



Discovering Our Planet Together



The Wild Side of China: A Nature Odyssey

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



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Trip Details:

Days:
12 Days

Price:
From \$12495
(+ Air)

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 rarely seen panda habitat, up-close encounters with pandas, and Chinese nature at its most entrancing. We also 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 at three world-renowned panda research centers—plus an exclusive opportunity to volunteer in their care

Special permits allow us into a remote, rarely visited national wildlife sanctuary where highly elusive wild pandas live and breed freely

Get close-up photos of 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:

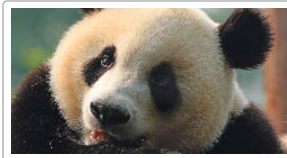
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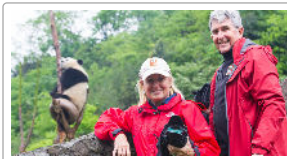
The Wild Side of China: A Nature Odyssey Itineraries

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



Wild Side of China Itinerary

Delve into China's lesser-known nature enclaves, including wilderness habitat and panda research bases that are home to some of the world's most endangered wildlife.



Wild Side of China Photo Itinerary

As you visit rarely seen parts of China, photograph stunning wilderness and uncommon wildlife, including giant panda, golden snub-nosed monkeys, takin and more.



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Itinerary At A Glance

Day 1

Xi'an, China / Shaanxi History Museum Tour

Day 2

Xi'an—Terracotta Army

Day 3

Qing Xi Village Visit / Wild Panda Nature Reserve

Days 4 & 5

Exploring the Wild Panda Nature Reserve

Day 6

Wild Panda Nature Reserve / Golden Monkey Nature Reserve / Pingwu

Day 7

Dujiangyan

Day 8

Dujiangyan Panda Base—Volunteer Opportunity / Jeizi Town

The Wild Side of China: A Nature Odyssey Wild Side of China Itinerary

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

Day 1: Xi'an, China / Shaanxi History Museum Tour

Arrive in the ancient imperial capital of Xi'an, one of China's earliest regions to be settled, and transfer to our sleek hotel located a short walk away from the Bell Tower. 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. After lunch on your own, we'll visit the Shaanxi History Museum, home to many of the treasures that have been unearthed from Xi'an's 1,000-year rein as China's leading city. The museum is renowned for its impressive collection of bronze wares, pottery figures and mural paintings in Tang tombs. Enjoy our first chance to savor a Chinese-style meal at a welcome dinner this evening.





Itinerary At A Glance

Day 9

Gengda Wolong Panda Base / Rilong

Day 10

Rilong—Shuangqiao Gou

Day 11

Dujiangyan Panda Valley / Chengdu

Day 12

Chengdu / Depart

Day 2: Xi'an—Terracotta Army

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 world's most remarkable archaeological discoveries. Consisting of 8,000 life-size soldiers, 100 chariots and 600 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. Later today, we take a walk atop Xi'an's ancient wall built in 200 B.C., one of the oldest and best-preserved in China, and wander through the evocative Muslim Quarter, founded by Persian and Arab traders who traveled the Silk Road 1,300 years ago.

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. Just beyond the village 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.

Days 4 & 5: Exploring the Wild Panda Nature Reserve

Our focus for two exciting days is a 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. The reserve also harbors more than 1,200 takin among its 430 different mammal species, 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 their midst is exhilarating.

Within the sanctuary, we also search 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. Night walks may reveal nocturnal creatures such as leopard cat, civet and hog-nosed badger. We can often observe them from the many remote roads and trails we explore, although dense vegetation and weather may affect our sightings.



Day 6: Wild Panda Nature Reserve / Golden Monkey Nature Reserve / Pingwu

Depart this morning on an overland journey along the scenic Fujiang River, traveling into the Min Mountains. En route, we pass the ancient town once known as Longzhou, the "prefecture of dragon" now known as Pingwu. This area is famous for a high density of wild pandas that live within its jurisdiction, though they are very rarely seen. We pass 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.

