

Chengdu Time



Special Interest Articles:

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Panda by Maddie



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When we were in China we went to Chengdu and saw the Pandas at the Panda Base. The Panda Base was made to breed the Pandas and let them back out into the wild. When we went there we were going to hold a Panda but we couldn't because the Pambassadors were there. A Pambassador is a spokesperson in China for a Panda Bear.

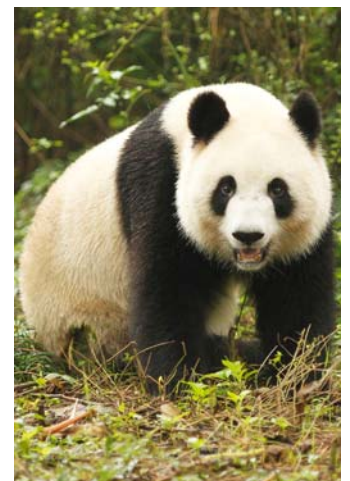
Next we went and saw the Pandas and it was cool because they could climb up branches to get a little leaf but it was neat. But

another Panda would explore very slowly. Two other Pandas just sat there and ate Bamboo (they were very lazy). After we saw the big Pandas we went and saw the baby Pandas. There were babies that had fur on them and they were in a crib. There was a guy taking care of the little ones and help them go to the bathroom. The Panda Base was very fun because bears are my favorite animal. Also because they are trying to protect the Pandas.

After we held a Panda we went to the Red Pandas. The Red Pandas were really cool because they were very active and

sneaky. But they are very good and fast climbers.

Two days later we went back to the park to hold a Panda. When they brought the Panda out we had to wait our turn because people were in front of us. When it was my turn to hold him, he was surprisingly big so it was hard to hold him, but it was really fun. The Panda was the same size as me and his fur was soft and coarse. While the Panda was on my lap they kept him busy by feeding him Bamboo shoots with honey.



Local Hospitality



Model on the runway.

We stayed at a brand new 5 star hotel called the Wyndham and for \$125 a night we had the top floor two bedroom suite with 20 foot ceilings. Now in a place like New York or Las Vegas this same room would run over \$2,000 a night but in the far reaches of China you only pay local prices.

It seemed as we were the only ones on the floor which had its own concierge and lounge with snacks and drinks served all day. Everywhere we went in the hotel someone was there to help us. But the hospitality did not stop there as the hotel manager came to us at dinner and asked if we could join him and his wife to see a fashion show that night in downtown. Who were we to decline such

an offer. The show was a lot of fun and we also had time to see some of the more hip new trendy areas of the city.

The next day I asked if he could arrange for us to visit one of the new factories being built in the area by large multinational corporations. In no time at all we lucky enough to get a tour of the Molex factory down the street that employs 7,000 people.

Molex is one of the largest manufacturers of electrical connectors that are in everything from cars to cell phones. The factory itself was very large and impressive with 260 assembly lines and hundreds of high tech machines for molding. But for me it was interesting to learn that all the design and development of new products is done right here in Chengdu, China.



Dinner time



In China you will have the

option of eating in a private dining room at the fancy restaurants. Now these rooms are not like you would expect at your local Chinese place but instead have a series of added features.

First there is a private bathroom on one side of the room and on the other is a small room for the waitress and busboy to

hang out in so they are at you beck and call but yet out of sight. The amenities do not stop there as there is a resting area with a couch and chairs so you can stretch out and digest if needed and of course a big flat screen TV built into the wall in front of the dining table. If only they had a steak and baked potatoes on the menu!!!

If by Rail



No journey would be complete without a short stint traveling on the rails. You always get a different perception of how life is when you take the time to ride on a local train.

We decided to take on the length of track between Xi'an and Chengdu which was a good 550km ride. The journey that would take us through mountain ranges and across valleys would last over 16 hours so we decided to take the night trains.

The station at Xi'an was enormous and in a state of organized chaos, so we hire 2 porters to carry our luggage to the train. These guys being somewhere in their 60's and were moving faster than we could go while having 2 bags each

strapped to their backs. Once at the train, each car had its own conductor at the door to check the tickets and get us situated.

Now the room was lacking just that "room" but with 16 hours in front of you a small bed is a real treat. Lisa had packed some peanut butter and jelly so we made use of it for our



late lunch as we departed the station. But the real treat was the local cuisine that was available for dinner in the dining car and what made it even better was that we really did not know what we were getting until it was served. But as with a lot of food in China if you have a good supply of steamed rice then you will be able to mask whatever disgusting food you are eating.

When you buy a first class ticket in China they will put you in the first class coach which for some reason has no windows that will open, keep in mind that in third class you could jump outside the windows open so wide. Then the highly intelligent train manager will put the smoking car in front of your car so all night you get a fresh supply of cigarette smoke and not any smoke but Chinese cigarette smoke.



"4 bedroom suite on a Chinese train."



"Maddie on the move."

Happy Valley

It would seem that at some point on every trip we end up going to a local amusement park. In fact I have been to enough of them around the world to write a book about them. Where ever we may be they all seem to have some of the same things like looping roller coasters, cotton candy and funny mascots walking around in furry costumes.

While we were in Chengdu we visited Happy Valley which is sort of a Magic Mountain without any people. Yes you heard right there were no people in a country with too many people. I do not know the reason why no one was there and the cost was equal to about

\$9 US dollars so it was very reasonably priced. The lines were so short that we ended up waiting for people to come because they would not let a ride go until it was full - now how is that for a reversal.

One of my favorite parts of

the park was an action kung fu show. The story was some Chinese soldiers picking on villagers and the local kung fu masters came to the rescue. The really cool part was they used real explosives and large fireballs during the show.



"Turtle on the loose."

Turtle Soup

Walking by a person selling some small turtles for about a dollar each we made the decision to buy 2 of them. We brought them back to the hotel and Maddie turned the room

into an obstacle course. After much deliberation they were awarded the names of Yin and Yang which pretty much matched their personalities.

We bought them with the plan of setting them free in the pond located within the garden behind our hotel. It was the perfect spot being well maintained and full of life. They were the best pets ever and that's because we had them for only 48 hours.

We let them go and I'm sure some day they will be on the menu at the hotel.

