

How to behave in a territory with bear occurrence?

Following time-tested rules can decrease the risk of a close encounter or a conflict with the biggest Slovak beast of prey considerably.

Minimise the encounter risk

- Walk only in areas where you can see far enough.
- Avoid dense and impenetrable vegetation, windthrows, hollows and smaller caves where bears could rest.
- Don't go to nature early in the morning and late in the evening or at night.
- Stay on marked hiking trails only.
- Walk rather with a group than alone.
- Let animals know that you are coming, e.g. by talking, clapping your hands, singing or with a jingle bell. However, loud noise is pointless.
- Pay enough attention to the area around you and avoid spots with fresh bear signs such as tracks, scat, biting marks on trees etc.
- Avoid places that smell bad from a distance – it can be a dead animal that a bear is feasting on.
- Keep your dog on a leash. Unleashed dogs can guide a bear directly to you.
- Don't leave rests of food and food wraps in nature after eating. They are very attractive to bears.

If you spot a bear at a greater distance, follow these recommendations:

- Don't get closer to it, watch how it behaves and slowly go away.
- While doing so, say something not too loud or make another mild sound to let the bear know that you are there.
- If the bear stays calm and far enough, you are in no danger.

What should you do if a bear gets closer?

- Stay calm, don't make any sudden movements and slowly go back to where you have come from.
- Never run from a bear and don't shout. It could trigger a chase response.
- Don't throw anything at the bear, don't feed it and don't get closer.
- If possible, watch its behaviour. Discomfort or even aggression is signalled by nervous movements, running from one side to the other, nodding the head, flattening the ears backwards, mumbling, huffing, drooling, digging with a paw or teeth chattering. Be very cautious in such cases.

How should you behave if a bear attacks you?

- If you have a bear spray with you, use it.
- If you don't, lie flat on your stomach with your legs apart (so that the bear cannot turn you around) and protect the back of your neck with your hands. In this way, you are no danger to the bear and it usually goes away.

Carry a bear spray with you

- It contains capsaicin that inflames the mucous membranes of the eyes and the nose, which can stop an attacking bear.
- The long-distance range should be 5 – 12 metres and the spray should be easily accessible, i.e. attached to your belt or chest. It's no use to carry it inside a backpack.

Don't forget that bears attack people only rarely. If nature offers you a chance to see a bear, be thankful for the unique experience.