This afternoon we reach 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. This evening, return to Pingwu to spend the night.

Day 7: Dujiangyan

A scenic drive 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'll pass through Mianyang, known as Fujun in ancient times, with a 2,200-year history that spans the Qin and Han dynasties. We'll 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 hot pot dinner this evening, then rest in Dujiangyan at an elegant new resort hotel.



Day 8: Dujiangyan Panda Base—Volunteer Opportunity /Jeizi Town

Today provides chances for close-up views of China's beloved giant pandas on a visit to Dujiangyan Panda Base. Opened in 2013 with the arrival of 10 pandas, this site 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. A highlight of our time is a special opportunity to volunteer in their care (though it is not guaranteed and depends on the status of the pandas at the time of our visit). Conditions permitting, we'll have the chance to interact with pandas at close range as we help their keepers care for them, including tasks such as preparing their food and cleaning enclosures.

This afternoon, stroll back in time in the elegant 1,000-year-old Jiezi Town—a contrast of water, stone and city life that is sure to captivate your imagination. Located at the foot of Fengqi Mountain with the Weijiang River flowing through it, the historic old town is revered for its ancient Qing-dynasty paved streets lined with shops and houses, the Guangyan Buddhist temple, 65-foot-tall millennium ginkgo trees and the Ziku pagoda with its legend of the white snake carved into the highest layers.

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. You'll have an opportunity for close-up photos of giant pandas in this natural habitat that features a striking backdrop of mountains. Traveling west, we head for 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: Rilong—Shuangqiao Gou

Early risers may catch the sunrise behind the peaks in Rilong, a vista touted 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 snow-capped 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 Jiujiu Lake, which is actually a group of four seasonal lakes and nine perennial ones—the legendary bathing pools for the “four sisters.”

Day 11: Dujiangyan Panda Valley / Chengdu

Head back to Dujiangyan, where we'll have the chance to visit Dujiangyan Panda Valley. This is a new 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. You'll see many red pandas here as well. This evening, celebrate our adventures at a festive farewell dinner.

Day 12: Chengdu / Depart

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



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Itinerary At A Glance

- Day 2**
Xi'an—Terracotta Army
- Day 3**
Wild Panda Nature Reserve
- Days 4 & 5**
Exploring the Wild Panda Nature Reserve
- Day 6**
Wild Panda Nature Reserve / Golden Monkey Nature Reserve / Pingwu
- Day 7**
Dujiangyan
- Day 8**
Dujiangyan Panda Base—Volunteer Opportunity /Jeizi Town
- Day 9**
Gengda Wolong Panda Base / Rilong

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Itinerary At A Glance

Day 10
Rilong—Shuangqiao Gou

Day 11
Dujiangyan Panda Valley /
Chengdu

Day 12
Chengdu / Depart

Day 3: Wild Panda Nature Reserve

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Bring your longest lens for possible photos of Tibetan and rhesus macaques, golden and Sichuan takin, musk deer, muntjac, serow, wild boar, blue sheep, and, more rarely, endangered moon bears and red pandas. Birding is superb with more than 150 species in the reserve—the elegant golden pheasant is a prize. Night walks may reveal nocturnal creatures such as leopard cat, civet and hog-nosed badger. We can often observe them from the many remote roads and trails we explore, although dense vegetation and weather may affect our sightings.



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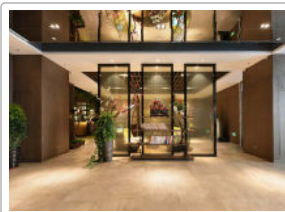
Accommodation Details:

- Meihao Lizhi Hotel Xi'an
- Wild Panda Reserve Hotel
- Jiuzhou Jindu Hotel
- Balan International Hotel
- Rilong Lotus Flower Hotel
- Shangri-La 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



Meihao Lizhi Hotel Xi'an

Enjoy a sophisticated hotel in the ancient imperial capital of Xi'an, located within sight of the scenic Drum Tower and a short walk away from the Muslim Quarter and the Bell Tower.



