

BROWN BEARS

IN THE CATALAN PYRENEES

During the 20th century, the Pyrenean bear population underwent a significant decline, in 1973, which led to be declared a protected species (Decree 2573/1973). In November 2004, Cannelle, the last native Pyrenean bear, died in France.



IT IS A SYMBOL OF AREAS OF GREAT NATURAL BEAUTY

Since 1996, 11 brown bears of Slovenian origin have been released into the wild. Thanks to the good adaptation of these specimens and to the good state of conservation of the territory, about 70 brown bears live in the Pyrenees in 2021. The Val d'Aran and the northern half of the Pallars Sobirà, especially the Alt Pirineu Natural Park, are the most frequented areas in the Catalan Pyrenees.



Generalitat
de Catalunya



Conselh Generau
d'Aran

Serveis centrals
C/ Provença 204-208
08036 Barcelona
Catalonia-Spain
Tel. (+34) 934 958 000

Plaça d'Aran 1-2
25530 Vielha,
Catalonia-Spain
Tel. (+34) 973 641 801

Oficina territorial
C/ de la Riba, 1
25595 Llavorsí
Catalonia-Spain
Tel. (+34) 973 622 335

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SA



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How to behave in an area with brown bears



Photos: Government of Catalonia, Juan Fernández and Òscar Rodbag

BROWN BEARS, A VERY SHY SPECIES

The brown bear is Europe's largest carnivore. It is a species that generates respect among human beings. Brown bears are usually very shy, and even in areas where they are abundant it is difficult to come across one of them. They detect humans at a great distance thanks to their privileged sense of smell and hearing, and see them as a threat, so they flee before being detected to avoid confrontations. However, there may be some eventual encounters.

BEARS TRY TO AVOID CONFRONTATIONS

Contrary to popular belief, brown bears are not aggressive. They are usually afraid of humans and avoid them, even in case of fortuitous and improbable encounters.



What do you need to know?

After centuries of coexistence with humans, brown bears have learned to avoid contacts with people and do not perceive them to be potential prey.

AVOID SITUATIONS OF RISK

Bears only attack when they are threatened or surprised. For this reason, when we walk through the territory where bears may be present, it is important to be noticed speaking loudly, walking calmly and being attentive, without leaving the signposted paths. If we are going with a dog, it is important to keep it on a leash.



TWO BEAR BEHAVIORS TO KNOW:

- » Bipedal Position: Bears have poor vision and often stand up to better identify with their sense of smell what they cannot see with their eyesight, and to show their strength.
- » Deterrent Charge: If, in spite of everything, they feel strongly threatened, they can move forward or run towards a person very fast and with aggressive attitude, stopping a short distance away and leaving the area.

What if you encounter a bear?

Although the chances of finding a bear are very scarce, it is good to know some behavioral guidelines:

- » If the bear has not detected us, it is best to move back slowly without running or alerting it.
- » We must never obstruct their path or their possible escape routes.
- » If he has spotted us, we need to keep calm, talk softly, and slowly move away, showing that we are not a threat.
- » We must never shout or threaten a bear. If it is a female with pups, we should never stand between the mother and the pups.
- » If we see the bear at a safe distance, we can enjoy the observation but we should not try to approach it to take better pictures.

KEEPING CALM IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING OF ALL

