

The islands are influenced by their different shores. On Pantelleria, houses have special domed roofs designed by Arabs from North Africa, which collect the scant rainwater and store it in underground cisterns. In the flooded caves of Mallorca, we find a toad that escaped from the nearby mainland in evolutionary times—a living fossil that helps explain why these islands are covered in the bones of pygmy hippos and giant dormice.

Part 3: HIDDEN SHORES

The word 'Mediterranean' means 'the sea in the middle of the land' and, ultimately, it is the unique combination of sea and land that has led to such an explosion of life here. In a few secret places, the hidden story of the Mediterranean's shores is preserved. The middle of the Mediterranean world is a crossroads for life. For birds, however, the sea is a barrier. They are forced to fly around the water at either end of the Mediterranean. At the time of the autumn migration, storks, pelicans, eagles and buzzards in their millions squeeze through a few narrow land bridges, creating one of the most spectacular scenes in the natural world.

The course of civilisation in the Mediterranean is faltering. From its perch in the high Atlas Mountains, the Barbary macaque watches as the Sahara desert swallows once-thriving Roman cities, and where ancient Egypt once flourished on the riches of the Nile, an invasion of alien animals floods through the Suez Canal. While civilisation marches on, from the cork forests of Spain to the national parks of Croatia, life thrives on the shores of the Mediterranean in only small treasured pockets. But ultimately, the Mediterranean's unique life and its unique culture cannot survive without each other.



MEDITERRANEAN SEA OF LIFE

3 x 53 min.

Written and directed by **Mark Brownlow and Andrew Murray**

HD, 5.1 and Stereo

Executive producers: **Sabine Holzer, Walter Köhler**



TERRA MATER
Factual Studios

With its idyllic beaches, turquoise waters and ancient culture, the Mediterranean is the most popular tourist destination on Earth. But just beyond the tourist beaches lies a hidden world: reefs teem with vibrant fish, dolphins and rare monk seals play in crystal waters, and mighty sperm whales gather to mate.

For the first time in HD, the Mediterranean's rarest secrets are brought to life like never before: the narrow Straits of Gibraltar are home to 100-strong pods of dolphins and are the haunt of killer whales. We swim with gigantic blue-fin tuna and soar with eagles. Specialised deep-diving technology enables us to descend into the abyssal depths of the Ionian Sea in search of giant sharks.

Where three continents collide, one sea shapes life. A unique fusion of plants and animals thrives here: flamingos and wild horses live side by side with monkeys, lynx and rare vultures. This three-part portrait of the world's most famous sea takes the viewer on a cinematic odyssey to reveal the extraordinary wildlife of the Mediterranean, the birthplace of Western civilisation.

Part 1: SEA OF LIFE

Five million years ago, the Atlantic Ocean burst through a wall of rock at the Straits of Gibraltar and created the Mediterranean. From that moment on, this 14-kilometre stretch of water has defined Mediterranean life. Due to highly concentrated salt levels, Mediterranean water is extremely clear and blue. It is the marine equivalent of a desert. But rare sponges, beautiful corals and unique sea grasses have found ways of filtering out the tiniest of particles and create an explosion of colourful life.

The waters of the Mediterranean join three continents and bring monkeys and flamingos from Africa together with bears and wolves from Europe. During antiquity, horses and knowledge of early farming came from Asia. As people flourished on the Mediterranean shores, they learnt to harvest its riches. Fishermen still continue to catch mighty tuna in the same way they have for thousands of years. And where Africa collides with Europe, in the deepest of underwater canyons, one creature dives to find food—the only resident population of sperm whales in the world.

Part 2: SEA OF ISLANDS

Scattered across the clear, blue Mediterranean Sea are more than 15,000 islands—each of them unique. From the volcanoes of Stromboli and Etna to the ancient granite spines of Corsica, each island has its own climate, its own character and its own life. There are forests of unique pine trees with their own special birds and lizards; there are islands where a single hidden valley is cloaked in hundreds of thousands of exquisitely coloured moths. There are chameleons from Africa and goats that have evolved on one island into mythical wild creatures. There are beaches of all colours, some of which are the last refuge of the rarest seal in the world.