Wild Panda Reserve Hotel

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

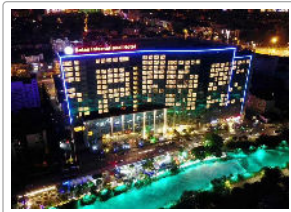


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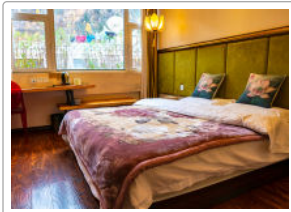
Jiuzhou Jindu Hotel

Located near the Bao'en Temple in Pingwu, settle in to a comfortable modern room, then relax in the outdoor pool or retreat to the teahouse as a respite from your travels.



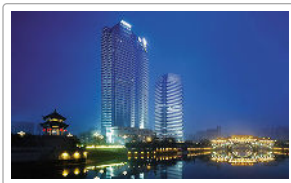
Balan International Hotel

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.



Rilong Lotus Flower Hotel

Feel the essence of Rilong's local character while staying at this simple but charming hotel with comfortable accommodations overlooking mountain peaks that rise in the distance.



Shangri-La Hotel

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.



We Show You the Natural China Most People Never See!

Google “trips to China” and you’ll find plenty that will show you 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. Natural Habitat holds special permits that grant us access into a nature sanctuary that few Westerners—and very few local tourists—ever see. With Nat Hab, you’ll trade the time you’d spend in 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 the panda immersion we do, 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 Enjoy a Rare Volunteer Opportunity with Pandas

At Dujiangyan Panda Base, you’ll have an optional chance for a volunteer experience in which you’ll help with aspects of the pandas’ care. This could involve preparing their food, cleaning enclosures, and other tasks that will place you directly into the daily activities of the pandas’ caregivers at this research base. Please note we cannot guarantee that this opportunity will always be available.

3 Enjoy 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 an 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’ll have better chances to find other rare and beautiful 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.



4 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.

5 Our Small Groups Go Places Larger Groups Can't

Because we limit this trip to approximately 12 guests, we're able to take you into places 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).

6 Travel with Two Guides

Our China trips benefit from the expertise 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." We don't know of any other China tour operator that provides this optimal combination of interpretive guiding, cultural expertise and personalized attention.

7 Experience Traditional Tibetan Culture

Our travels include an overland traverse along the edge of the sprawling Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, where small villages, prayer flags and chortens dot the landscape. We'll learn more about this deeply traditional culture, which offers a dramatic counterpoint to the urban Chinese setting of Chengdu.

8 Enjoy Outstanding Regional Cuisine

While nature may be your primary interest, food lovers will be thrilled by the culinary delights offered on this trip. Sichuan is famed for its piquant cuisine, and we take full advantage of opportunities to try 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 any given meal (though be sure to make special needs known to us ahead of time). And never fear that you'll be eating only in hotels or touristy restaurants: we make a point to choose locations popular with local people, for a truly authentic Chinese dining experience that Western visitors will also enjoy.

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.



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.

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 China nature adventure on offer. Here are some of the advantages when you Make It Private:

- 1 Your private group of family or friends
- 2 Your own private Expedition Leader and local Chinese naturalist guide
- 3 Private activities in Tangjiahe
- 4 Exclusive access to a remote wildlife reserve via special permits
- 5 Private road transfers throughout
- 6 Surprisingly affordable pricing

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.



