

Changes for pandas

Outlying Areas

by Ray Kosarin

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contributing travel editor

Last week it cost \$2, on top of the regular \$2.50 zoo admission, to see the giant pandas at the Toledo Zoo. This week there is no \$2 fee.

A U.S. District Court judge has granted a preliminary injunction sought by the World Wildlife Fund and the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums; both groups object to any commercialization of the giant pandas and want them returned to China.

Michigan panda lovers have already been told that their request to bring pandas to Detroit has been denied.

If you want to see the pandas, Toledo is probably your best bet.

Le Le and Nan Nan are well worth the hour-plus that it takes to drive to Toledo, but there are a few things you should know before you go.

A large stretch of Interstate-75 is torn up south of Monroe, so plan ahead. From the western suburbs, take US-23 south to I-75, or take I-75 to US-24 (which is Telegraph Road—see Detroit Road) and follow that into Toledo. If you are closer to I-75, take that but get off at Monroe and follow US-24 into town.

Follow the highway signs to the zoo. Parking is \$2 a car around the zoo, or you can take a \$1 a person shuttle from either the shopping malls or downtown. The closest mall to the northern entrance to town is Franklin Park Mall.

WHY ALL this fuss about a great black and white beast? The giant panda was recorded in the Shijing, the Book of Songs, 1,000 years ago, but it is only 120 years since the western world discovered the bear and went panda-crazy. In those days, the great 'explorers' were naturalists like Pere Armand David of France, who brought home the first existing description of pandas from the mountains of central China.

Kermitt and Theodore Roosevelt Jr. went east with their hunting rifles in 1928 and brought the first panda skin back to America; it went to the Field Museum in Chicago.

Chicago also got the first live panda when Ruth Harkness brought Su-Lin and later Mei-Mei to the Brookfield Zoo in the late 1930s. Her rival Floyd Tangier Smith captured six of the great mythical beasts, one of which ended up in the St. Louis Zoo.

Everybody wanted the giant panda. The Bronx Zoo got Pandora, who created a sensation at the 1939 New

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York World's Fair; later Madame Chiang Kai-shek gave the Bronx Zoo Pan-deo and Pand-dah as thanks for U.S. aid to China.

Then World War II closed the panda business down.

BY 1946, the Chinese were declaring the panda on the verge of extinction and by 1961 the panda became the symbol of wildlife conservation for the World Wildlife Fund. Four natural reserves were established to protect the great beasts in their bamboo forests. A few pandas were still given as gifts; that's how Ling Ling and Hsiao Hsiao got to the National Zoo in Washington.

It's a fine thing when the whole world watches your sex life, but that is what has happened to Ling Ling and Hsiao Hsiao, who can't quite get it together to produce offspring.

About 40 baby pandas have been born, most by artificial insemination; few have survived.

In 1981 the giant panda was given full protection, which effectively stopped the trade in living pandas. The Chinese recently sentenced a pair of poachers who killed two pan-

das to life imprisonment.

There is still a loan plan, which is how the living pandas found their way to the Calgary Zoo during the 1986 winter Olympics, to San Diego and Busch Gardens this winter, and to the Toledo Zoo for 100 days of 1988 summer, more if they get an extension.

Scientists have been arguing for 100 years about whether the giant panda is a member of the bear family. Pere Armand David named it Ursus melanoleucus, or black and white bear. His assistant called it Alluropoa, or panda-foot.

Later, it was decided that the giant panda was really related to the 'lesser' or red panda, part of the racoon family. Now they've almost decided that Pere David was right in the first place; it's a bear!

The pandas are great fun, but they aren't the only animals in the Toledo Zoo. Don't miss the only hippopotamus in the world, where you can stand with your nose against the glass of an underwater pool and watch the hippo cavort beside you.

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