

From solitary to sanctuary with help from American Airlines Cargo

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At 33 years old, Sandra is an orangutan that has spent most of her life alongside caretakers, within strict confines and without any family.

Born in Germany, Sandra moved to Argentina about 25 years ago. She lived at the Buenos Aires Zoo before it closed its doors in 2016, however Sandra stayed on the land when it was converted into an eco-park.

Most recently, protestors asked the Argentinean government to step in, hoping that Sandra would be given more natural living conditions. A judge eventually granted Sandra human rights for a non-human, making it easier for her caretakers at the eco-park to relocate her to a sanctuary in the United States.

Enter the American Cargo teams at Ezeiza International Airport (EZE) in Buenos Aires and DFW.

When David Vance, Managing Director of Operations for Cargo, received the request from the Buenos Aires Eco-park to help transport Sandra, he knew her travel would take some careful planning. Due to strict import guidelines for primates set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Sandra's trip required special attention and attire.

Sandra arrived at EZE in a crate designed specifically for her journey. She had been introduced to the crate in the last year, and traveling in it during the flight helped her feel more relaxed.

The Cargo team carefully loaded and secured her crate aboard a Boeing 787-8 for the 11-hour flight to DFW.

At DFW, team members were dressed in CDC-mandated hazmat suits and awaited Sandra's arrival. DFW Cargo

team members volunteered their time to ensure Sandra received a warm welcome to the United States when American Airlines Flight 996 arrived at 5 a.m. on Thursday, Sept. 27.

After the Cargo team helped Sandra deplane, she was delicately loaded onto a van that was waiting for her planeside. She was taken to the Sedgwick County Zoo in Kansas to complete her government-required quarantine.

She arrived in Kansas in perfect condition, according to Federico Iglesias, Director of the Buenos Aires Eco-park. Sandra will remain at the Sedgwick County Zoo for medical exams before moving into her new home at the Center for Great Apes in Wauchula, Florida.

"The Center for Great Apes offers 30 years of experience caring for orangutans and providing them with excellent health care, enriching activities, and choices for areas Sandra would like to explore," said Patti Regan, founder of the Center for Great Apes. "There are 21 orangutans already living at the sanctuary, so Sandra will have the opportunity for companionship with her own species."

The Center for Great Apes also has a more suitable climate and natural environment compared to her previous living conditions.

"A special thank you to the teams in EZE and DFW for ensuring Sandra was taken care of along her journey. Our teams went above and beyond to ensure everything ran smoothly," Vance said. "It was an honor to provide our services to aid in Sandra's relocation and eventual new home at the sanctuary. We wish Sandra a long and happy life in her new home."

Sandra's new home has 11 outdoor habitats specifically for orangutans, unlike her previous home constructed of beams and ropes.

At EZE, the Cargo team thoughtfully prepared Sandra for her overnight flight to DFW.