

NATURE



WHERE NATURE ENDURES.

WILD PERU

LAND OF EXTREMES

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3 x 50 min., 4K, 5.1 + Stereo



One nation; three distinct worlds. This three-part series tells the story of a land ruled by extremes, where life thrives in the most challenging conditions imaginable.

Peru is home to ten percent of the world's flora and some of the greatest numbers of mammals and bird species found anywhere. It is a spectacle of life and colour. This extraordinary diversity is a result of Peru's unique geography; one that divides the country into three very different realms. Towering mountains, rising to 5,500 metres, run through its heart. On one side lies dense tropical rainforest, flooded for half the year. On the other a scorching coastal desert, bordered by the vast Pacific Ocean.

Extreme altitude, relentless rain and searing sun have seen ancient civilisations rise and fall. And yet, nature endures; this very adversity fueling some of the most spectacular gatherings of wildlife on our planet. With the world yet to wake up to the wonders of Peru, join us for an immersive cinematic journey as we uncover South America's best kept secret.

Episode 1: The Dividing Line

Peru lies entirely in the tropics, yet our series begins with a world locked in ice. At 18,000 feet, these are the tallest peaks of the Andes Mountains. Their staggering height prevents clouds from passing. It makes them the dividing line between two distinct realms; one wet, the other dry. But these mountains are also a place unto themselves, home to their own unique species. To survive here takes extraordinary adaptation and resilience. Up here, great civilisations have fallen, but nature thrives.

The glaciers that cling to Peru's peaks are the only ones found in the tropics. At first glance it is impossible to think anything might live up here. And yet, from a small recess on a wall of ice, a tiny chick calls out. Amazingly, this is its nest. It is a glacier bird; the highest nesting bird in the world. In the short spring-time breeding window, its parents rush back and forth with what food they can find. The days are heating up and, with the glacier retreating, a deadline looms where the nest will melt. Any unfledged chicks will tumble to their doom.

It takes something truly special to survive in Peru's mountains. To the western side of this dividing line, where little rain falls, lie the sparse grasslands of the Altiplano. At almost 4000 metres, animals here are supremely adapted to the high altitude and freezing temperatures. Dust flies as camel-like vicuñas battle for the right to mate. One of the world's rarest, most beautiful wild cats, the Andean cat, stalks its prey amongst rocky outcrops.

On the opposite side of these high peaks lies a completely contrasting world. Yellow-tailed woolly monkeys leap through the canopy of dense cloud forest, their thick coat keeping them warm at high altitudes. Brightly coloured cock-of-the-rocks gather for their raucous displays. This side of the Andes is where the mighty Amazon river is born and these forests in the clouds, home to secretive mountain tapirs and curious nocturnal monkeys, are some of the most biodiverse found anywhere.

Peru's towering mountains are where the true spirit of this country lies. Fittingly, its most famous landmark is found up here. At 2500 metres, the ruins of Machu Picchu are evidence that people have long struggled to conquer the high Andes. Today, cute vizcachas spend hours sunbathing on top of the crumbling rocks. It is a stark reminder of the challenges to survive in this extreme realm.

Episode 2: The Forest of Mirrors

In our second episode, we visit a world of breathtaking complexity. Peru's Amazon rainforest is among the most biodiverse regions on Earth. Here, we discover a realm bursting with colour. A land of beautiful and bizarre species and intimate relationships. Like all of Peru's habitats, this is a uniquely challenging place to live, not least because these forests spend half their year submerged in water.

Deep in the heart of Peru's Amazon lies a small exposed river bank. It may not seem like much, but as a new day dawns, raucous calls draw nearer. Soon the area explodes with noise and colour. Seventeen different parrot species fill the air; from large flocks of parakeets and amazons, to stunning macaws. They are drawn to the river bank as, by eating the clay, they get vital nutrients they're not able to find elsewhere. This daily gathering is one of the greatest wildlife spectacles on our planet. The parrots come from kilometres around – a sign that surviving here is no small feat.

The most unusual feature of Peru's Amazon is that, for half the year, it is submerged in water. Rainfall from the slopes of the Andes pushes rivers seven metres higher, transforming this into a forest of mirrors. Aquatic mammals thrive here. Male river dolphins use pieces of driftwood to display their prowess to females; giant river otters hunt for fish whilst avoiding caiman; and manatees swim amongst the rainforest trees.

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An unusual cast of animals inhabit the trees above the trees above the waterline. Red uakari monkeys sleep in troops up to 200 strong. During the day, they spread out to feed on unripe fruit, which they break open with specialised canines.

Episode 3: The Desert Coast

In our third episode, we visit Peru's extraordinary coastline. It is a land of immense contrast; where a seemingly lifeless desert meets some of the greatest gatherings of wildlife on Earth. On land, spectacled bears and sechura foxes struggle for existence beneath the searing sun. In the ocean, myriad marine mammals and enormous colonies of penguins and cormorants thrive on an abundance of prey.

Peru's coastline runs for 2,500 kilometres. At this latitude, lush rainforest should abound, yet we find a barren landscape. A long, black figure moves through it. A spectacled bear. To survive here, she must remember the location of several freshwater springs, often kilometres apart.

Peru's coastline, in places as narrow as twenty kilometres, is unique for two reasons. On one side, the high Andes block the humid Amazonian air and cast a rain shadow over the region. On the other, the cold Humbolt current, moving up from the Southern Ocean, reduces temperatures, preventing tropical conditions. The result is a desert which receives less than five millimetres of a rain a year – one of the driest on Earth.

However, the cold waters of the Humbolt, which starve the land of life, bring rich upwellings of nutrients. This supports large numbers of plankton, which in turn makes Peru's coast home to millions of seabirds and over thirty species of whale and dolphin.

We reveal the comic mating dance of boobies; follow charismatic Humbolt penguins through the breeding season; witness the migration of humpback whales; and discover playful pods of dolphins leaping in the surf, just for the sheer joy of it.

Peru's coastline, however, can be a challenging and unpredictable place. Evidence of this is etched in the desert sands. Drawings of monkeys, hummingbirds and whales, hundreds of metres long, reveal a past civilisation known as the Nazca. As in all of Peru's unique realms, people have tried and failed to live here; yet an extraordinary cast of animals has found ways to survive in the extreme environment.

A production of Terra Mater Studios and Dandy Lion Films

