

Sriracha Tiger Zoo

First Visit: 30th April 2015

There are many separate areas within Sri Racha Tiger Zoo that hold the tigers. However, there was consistently no enrichment and no natural environment, both in enclosures and cages. Many tigers can simply be seen locked inside small cages, some double stacked on each other.

Shoot And Feed - there were two of these sections in the park. Each one consists of a relatively large, concrete-floored outside area with anywhere from 12 to 15 tigers inside. These had no natural enrichment, no places to hide and only a pond with scummy water. Above the enclosures were a line of small boxes with targets on them. Tourists can pay to hire an air rifle which they use to shoot the targets, releasing small pieces of food to the tigers below. The tigers were clearly starving, with many of them emaciated looking. Fights constantly broke out though all the tigers are declawed so few injuries could occur. In some instances they are also de-fanged; the large canines filed down to small stubs. There were a number of injuries noted including small round wounds, which appeared to be airgun shots. It appeared that the tigers would be rotated into this section with a number of small cages surrounding the enclosure giving this impression. These cages measured around 10x3m and had 10 to 12 tigers inside.

Cub Photos - there were a number of sections with photos with cubs of varying ages but the handling and living conditions remained the same. Cubs were kept in small slatted cages that were large enough for them to turn around in. There was no enrichment or place to hide. Most of the cubs appeared lethargic, preferring to sleep or ignore the noise around. Some were interested in our researchers and could be enticed to play. When tourists wanted photos, cubs would be manhandled out of the cages, often dragged out by the tail and unceremoniously thrown onto the tourists lap for a few seconds and some milk. The cubs in some areas were consistently crying and pacing, one had rubbed a large raw wound on its nose.

Tigress and Piglets - there is a story circulating the internet of a depressed tigress who lost her cubs only to find happiness when given a litter of piglets. This story comes from Sri Racha but could not be further from the truth. In fact this tigress has been nursing piglets for years, trained to accept the piglets. She is kept in a glass fronted room complete with tiled floors, nowhere to hide and no natural vegetation.

Adult Tiger Photo - though there are numerous cub photo opportunities, there only appears to be one adult tiger doing photos - Viggo. He has his teeth filed down and spends the entire day tethered with a foot long chain. His ears are permanently pinned back giving the impression he has no ears - this simply means he is very stressed and unhappy in the situation. Staff carry small whips with them and force him to endure endless photos - it seems for the whole day and judging from the photos and questions with staff, he has done this for many years.

Tiger Feed - one long narrow concrete enclosure offered tourists the chance to dangle whole chickens on fishing rods to the tigers. Tourists did so, jerking the chickens out of reach at the last second so that the jumping tiger fell short. The water was also filthy.

Circus - there is also a circus show where eight tigers come into the ring three times a day to perform. They are forced into doing a number of unnatural tricks such as jumping through hoops of fire, walking on their hind legs and crossing tight ropes. The trainer is very aggressive, carries a whip and uses food as a reward. All the tigers are clearly afraid of him and all display signs of extreme aggression.

Other Cages - there are a number of tigers caged around the zoo. All of these are highly inadequate, barren and concrete floored. All have water provided and appear clean. One section, the cages were double tiered with tigers in a second floor set of cages - never having access to the outside. Many injuries are visible including missing tail tips, generally left as open wounds. Many tigers were highly emaciated, had crossed eyes or other eye problems. Blaring music played throughout the entire park, not a moment of peace for these tigers.

Second Visit: 20th February 2017

No change in the setup at all regarding extra programmes, activities and general welfare. The only noticeable change was that there was no longer the Tiger Feeding programme with the dangling chickens.

Another tigress was observed being trained with a group of piglets. A staff member was observed feeding her pieces of raw chicken while a group of piglets wandered around her.

More injuries such as open tail wounds were noticed. Emaciated tigers and all are declawed. The practice of de-fanging seems to have abated with only the older adults showing this act.

The circus show still runs in the same manner with the same tigers performing three times a day. They display serious levels of aggression towards the handler. Handlers are heavy-handed throughout the zoo, manhandling any tiger for photos.

Cages and enclosures are still barren with no enrichment to speak of though a very few now had tyres placed inside. Double stacked cages still had tigers at the top. More young cubs though the overall number as reported by staff, remained the same. The observed number was higher.

Third Visit: 9th April 2018

No changes noted in enclosures or cages, general welfare, physical state of tigers, handling by staff or reduction of programmes. Tigers remained, for the most part, disinterested and lethargic with the exception of a few interested cubs.

All programmes from the previous year were still present. Six of the same tigers from the year before still seemed to be in the circus show, with two new young ones being trained.

Tigers are all declawed but the de-fanging definitely appears to have ceased.

Still no enrichment, no natural environment and no places to hide. Many tigers witnessed pacing and displaying other stereotypical behaviours. It is also not natural for the tigers to be living in such large groupings.

Number of tigers continuing to remain roughly the same despite many new cubs being born. The numbers do not add up. Generally welfare is poor, the worst in the country.

Fourth Visit: 2nd April 2019

No changes noted in enclosures or cages, general welfare, physical state of tigers, handling by staff or reduction of programmes. Tigers remained, for the most part, disinterested and lethargic with the exception of a few interested cubs.

The tigress with piglets has been swapped for a much younger, one year old cub who seems very playful. Otherwise all of the programmes from the previous years were present, including the tiger show, which had many of the same tigers from all previous years.

There was the addition of a new area by the photo area for the large adult male. It appears this has expanded and now promotes a walk with the tiger activity in an outdoor garden area that is complete with flowers and grass. This does not appear to be for the tigers' benefit, but rather for the aesthetics of a photo.

Most tigers had no access to any water, were seen to be pacing and there were many seen to be limping and sporting minor wounds. Once enclosure did have a large tyre in it, our researchers assumed this was for enrichment, but as the tigers have no claws, part of its use was unable to be utilised by the tigers. Tigers once again seemed to have better body condition than on previous years – there were no skinny, emaciated tigers, some were even obese.

As has been the case on all our researchers' visits, the number of tigers remains constant despite their being at least 20 cubs under one year old.