



PRESS RELEASE 17 February 2018

The Ähtäri Zoo Snow Panda House open to the public

Saturday 17 February is a historic day, when the Ähtäri Zoo Snow Panda House opens to the public at 10 am. The panda couple Jīn Bǎobǎo and Huā Bào, a.k.a. Lumi and Pyry, arrived in Finland on 18 January. Their month of quarantine in Ähtäri went well, and the pandas have got used to their indoor enclosures. Now they are allowed to go outside and play in the snow.

The Snow Panda House was finished in record time, and it was delivered on a turnkey contract by Lemminkäinen Talo Oy. Construction began in early 2017, and the house was finished in December 2017. The area of the Snow Panda House is ca. 2,400m², the site covers over 10,000m², and the outside enclosure is ca. 4,000m². The building provides the pandas with private rest areas, indoor and outdoor enclosures, and various stimuli such as climbing facilities and water elements. In the welcoming indoor facilities, the public can follow the panda couple's life through large glass walls. The building also houses a café and spacious terraces. The indoor conditions are equivalent to those inside a greenhouse. The humidity level is precisely defined and the temperature is controlled so the vegetation thrives and the pandas are able to behave as their species normally does. This is important to keep them happy and healthy. Also, the pandas' food needs to be stored in precisely defined conditions.

The panda project is a part of the Ähtäri Zoo's long-term Master Plan 2030 development programme. This is a system that strengthens Ähtäri Zoo's internationally recognised work in conserving endangered species and continues the strong development work of the leading Finnish destination for nature and family tourism.

During the quarantine period, the pandas got used to their new home, monitored by the Ähtäri Zoo's panda keeper Anna Palmroth and vet Heini Niinimäki. A Chinese vet and panda keeper have also been present.

"Everything has gone well, and they have eaten a lot of bamboo. They need 12 to 30 kg of it a day. The pandas also get panda cake and some carrots and apples. Adult pandas weigh between 90 and 150 kg. Jīn Bǎobǎo, a.k.a. Lumi, weighs a little over 100 kg, and Huā Bào, who is also called Pyry, weighs some 110 kg," says the vet Heini Niinimäki.

Visitor numbers set to increase

"The coming tourism seasons is expected to be very active, and we can already see that the season is being extended. As far as accommodation reservations and ticket sales development are concerned, the season seems to start earlier and end later. As early as the Helsinki Travel Fair, our sales personnel felt that the Ähtäri Zoo was an extremely desirable and interesting destination, as the arrival of the pandas coincided with that fair. We had prepared by bringing more brochures than usual, and still needed more. Foreign

travel agents have also been interested in Ähtäri tourism services, and we're co-operating more with them," says Jonna Pietilä, the CEO of Ähtäri Zoo. Tickets for Ähtäri Zoo are on sale at ahtarozoo.fi and lippu.fi. For the Snow Panda House, one-hour time slots are used, which means that when purchasing a ticket, visitors select the hour they plan to enter the Snow Panda House. Visitors can view the pandas for as long as they wish within opening hours. With the time slots, Ähtäri Zoo is able to guarantee a successful visit to the Snow Panda House even at the most popular times. Opening hours and ticket prices are available at ahtarizoo.fi.

Pictures, press releases and a video of the pandas playing in the snow are available here (<https://photos.app.goo.gl/K16Z35d8OYdkV7kn1>).

More information

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Ähtäri Zoo

Ähtäri Zoo was founded in 1973 and is the oldest natural zoo in Finland. There are presently over 50 species at the zoo, most of which are typical species of the coniferous forest zone. International animal conservation work is an important part of Ähtäri Zoo's operations. www.ahtarizoo.fi

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