

Giant Pandas

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Giant Pandas only live in China, in the mountains of Sichuan Province, Gansu Province, and Shaanxi Province. Millions of years ago, there used to be lots of pandas, but now there are only about one thousand left. They live in mountain forests of bamboo and pine trees, which are always covered in clouds and rain.

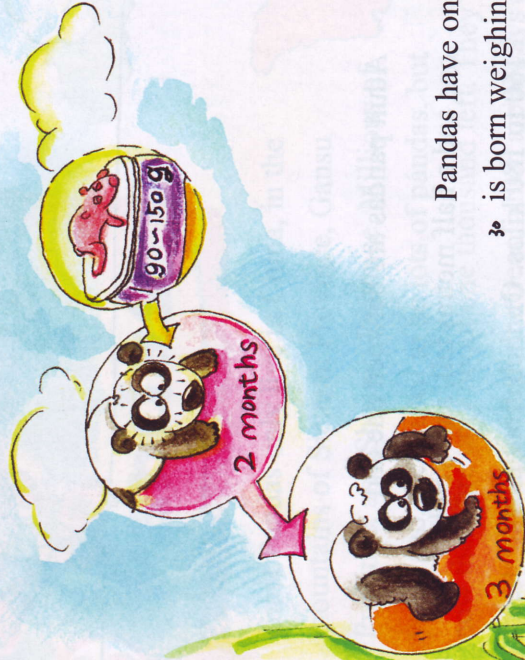


Pandas look like bears with black and white marks. Their ears, the hair around their eyes, and shoulders are black, but the rest of their body is white. They have thick woolly coats which help them keep warm. They are very good at climbing and hiding from people.



Adult pandas are between one and one and a half metres tall, and weigh 160 to 180 kilos. On their front paws they have a bone like a thumb, and this helps them hold bamboo stalks. Their teeth are very strong, so they can bite through the bamboo. They mainly eat bamboo, but also eat flowers, fish and mice. The panda is a very hungry animal and needs 10 to 20 kilos of food each day. It spends twenty hours eating every day.





Pandas have one cub a year, which
is born weighing 90 to 150 grams.

The panda mother carries the baby
panda with her at all times, even
when she sleeps and eats. The baby
panda cannot open its eyes until it
is two months old. It can't move
on its own until it is three months
old. When a cub is one year old, it
can live on its own.



A reserve is the name for
a safe place for animals.
There are eleven panda
reserves in China. But
it is still difficult for all
pandas to find enough
food. In 1999, a very
thin and hungry panda
walked into the yard of a
farmer in Shenxi village,
near Dujiangyan. The
farmer fed the panda
and told the police, and
the policemen took
the panda back to the
mountains. The farmer
was given a special prize
because he helped save
the panda.