

The remarkable, little known Cantabrian Mountains extend along the Atlantic coast of northern Spain for nearly 500 kilometres from the east Pyrenees to Galicia. In some parts, they tower 2,500 metres above sea level.

The mountains form a barrier between the cool, moist part of Spain, known as Espana Verde or "green Spain", and the arid central plateau. Proximity to the Atlantic makes for high humidity. Generous summer rainfall on the northern side of the mountain range provides perfect conditions for abundant vegetation. Oak, chestnut, and beech forests grow in the lower altitudes while lush mountain meadows carpet the higher elevations. Only the highest summits are dry and barren, except in winter, when thick snow blankets the mountains.

But the treasures of Spain's magical mountains go beyond luxuriant vegetation and scenic beauty. The mountains are home to a huge variety of wildlife like chamois and red deer, wolves, brown bears and wildcats.

In forests, on meadows and cliffs life plays out its dramas far away from civilisation in the Cantabrian Mountains.

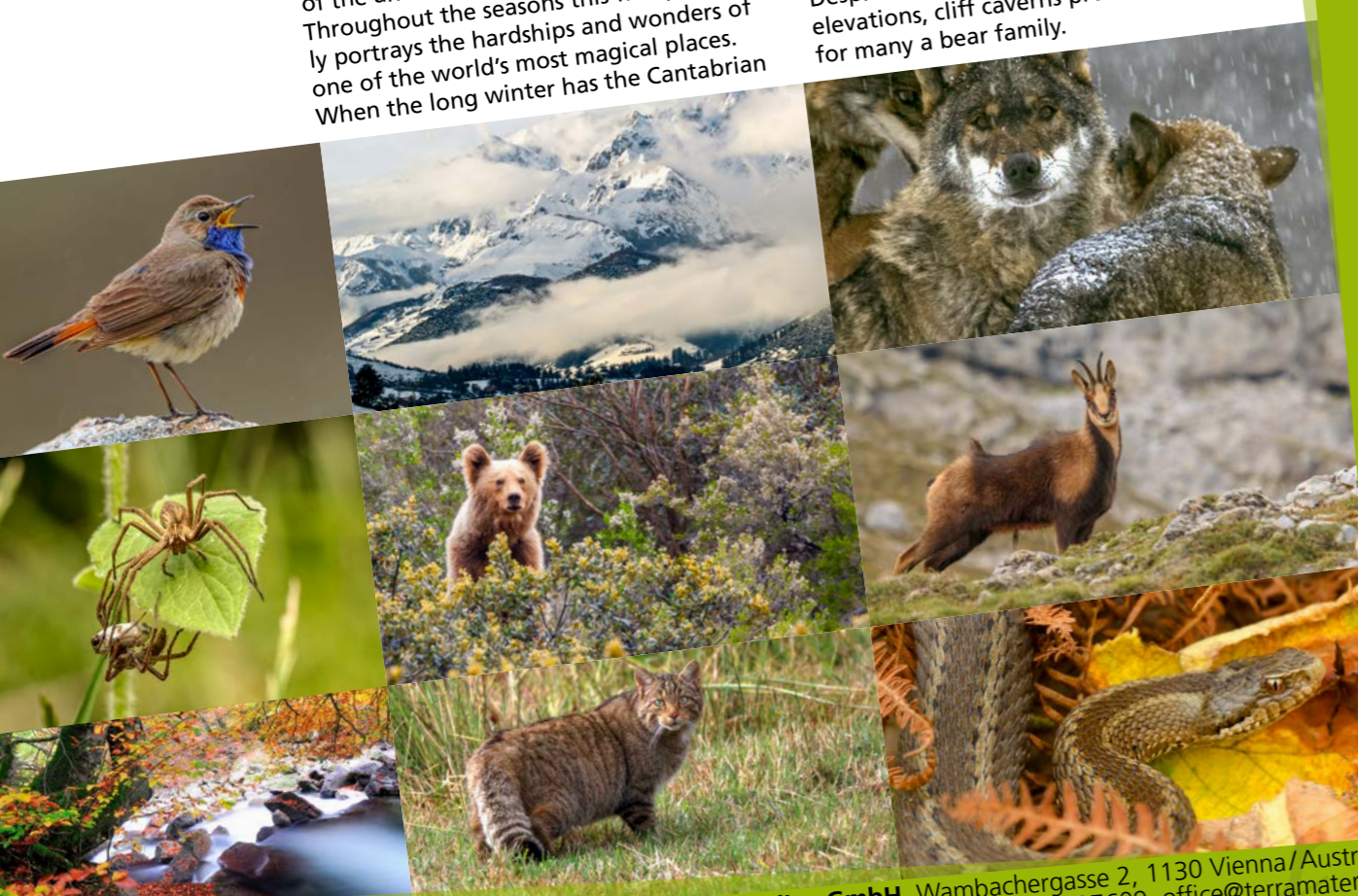
Over the course of a year, we capture the trials and adventures both great and small, of the animals in this unique wilderness. Throughout the seasons this film poignantly portrays the hardships and wonders of one of the world's most magical places. When the long winter has the Cantabrian

Mountains firmly in its grip, wild hunters have their best chance for success. Snow and lack of food drive red deer into the valleys and towards certain danger. Blood curdling howls pierce the cold, still air. When a deer has difficulty walking in the deep snow, it risks becoming easy prey for a pack of hungry wolves. Wildcats are also on the prowl, stalking partridges even during the snowstorm.

As soon as the snow starts to melt, animals that spent the winter comfortably sheltered in their dens emerge. Female Brown bears, anxious to feed themselves and their cubs after a long hibernation, busy themselves searching for fresh grass. And if grass is still scarce they climb bushes and trees to nibble on the first tender shoots.

Summer days in the Cantabrian Mountains are fraught with dangerous challenges. The Atlantic salmon are now navigating their way inland from ocean to hinterland through ever decreasing estuaries, as they migrate to their ancestral spawning grounds.

Brown bears living high up in the forested mountain slopes also face peril. The Cantabrian Mountains are their western-most European habitat. Mother bears must be on constant guard to protect their young. If they encounter a male in search of a partner, he may kill the cubs. Despite the lack of escape routes at these elevations, cliff caverns provide sanctuary for many a bear family.



NATURE



CANTABRIA SPAIN'S MAGICAL MOUNTAINS

1 x 50 min.

Written and directed by **Joaquín Gutiérrez Acha**
Produced by **José María Morales**

HD, 5.1 and Stereo

Executive producers: **Andrea Gastgeb, Sabine Holzer**



TERRA MATER
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