






Sichuan's Mammals Tour

Destination: Sichuan Province, China **Season:** mid March – mid April

-  Expert guides throughout including a specialist team of rangers for Panda tracking
-  Spotlighting every morning and night in Rouergai & Tangjiahe Reserve
-  Hike and track in pristine Giant Panda habitat in Sichuan Province (SW China)
-  Excellent chances for Pallas's Cat, Chinese Mountain Cat & other rare mammals
-  Possibility for over 40 species of mammals including some real rarities

Dates:

Next group tour: 22nd Mar – 4th Apr 2024
Group tour: 3rd May – 16th May 2024

Private / Tailored Tour information:

This tour can be booked in two different times of year (1) anytime between the middle of March and the middle of April (this is the breeding season of giant pandas and when they are more active) and (2) November, which is when the pandas move lower down the mountainsides to avoid the heavy snowfall, (subject to availability). However please note that the above dates are only for the panda section of the trip.

Whilst we have a good success rate in filling tours we always suggest booking a private tour to avoid any disappointment.

The costs for a different group sizes (ranging from 1 – 6 are listed on the right, for people wanting to book private tours outside of our group tour dates); however for groups over 4/5 people we have to split the panda section of the trip into two locations. This is due to excess disturbance in the forest and the potential for forcing the pandas away.

We also have flexibility for the duration of trip you would like to book, if people would like to spend longer in some of these locations; that is possible, subject to availability.

There are also a couple of optional extensions that can be run in conjunction with trip (either at the start or the end), out most popular is a 1 night extension which visits a habituated troop of Golden Snub-nosed Monkey at Foping and another extension we can offer is up to Changqing in search of Snow Leopards as well as other high altitude Tibetan Plateau specialist species that are not found in the slightly lower in elevation region around Rouergai.

Prices (2024 season):

Group Tour (13 nights)
£3,995 per person
*single supplement £450

Overview

Day 1: Chengdu / Panda Spot

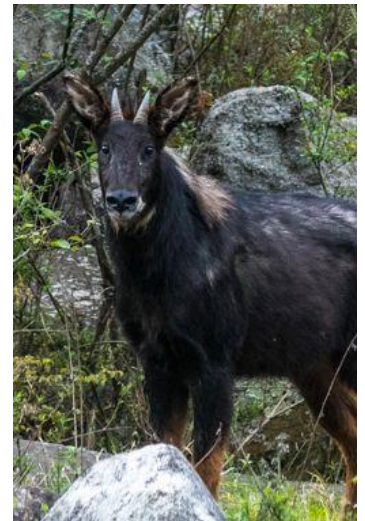
Days 2-8: Panda Spot

Day 9: Panda Spot / Rouergai

Days 10-11: Rouergai

Days 12-13: Tangjiahe NNR

Day 14: Chengdu





Tour Information

Introduction

When people think of China they rarely think of wildlife and if they do think of Chinese animals that inevitably think of giant pandas. This one species is so iconic and so famous around the world that it is hard to imagine them as wild animals that live a life completely removed from people, but in recent years more and more giant pandas are living wild lives away from the disturbance of people. This is testament to fantastic conservation work and we will be hopefully benefiting from this conservation work as we enter a huge bamboo ecosystem in the mountains of one of the last remaining wild giant panda habitats. By hiking in this forest we will be in prime panda habitat and will hopefully be rewarded with one of the rarest sights in nature.

However this is only the first of three very different habitats we will be exploring, from the bamboo zone we will travel to the edge of the Tibetan plateau and to the rocky and rugged wilderness of Ruoergai where typical high altitude species such as Pallas's cat and Chinese mountain cat live and then down into the forested mountains of Tangjiahe where musk deer, serow, gorals, badgers and bears live. We will spend a considerable amount of time exploring these habitats for wildlife and trying to see as many of these species as possible and hopefully get some rare species too.

You will be experiencing rural China at the end of winter, this is a time of year and locations which are not often visited by tourists. Everything from the food, culture, architecture you will encounter will differ from the typical Chinese imagery that most people have when they think of the superpower that China is nowadays and the ultra modern cities.

This is a unique tour that explores part of China that are rarely visited, to get a good idea of what to expect we recommend you read through the below information. We have outlined a detailed itinerary for the entire trip. However due to weather conditions the route and activities may vary once we get there, although we will endeavour to stick to the stated itinerary as much as possible. The most obvious deviation from the itinerary will come if a giant panda is seen early and seen well and if everything works out we can leave the bamboo zone and go in search of other species in other locations.

Our two tours in 2019 resulted in a total of 4 Giant Pandas being seen. Including watching a mother and cub in a tree for over 1 hour and a sighting of a male at 5m range!

