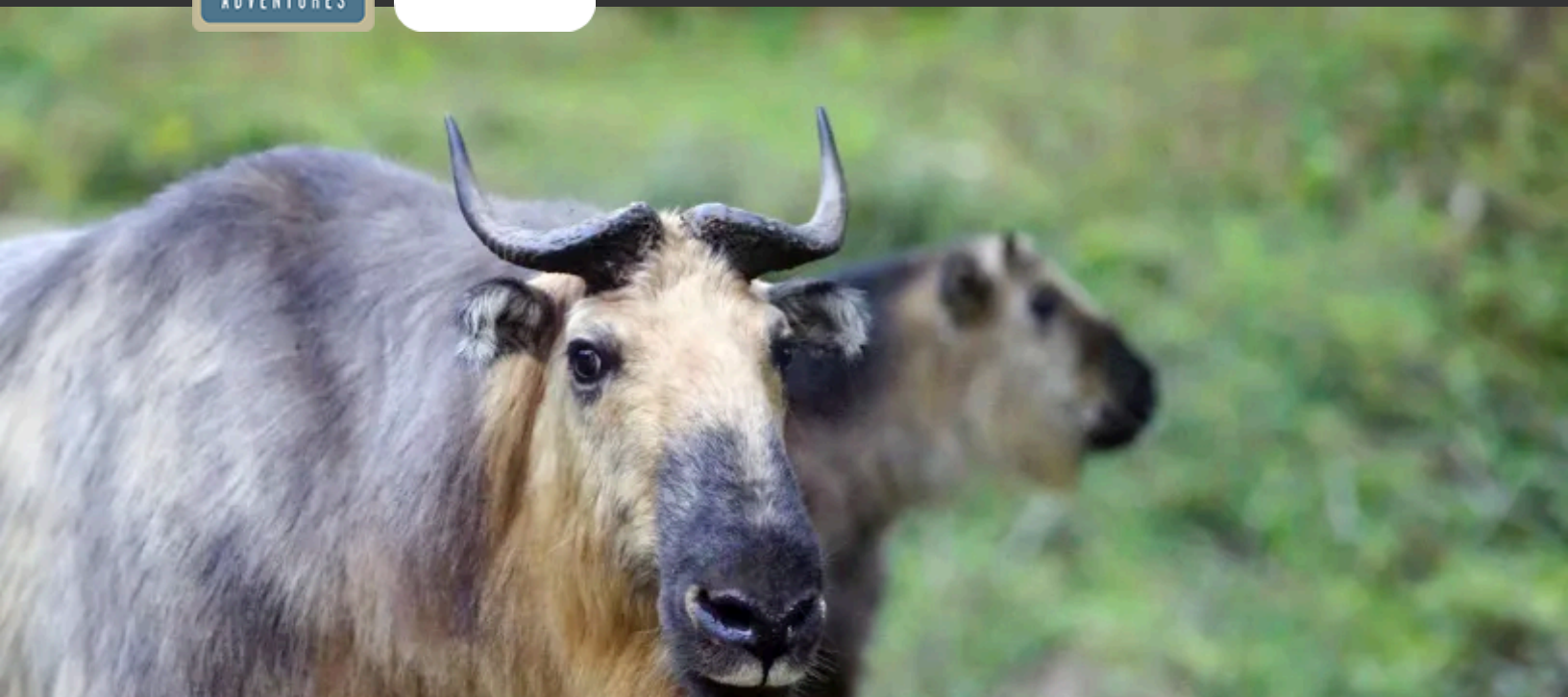
Getting There & Getting Home

Arrive in Xi'an by 9 am on Day 1 in order to participate in activities beginning at 11:30 am. You are free to depart Chengdu anytime on the final day. We recommend Chengdu Tianfu International Airport (TFU) for your departure flights.

We can best serve you if our Natural Habitat Adventures Travel Desk makes your reservations, as our staff is intimately familiar with the special requirements of these programs and can arrange the most efficient travel. Please call us at 800-543-8917. Note that while we offer you the best possible rates available to us on airfare and additional nights' accommodations, you may find special web rates or better fares online.



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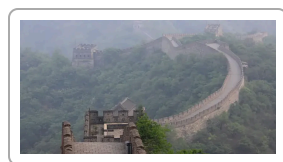


Extension Details:

Beijing & the Great Wall
Extension
\$2495

The Wild Side of China: A Nature Odyssey Extensions

Meet Pandas Up Close & Search for Rare Wildlife on Remote Nature Reserves



Beijing & the Great Wall Extension

Don't miss a chance to walk along the 2,000 year-old Great Wall and experience a taste of China's vibrant capital—discover its dynamic history, stroll through a night market and dine on Peking duck.

\$2495 (+air)



Natural Habitat & WWF: Discovering Our Planet Together

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WWF's membership travel program is operated by Natural Habitat Adventures (Nat Hab). To date, Nat Hab has provided more than \$6 million in support of WWF's mission and will continue to give 1% of gross sales plus \$175,000 annually through 2028. WWF® and ©1986 Panda Symbol are owned by WWF. All rights reserved.