

DISCOVER DINARICS AND ITS BEST KNOWN LARGE CARNIVORE:

THE BROWN BEAR

The northern Dinarics represent large areas of preserved nature of exceptional conservation value, covering parts of Slovenia and Croatia. The area is amazingly rich with natural and cultural heritage. Extensive oak, beech and conifer forests are home to Eurasian lynx, wolf and brown bear.

Densities of bears in northern Dinarics are one of the highest in Europe. They live in human-dominated landscapes, sharing same areas with people. Food can attract them to settlements, where they can cause problems to local communities. If they find unprotected livestock, beehives or crops, they can cause considerable damage. Such conflicts reduce human tolerance, which is crucial for their long-term survival. Luckily, conflicts with large carnivores can be avoided with appropriate conflict mitigation measures. When visiting nature, never leave any organic waste where bears can get it. It is very important that bears do not associate food sources with human presence. Help us maintain bears' natural shyness.



Photo: Marko Masteli

SUPPORT BEAR FRIENDLY PRACTICES

Bear friendly label promotes practices that reduce conflicts and contribute to better coexistence between people and large carnivores.

The label is awarded to products like honey, meat and milk to honour the use of effective protection measures among farmers and beekeepers in the large carnivore area, giving them sense of recognition to their commitment. Moreover, the label can be applied to a wide variety of local products and services that promote bear conservation in the local area, like souvenirs, tourist accommodation and responsible tourism programs.

Supporting bear friendly products and services benefits local community and helps to build up the positive image of a bear within the local community working to protect its heritage.



Photo: Petra Drašković Pelc

KEY FACTS ABOUT BEAR BEHAVIOUR

- NATURAL WARINESS:** Typically it is difficult to see a bear in their natural habitat since they tend to avoid humans.
- OPPORTUNISTIC FEEDING:** Bears are classified as carnivores but are omnivorous (mostly vegetarian) in practice. They also feed on anthropogenic food (e.g. garbage, domestic animals, crops) when available and unprotected.
- SOCIAL LEARNING:** During the period when cubs stay with their mothers, they learn about their environment, identification of food, and how to respond to potential predators, which shapes the future behaviour of the cubs.
- HOME RANGE SIZE:** Bears need lots of space. Even the largest Central-European forest complexes are smaller than many bears' home range. Therefore bears overlap with humans.



Photo: Marko Masteli

HOW TO BEHAVE IN THE BEAR AREAS?

Bears are generally shy. They perceive humans as threat and avoid confrontations. However, please keep in mind the following when visiting bear areas:

- In the forest, make yourselves noticeable (e.g. by talking or whistling), especially while passing through dense vegetation or in low visibility areas.
- Keep your dog on a leash at all times. If your dog comes upon a bear, it will probably rush the bear directly and lead it to you when it seeks protection.
- Never approach bear cubs because the mother bear is most likely somewhere nearby.
- If you see a bear, never try to approach or disturb it. Move away slowly.
- When visiting nature, never leave any organic waste where bears can get it. It is very important that bears do not associate food sources with human presence.
- Do not enter the vicinity of or crawl into a bear den as it can be life-threatening.



Photo: Marko Masteli



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www.discoverdinarics.org
www.facebook.com/DiscoverDinarics
www.dinalpbear.eu
discoverdinarics@gmail.com

Project partners:



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BEAR FRIENDLY PRACTICES:

- effective protection of livestock, beehives or orchards
- use of bear-proof garbage bins
- development of responsible tourism programs
- active promotion of large carnivore conservation in the local area



Photo: Anja Moric

Photo: Turistična kmetija pri Andrejevih



Photo: Petra Drašković Pelc

Photo: Dejana Majstorović

Photo: Martina Osmak

RESPONSIBLE BEAR TOURISM

Bears in the Dinarics are symbols of preserved nature and successful coexistence between people and large carnivores. Being in the same landscape, seeing signs of bears presence such as a track or a scat, is drawing visitors in the region. However, poorly managed bear tourism can encourage undesirable behaviours, increasing the level of conflicts between local people and bears.

Discover Dinarics portal is featuring best practice wildlife tourism programs offered by different local tour operators that follow the guidelines for responsible wildlife tourism. Programs support on-the-ground conservation of bears and promote human-bear coexistence.

Visit: discoverdinarics.org



Help us keep our bears wild. Choose tour operators that follow the guidelines for responsible bear watching.



Photo: Marko Masteli

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ENCOUNTER A BEAR?

- When you spot a bear from a distance, retreat slowly from the way you came and give the bear plenty of space to continue its route. Never run away!
- If a bear is coming towards you and it has not yet seen you, make yourself noticed by speaking calmly and retreat slowly.
- Do not throw rocks or any object towards the bear. A bear that feels threatened may act defensively and the risk of an aggressive reaction increases.
- Never run away from a bear or try to climb a tree. Bears are good climbers and can reach up to 50 km/h.
- If a bear attacks you, never fight back.



A bear standing on its hind legs is a sign of curiosity.



Photo: Janez Papež