The trip is split into 2 sections, the first is our unique wild panda tracking section. On this last trip we came very close to seeing a giant panda (the dung was still steaming) and we saw 2 red pandas. This was the first time since 2006 that anyone had gone looking specifically for giant pandas in the wild and so it was learning curve. We got closer than expected and hope to keep improving more and more with our future trips.

The second section is easier for wildlife observation and we saw 3 Pallas's cats, 3 Chinese mountain cats, Tibetan wolves and many more species. I will be finishing up the trip report in the coming week or so and can forward it to interested people.

First of all I ask for your discretion in this matter, as it is not technically allowed for foreigners to look for pandas in china. Which is why I have not advertised this trip overtly, but instead we have sent this brochure to people who have expressed an interest or we believe may be interested.

Despite looking for pandas not being technically allowed we are registered with the local police and forestry department in the panda habitat we will be targeting and we had official park rangers and an employee of the local panda centre with us, so we are not doing anything we shouldn't.

Itinerary

Day 1 **Chengdu / Our Panda Location**

Arrival & Travelling

Accommodation:

(Local Guest House)

Food:

Dinner is the only meal included today and is served at the hotel.

Transportation:

Private vehicle.

Today you will arrive into Chengdu and you will be met at the airport by your local guide and then depart the city and head to our panda location, the drive will take around 5-6 hours and depending on your arrival time (and local conditions - as there are two high passes to cross and snow can block the roads) we may overnight en-route and continue first thing in the morning. Either way it is a good idea to get a good nights sleep tonight as tomorrow we will head into the park and begin our quest for the elusive giant panda.



Days 2-8 **Our Panda Location**

Hiking & Panda Tracking

Accommodation:

(Local Guest House)

Food:

All of our meals will be served at the guest house or with a packed lunch or field snacks.

Transportation:

Walking.

For the next 7 full days we will hike the various trails in panda habitat, the forest here is enormous and there are many access points. We will select the best one with the help of our local guide who knows the area. Each day we will hike trails and scan for pandas in our attempt to see one of these elusive animals. There is a wealth of other life here including Chinese serow, Chinese goral, sambar, tufted deer, northern leopard cat, complex-toothed flying squirrel and Chinese hog badger as well as a large range of hardy winter birds including various pheasants. However as with most forests seeing much wildlife is difficult and nearly all of our time will be dedicated to looking for giant and red pandas.

We cannot include too much detail here as there is no fixed rule to what we will do each day, it is very much a play it by ear situation depending on panda movements and recent activity. What we can say is that each day will be long, there will be much hiking, the conditions are tough, temperatures in March can still be cold at night and in the shade and terrain rugged. However if you want to see a wild giant panda this is what is needed.

If we do encounter a giant panda early then we do not have to rough it in the forest, we can come back to the hotel and make other plans. There is certainly a lot of other wildlife to be seen around here, our first and major target is of course the panda but other species can be targeted if we get lucky.

Each day we will come back to the hotel for dinner and the night, preparing to travel back into the heart of panda habitat again tomorrow.

Also depending on the road conditions it is most likely we have to overnight in Wolong or Dujiangyan on the way to and from the panda location and our other destinations. This does not affect the time we have in the reserve, we have 5 full days and 2 half days dedicated to panda tracking.

Day 9 **Rouergai**

Travelling & Spotlighting

Accommodation:

Kai De Feng Hotel
(4* Hotel)

Food:

Breakfast will be served at the guest house and then lunch en route and dinner at the hotel.

Transportation:

Private vehicle & Walking.

Today we will make our way to Rouergai, which is located on the edge of the vast Tibetan plateau, the drive will take around 9 hours and along the way we will try and spot some species of birds including larger species like eastern cattle egret, Himalayan griffon, Himalayan buzzard, northern goshawk and various smaller species including white-browed tit-babblers, Sichuan tit and azure-winged magpies. After we arrive we will check in and then head out to see what wildlife we can see on the grasslands. After dark we will start spotlighting as we drive around looking for wildlife including Chinese mountain cat, Pallas's cat and Asiatic badger among others.

Days 10-11 **Rouergai**

Wildlife Watching

Accommodation:

Kai De Feng Hotel
(4* Hotel)

Food:

Breakfasts will be field breakfasts, lunches at the local restaurant and dinners at the hotel.

Transportation:

Private vehicle & Walking.

For the next two full days we will explore Rouergai further, with diurnal species of note including red foxes, Tibetan foxes, plateau pikas, marmots (if they are awake from hibernation), Siberian roe deer, Asian badger and possible (but harder to spot) Tibetan gazelle and Tibetan wolf.

Vultures such as Himalayan griffon and lammergeyer are also possible around here. Both during the day and at night there is a wealth of wildlife to be seen here and we will spend as much time as possible exploring to find as much as possible. A good degree of flexibility in where and what we eat is key when looking for wildlife both here and in Tangjiahe as we look to maximise our chances of seeing as much as possible.