Discovering Our Planet Together



Dates & Pricing Summary:

Prices:
From \$12495
(+ Air)

Location:

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

2022 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Oct 8, 2022	Oct 19, 2022	Fall Foliage Season
Oct 11, 2022	Oct 22, 2022	Special Photo Departure Fall Foliage Season
Oct 15, 2022	Oct 26, 2022	Fall Foliage Season
Oct 22, 2022	Nov 2, 2022	Fall Foliage Season
Oct 24, 2022	Nov 4, 2022	Special Photo Departure Fall Foliage Season
Oct 29, 2022	Nov 9, 2022	Fall Foliage Season
Nov 5, 2022	Nov 16, 2022	Fall Foliage Season

2023 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Mar 23, 2023	Apr 3, 2023	Wildflower Season



Discovering Our Planet Together

Dates & Pricing Summary:

Prices:
From \$12495
(+ Air)

Location:

Group Size:
Limited to ~12
Travelers

Physical Requirements:
Moderate

Departure	Return	Notes
Mar 29, 2023	Apr 9, 2023	Wildflower Season
Apr 2, 2023	Apr 13, 2023	Wildflower Season
Apr 9, 2023	Apr 20, 2023	Special Photo Departure Wildflower Season
Apr 13, 2023	Apr 24, 2023	Special Photo Departure Wildflower Season
Apr 16, 2023	Apr 27, 2023	Wildflower Season
Oct 7, 2023	Oct 18, 2023	Fall Foliage Season
Oct 10, 2023	Oct 21, 2023	Special Photo Departure Fall Foliage Season
Oct 15, 2023	Oct 26, 2023	Fall Foliage Season
Oct 19, 2023	Oct 30, 2023	Fall Foliage Season
Oct 22, 2023	Nov 2, 2023	Special Photo Departure Fall Foliage Season
Oct 29, 2023	Nov 9, 2023	Fall Foliage Season



Pricing

2022 Prices

- **Trip Price**
\$12795 to \$12995
- **Special Photo Departure Price (see details)**
\$12795 to \$12995

Single Occupancy: For a single room add \$2095.

Deposit: \$500 per person (nonrefundable)

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

2023 Prices

- **Trip Price**
\$12995 to \$13295
- **Special Photo Departure Price (see details)**
\$12995 to \$13295

Single Occupancy: For a single room add \$2195.

Deposit: \$500 per person (nonrefundable)

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



Group Size

Limited to ~12 Travelers

A very important feature of our China adventure is the limited group size, as nature expeditions are best experienced with a small group of travelers.

Take this trip on a private basis, traveling exclusively with your immediate family, multi-generational family or group of friends. for details and pricing.

Included

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, most gratuities, still camera fees, airport transfers on Day 1 and final day, 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. 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 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.

On custom or private departures with smaller groups, our ability to accommodate varying levels of physical abilities or interests is limited, since these trips are staffed with a single Expedition Leader who may be assisted, pending availability, by local guides.

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. Expedition Leader Brad Josephs, who helped create our itinerary, made this comment about it: "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 are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we strongly recommend that all guests have, at minimum, medical evacuation insurance for this program. While this is not required, we make this strong suggestion in the interest of our guests' safety. We recommend that your chosen independent insurance plan includes at least \$250,000 in medical evacuation coverage.

To protect your investment and to provide peace of mind while you travel, we also strongly recommend purchasing comprehensive travel insurance. Plans may cover everything from medical treatment to trip cancellations and delays and lost luggage. Please contact our office if you would like more information about the medical evacuation and comprehensive travel insurance policies we offer by calling 800-543-8917.

Getting There & Getting Home

Arrive in Xi'an by 9 am on Day 1 in order to participate in activities beginning at 1 pm. You are free to depart Chengdu anytime on the final day. 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.



Natural Habitat & WWF: Discovering Our Planet Together

Natural Habitat Adventures • PO Box 3065 • Boulder, CO 80307

USA & Canada: 800-543-8917 • International: +1-303-449-3711

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Since 2003, Nat Hab has donated more than \$4.5 million to WWF's global conservation efforts and will continue to give 1% of gross sales plus \$150,000 annually through 2023 in support of WWF's mission to conserve nature and reduce the most pressing threats to the diversity of life on Earth. WWF® and ©1986 Panda Symbol are owned by WWF. All rights reserved.