

PANDAS ENTICE TOURISTS TO TOKYO



When the Ueno Zoo in Tokyo lost its favourite resident, Ling Ling the panda in 2008, many hearts were broken. However, the Japanese rejoice as earlier this year, a pair of new pandas arrived to their new home in Tokyo.

As a symbol of peace and warmer diplomatic relations, the Chinese president agreed to send the first giant panda to the Ueno Zoo in Tokyo in 1972. Ever since there has always been pandas there and **the attraction has become immensely popular. An additional million tourists came to visit the zoo** and when Ling Ling, the most popular resident of the zoo, passed away in 2008 many letters of grief and sympathy arrived. A month later, the Chinese president visited Japan and promised to lend another panda to the zoo.

The male Bili and female Xiannu arrived in Tokyo earlier this year causing excitement and much anticipation. **These five-year old pandas came from the China's Sichuan province, which is home to the majority of the world's last 1,500 pandas.** Even though they arrived late at night, a hoard of eager fans welcomed the two at the airport. The zoo itself wanted to arrange for a warm welcome and spent \$1, 1 million to refurbish their cage, installed a heated floor and a brand new playground to make sure Bili and Xiannu get all the comfort they deserve.

The pandas are a symbol of peace and international cooperation between the Chinese and Japanese. **The Tokyo government is renting the pandas for \$950,000 a year**, thus contributing to the reconstruction of Sichuan panda sanctuary as well as a special panda breeding project.

When Ling Ling died, there was a 0.5 million drop in tourist visitors and the Japanese hope that with the new pair, tourists will once again return. Chinese travelers are likely to grow in numbers and Japanese authorities want to make sure they encourage the Chinese to come for a visit.

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