



DAYTRIPPER

Shenzhen Safari Park

They were a media sensation. Though small, and identically dappled, the arrival of the black-and-white pigs at Shenzhen Safari Park was covered by CCTV, the Shenzhen Television Station and Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post*. Why?

Their DNA has been adjusted, rendering them pet-sized for life.

A short jaunt in Shenzhen Safari Park – which we can safely call a ‘zoo’ – leads to a concrete paddock, where the pigs are asleep in all their genetically modified glory.

Though not snatching headlines with their tiny, cloned snouts, the 300-or-so other species kept at the zoo are just as interesting. From oryxes to alligators, the zoo offers views of 10,000 beasts and birds – many in open-air enclosures – throughout a 2-million-square-meter complex located in northern Shenzhen.

Established in 1993, wide concrete boulevards lead from ‘Ape Village’ to ‘Penguin Island,’ necessitating comfortable shoes for a day of walking.

The undeniable stars of the show are located in the western area, where pandas Yuan Zhou and Jiao Qing reside. The 6-year-old bachelors live in an open-air enclosure, and during our visit one poses atop a rock, before flopping off to the squeals of a gaggle

of smartphone-wielding patrons.

Like most animals in the park, the pandas look clean and happy, though a show of bear cubs on bikes is something we wish our RMB240 tickets hadn't gone towards.

If you have high hopes of spotting a particular fauna, call ahead: on our trip, parts of the park were closed off, perhaps explaining a lack of crowds during the weekday afternoon visit.

Like the pigs, a golden-plumed bird resembling a certain head of state has also been a draw for the zoo. Sadly, as it remained in its coop, all we saw of the golden pheasant was a large statue in its likeness in front of the park's gates.

Those looking for some action can attend the nine shows, which are held most days. From the ‘Tiger Jumping Show’ to Mongolian-themed horse stunts and, oddly, an evening motorcycle and car stunt show, all are included in the ticket price.

The Shenzhen Safari Park is worth a visit for anyone interested in seeing animals that most don't realize are even in Shenzhen – just be prepared to walk for about four hours through the sprawling complex. **SG**



How to get there:

High-speed trains go from Guangzhou East to Shenzhen. From there, ride the Shenzhen Metro Line 7 to the Xili Lake stop.