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**Press release**

## **Flying home for Christmas**

**Pit and Paule leave Zoo Berlin | Last chance to visit Germany's first panda offspring**

At birth, the two pandas Pit and Paule weighed as much as a bar of chocolate and were dependent on their mother's all-round care. In the meantime, they not only weigh around 80 kg each, but will now go their own ways and start their journey to China. Until mid-December, guests can pay them a visit at Zoo Berlin.

"The birth of the first giant pandas in Germany was not only a personally moving experience, but also a highlight in my professional career as a zoo veterinarian and zoo director that nothing will easily eclipse," admits Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem. For all giant panda fans, this is now the last chance to visit the very first panda offspring in Germany once more and say goodbye. Until mid-December, the twins can be seen in the indoor enclosure, alternating with mother Meng Meng. It won't be too hard for the panda parents to say goodbye, as the panda teenagers and their mother have already been living separately for two years. "In their natural habitat, the animals are solitary," reports zoologist Dr Florian Sicks and adds: "As a rule, panda mothers and their offspring go their separate ways after about two years. From the age of five to six years, male pandas become sexually mature." The natural habitat of giant pandas is sparse deciduous and coniferous forests in Chinese mountain regions around Sichuan, Shaanxi and Guanzu provinces, mostly at an altitude of 1,500 to 3,000 metres. Unlike the brown bear, the giant panda does not hibernate because its food source, bamboo, is available all year round and also provides it with so little energy that it has to eat constantly. When temperatures are too cold, it migrates to lower-lying valleys to find its food there.

### **Background**

Germany's only giant pandas have been living at Zoo Berlin since summer 2017. On 31 August 2019, panda lady Meng Meng (10) gave birth to two baby pandas (Pit: 186 g and Paule: 136 g). They were the first panda offspring ever born in Germany. Father Jiao Qing (13) is not involved in the rearing of the twin cubs - as is typical for giant pandas. Pit and Paule have been living separately from mother Meng Meng since November 2021. The bears take turns inhabiting the different panda enclosures at Zoo Berlin. According to the results of China's fourth Giant Panda Survey, there are 1864 giant panda in the wild in China. Therefore, the panda is classified as endangered on the Red List of Threatened Species of the World Conservation Union IUCN.