

Panda Love

BEHIND THE SCENES AT
A PANDA SANCTUARY

AMI VITALE

Behind the Scenes At A Panda Sanctuary

As conservation icons go, nothing quite beats the Giant Panda. Instantly recognizable world wide, adored by billions, a virtual brand whose resemblance to anything wild is as tenuous as it is rare. Ever since President Roosevelt's sons, Theodore and Kermit shot one, in 1928, in the wilds of Sichuan, China, the West has coveted the clownish, adorable animal and zoos today pay millions of dollars to mount exhibits, where panda "ambassadors" on loan from China never fails to attract a crowd.

There are less than 2000 Giant Pandas in the wild and many conservationists privately consider them a relict species; taxonomically unique, shy, and inexorably drifting towards extinction. Their breeding secrets have resisted for decades the prying efforts of zoos and their mountainous bamboo forests have been besieged and fragmented by agriculture.

But now, a glimmer of hope as years of research and failure is finally paying off. Chinese scientists and their international counterparts have cracked the puzzle of successfully breeding pandas in captivity and now are sending them back to the wild. They will have no lines of school children waiting to meet her nor a fan page on Facebook. But as these pandas trundle off into the mist-drenched mountains of the Li Zi Ping Forest Reserve in Sichuan Province, they take with her the aspirations of their human caretakers and hope for their species.

In a region where bad environmental news is common, the Giant Panda might prove to be the exception and a testament to the perseverance and efforts of Chinese scientists and conservationists. By breeding and releasing pandas, augmenting existing populations, and protecting habitat, China may be on its way to successfully saving its most famous ambassador and in the process put the wild back into an icon.









Panda Sanctuary is a collection of incredible images of these gentle giants. Ami Vitale's stunning photographs, taken on location in China, document the efforts to breed pandas and release them back into the wild. Ami was given unprecedented access to the pandas and her photos give an amazing insight into the bears' lives in both the sanctuaries and their natural habitat. Fluffy panda cubs tumble out of baskets and play hide-and-seek with their carers, while the adult pandas curiously explore the forest and climb trees.

The giant panda is everyone's favourite bamboo-munching bear. China is on course to save its most famous ambassador, and Panda Sanctuary lovingly documents the process of putting the wild back into an icon.

Ami Vitale is an American photojournalist and documentary film maker. She is a Nikon ambassador and a regular contributor to National Geographic. She has travelled to more than 90 countries, bearing witness not only to violence and conflict, but also to surreal beauty and the enduring power of the human spirit. Throughout the years, Ami has lived in mud huts and war zones, contracted malaria, and donned a panda suit—keeping true to her belief in the importance of “living the story.” In 2009, after shooting a powerful story on the transport and release of one of the world’s last white rhinos, Ami shifted her focus to today’s most compelling wildlife and environmental stories.

Spring 2018 | Hardback
£15.99 | 978 178488 127 6
160pp | 205 x 205mm
Full colour photography

Hardie Grant Books
hardiegrantbooks.com

🐼 @hardiegrantuk

