

Chiang Mai Night Safari

First Visit: 6th March 2017

The zoo section houses tigers in glass-fronted indoor enclosures. These are about 8x5 metres and each have two to three small 4x4-metre night cages/dens at the back for the tigers to retreat to. During the day, they appear to be locked out of these areas in order to be on display, leaving the tigers with no place to hide from visitors. The enclosures here are concrete-floored but have rocks and cave features created inside. There is no natural vegetation and it is assumed that the rooms are all air-conditioned. Water was available for the most part, though not in all areas. This section also holds a cub nursery. There were four- to five-month-old cubs present, who could be fed pieces of chicken for an extra fee.

There are two separate shows in the zoo zone. The first is a mixed animal show that involves clicker training of the animals and has no humans involved. The animals, including three tigers, perform a series of natural behaviours, demonstrating climbing, jumping and swimming skills.

The second show is labelled the "White tiger" show and is a more traditional offering, making the tigers jump on their hind legs, stand on balls, roll over and jump from wheeled platform to wheeled platform. Handlers hold small whips and the tigers seem stressed around them. They also appear to be de-clawed.

Body condition of all tigers in this area was adequate, however, the tigers did seem stressed or disinterested. There is a set of indoor cages in this area with glass fronts. Many of the tigers in the cages were pacing. Though staff were present, no one stopped visitors from banging on the glass windows. These areas have faux rocks and platforms to make them look natural but are all made from concrete.

The Safari Zone has a number of large enclosures with each subspecies of tiger separated. Golden tigers and white tigers are also

separated in this fashion, giving the impression they are separate subspecies.

Each enclosure looked to be about 200 square metres and was complete with natural vegetation, platforms, cave areas and ponds.

Tigers here had adequate body conditions and, for the most part, appeared much more relaxed, though some pacing was noted. This could have been due to the fact that the tiger was stressed by the arrival of the train.

Second Visit: 21st April 2018

Nothing much had changed since the first visit. Cages and enclosures remained the same, as did the welfare levels of the tigers. The only change of note was in the "White Tiger" show, which now comprised of lions as well as more tigers than before. One was a young tiger, possibly about 18 months old, who appeared unfazed by the entire proceedings and was treated fairly well by the handler.

Once again, staff appeared unhelpful or did not know the exact number of tigers residing in the venue.

Third Visit: 19th April 2019

All areas of the park were the same as before – the more natural show at the start followed by the White Tiger show which now has fewer tigers and more lions. None of the animals appear happy or relaxed in this environment.

The only improvement was in the inside cage area. This time there was a thick sandy substrate all over the floor and enrichment items including tyres hanging from the ceiling. There were vastly fewer tigers here than before. However tigers were still pacing – limping and swellings on limbs were also observed.

Safari Zones were similar to what they had looked like previously with one enclosure even housing sub-adult tiger cubs still with their mother which was nice to see.

It is possible that Chiang Mai Night Safari is going to be taken over by the ZPO, which may see it improve in future visits.