Day 12 **Rouergai / Tangjiahe NNR**

Tracking & Wildlife Watching

Accommodation:

Tangjiahe Reserve Hotel (4* Hotel)

Food:

Your breakfast will be served at the hotel in Rouergai, with lunch en route and dinner will be at the new hotel in Tangjiahe.

Transportation:

Private Vehicle & Walking.

This morning will be our last chance for high altitude wildlife of the Tibetan plateau as we will depart and begin the drive to Tangjiahe (5-6 hours). Tangjiahe is a forested reserve and we will likely arrive there in the late afternoon and after dark we will have some spotlighting, there are many species that can be seen here including Chinese hog badger, Sichuan takin, Reeve's muntjac, Himalayan palm civet, wild boar and northern leopard cat which can be seen at night.

We will likely to get our hotel in the night and have a dinner before going back out into the park for spotlighting.

Day 13 **Tangjiahe National Nature Reserve**

Wildlife Watching

Accommodation:

Tangjiahe Reserve Hotel (4* Hotel)

Food:

All meals will be served at the hotel in between excursions into the reserve.

Transportation:

Private Vehicle & Walking.

Today is our last full day of wildlife watching and our only full day to explore the hillsides and forests of Tangjiahe. During the day we will be looking for wildlife such as squirrels, wild boar, Sichuan takins, Tibetan macaques and many species of birds, such as little forktails, brown dippers, crested kingfishers, black-throated tits and crested goshawks. One of our key targets here is the golden snub-nosed monkey. They used to be seen fairly regularly here, however last year they were only sighted on 25% of the trips here, but we will do what we can and March is a fairly good time for them.

We will also head out after dark and spotlight for other nocturnal species.

Day 14 **Chengdu**

Wildlife Watching & Travelling

Accommodation:

NA

Food:

Breakfast will be served at the hotel and lunch will be en route to Chengdu.

Transportation:

Walking & Private Vehicle.

This morning will be your final morning for wildlife watching and then after breakfast we will head out towards the city of Chengdu (6-7 hours), we recommend you to not book your return flights until late in the day or night or even better book the Chengdu Airport hotel for this night and then have your return flight for tomorrow. The hotel has free shuttle buses to the airport.

Your tour and all Royle Safaris services end upon transfer to the airport

Please note that the itinerary stated above is correct as our planned intentions for the tour. However adverse weather conditions and other local considerations can necessitate some modifications of the itinerary during the course of the tour; any changes will be made to make the best of the time, weather conditions and other constraints forced upon us and all changes will be made in conjunction with our terms and conditions.



Tour Inclusions

Absolutely everything mentioned in the above itinerary is included (except where it is expressly mentioned as an optional extra).

- All accommodation as mentioned above or of a similar standard as mentioned.
- All meals as mentioned in the itinerary; please note that some lunches and dinners are not included when staying in Chengdu in this itinerary.
- Bottled mineral or purified (boiled) water will be provided throughout and on request.
- Private vehicles for all transfers.
- English speaking local drivers and guides with years of experience in working in the areas we are travelling.
- Royle Safaris zoologist escort where available.
- Expert mammal guide.
- All fuel, tolls, taxes and other expenses relating to driving.
- All wildlife watching and cultural activities as mentioned in the itinerary.
- Entrance fees and permits to all locations for wildlife watching mentioned.
- Field guides will be available for reference whilst on the trip.

Tour Exclusions

Nearly everything you will need is included in the price you have already paid for the tour. However there are some things not included.

- International flights to and from the tour start and end points.
- Travel insurance including any fees that result from emergency medical or evacuation needs.
- Visa fees for entering the country(s).
- Vaccinations and any medication are not included.
- Any food other than the meals provided and mentioned in the above itinerary; please note that some lunches and dinners when staying in Chengdu are not included in this itinerary
- Some meals will include a drink (such as juice, tea & coffee at breakfast) but most soft drinks and alcohol are an extra expense.
- Any items of a personal nature are not included, such as souvenirs, medication, toiletries, laundry and phone calls.
- Tips are also not included. There is no hard and fast rule for tipping in China. However we would appreciate it, if you have been happy with the service of the guides then please tip a little something at the end of the complete excursion. For local guides we hire for individual activities please tip individually and also if there are tip boxes in restaurants, camps, lodges and hotels then these are generally used for tipping all of the staff.
- Any departure taxes which may be due when leaving are not included (but may be included in the cost of your flights).

Please refer to our Terms & Conditions (<http://www.royle-safaris.co.uk/terms-conditions/>) before booking any trips – email or paper copies of Terms & Conditions can be provided if needed