

# BROWN BEARS

## IN THE CATALAN PYRENEES

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



## IT IS A SYMBOL OF AREAS OF GREAT NATURAL BEAUTY

Since 1996, 9 brown bears of Slovenian origin have been released into the wild, and a combination of their favourable adaptation and the good state of conservation of the natural habitat have resulted in a population, in 2016, of between 35 and 40 brown bears in the Pyrenees. The areas of the Catalan Pyrenees most frequented by brown bears are Val d'Aran and the northern half of El Pallars Sobirà, particularly in the Alt Pirineu Natural Park.



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Photos: Government of Catalonia, Juan Fernández and Òscar Rodbag

## How to behave in an area with brown bears



## BROWN BEARS, A VERY SHY SPECIES

The brown bear is Europe's largest carnivore. It is a species that instils a certain fear in humans. Bears are generally very shy; even in areas where they are present in considerable numbers, they are rarely seen. Their extremely good sense of smell and hearing means that they can detect the presence of humans at a great distance, allowing them to get away before they are detected, and so avoid confrontations. Even so, encounters can happen.

## 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 the unlikely event of chance encounters.



## What do you need to know?

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

### AVOID SITUATIONS OF RISK

Bears only attack if surprised or when they feel threatened. For this reason, when walking in areas where bears may be present, it is important to make your presence known, speaking in a loud voice, walking calmly, paying attention to your surroundings and staying on marked paths. If walking with dogs, these should be kept on a lead.



## What if you encounter a bear?

Even though the probability of encountering a bear is very small, it is important to be aware of some basic rules:

- » If the bear has not detected your presence, the best course of action is to retreat slowly and calmly, without alerting it to your presence.
- » Never block the bear's path or its possible escape routes.
- » If the bear has detected your presence it is important to stay calm, speak as softly as possible, and to move away slowly, showing that you do not present any threat. You must never shout or behave threateningly towards a bear.
- » In the case of a female bear with cubs, never get between the mother and her cubs.
- » If the bear is at a safe distance, enjoy watching it, but never try to get closer to take photos or to get a better view. Always from distance.

**STAYING CALM IS THE MOST  
IMPORTANT THING OF ALL**

