

**arte**  
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presents

# EUROPE'S WILDEST HERITAGE

A series of 5x52' **4K**  
Produced by Le Cinquième Rêve & Doclights





# THE PITCH

A premium Wildlife & Discovery collection (5x52') filmed in 4K. To dive into **5 of the most visited European heritage emblems** and their breathtaking, unexpected and diversified wildlife. This ambitious series is an amazing immersion into the heart of incredible ecosystems, with the people who preserve it everyday.







# THE KEY POINTS

## HIGH PLACES OF HERITAGE SUBLIMATED

These architectural emblems are magnified by sumptuous aerial images. Thanks to **FPV drones** and privileged access, we explore every nook, cranny, alley or maze, revealing their splendor. This immersive process offers new vantage points, unseen by the visitor, of these jewels of our heritage!

## BREATHTAKING ANIMAL SEQUENCES

Mating seasons, births, first steps and learning of the young, hunting or dangers are filmed as close as possible in **100% animal sequences, in total immersion**, by the greatest professionals of animal cinema. These scenes of animal life, some of which will be filmed for the first time, give us the key to the functioning of the ecosystems of these great heritage sites.

## MONUMENTS, ANIMALS... AND PEOPLE!

Animal photographers in the National Domain of Chambord, herpetologists in the Pyrenean summits, seal rescuers in the Mont-Saint-Michel Bay, they are all passionate about these sites and know every nook and cranny. Filmed in action in the field, they bring a new reading of these exceptional places, sometimes intimate, sometimes spectacular.





# THE COLLECTION EPISODES

1/ MONT-SAINT-MICHEL

2/ PIC DU MIDI

3/ CHÂTEAUX OF THE LOIRE VALLEY

4/ THE ALHAMBRA

5/ BASTEI BRIDGE



# EPISODE 1 - MONT-SAINT-MICHEL

## SUMMARY

A religious building, then a bastion of defense, and today a **UNESCO site** visited by the whole world, the Mont Saint-Michel is a true standard of our heritage. For 1300 years, the great history of this mythical place has been mixed with a more confidential history, that of the Bay's wildlife. From the top of the Statue of the Archangel to the sand dunes, crossing the immense salt meadows, the Mont-Saint-Michel Bay is a real hotspot of biodiversity punctuated by the tides.

Reckless gulls, lazy sea-calves, courageous sheep and playful dolphins, chattering colonies of egrets on the island of Tombelaine, whispering ballet of starlings, short-eared owls on the schorres, nurseries of fish and crustaceans on the foreshore, upwelling of salmon and eels, spectacle of orthopterans on the cliffs of Carolles-Champeaux...

The Mont-Saint-Michel Bay is a jewel case of nature, today in danger because of the progression of the salt meadows. Through the eyes of its feathered, furry and scaly inhabitants, this wildlife sanctuary reveals its fragility and undeniable richness.



# THE EPISODE'S HIGHLIGHTS


At sunrise, the Mont-Saint-Michel overlooks the bay, perched on its granite islet. A drone quickly goes up the glittering sea to the rock of the Mont. At its top, the abbey shines, illuminated by the first orange lights, and emerges from a light morning mist. The drone caresses its facades, evolves between the arches, the four crypts of the church, and goes along the «Merveille», built in the XIIIth century. Minutia, finesse and robustness define this place which has faced, unshakeable, sea and tides for a thousand years. But these great sandy expanses of the bay are as spectacular as they are formidable. When the sea retreats, the bay is transformed into an immense space where dangers are omnipresent. The criches, these ditches dug during the tides, muddy and filled with water, cause frequent bogging. And this is not without mentioning an exceptional phenomenon of high tide that sometimes occurs in the bay. The «tidal bore» is one of the most important tides in Europe. At high tide, the sea rushes into the bay and gives birth to a wave of about 50 centimeters high that covers everything in a few minutes.



Swarms of lesser black-backed gulls circle the heights with loud, heady cries, circling the Statue of the Archangel before darting into the cobblestone streets, ancient ramparts and far corners of the fortress where the first tourists arrive. As you approach, this astonishing brownish rock formation that stretches as far as the eye can see reveals itself to be the result of the work of tiny marine worms, the honeycomb worms. Barely 3 cm in size, this «ordinary» microfauna produces extraordinary constructions, which reach records for their surface area on a European scale. A unique halophilic vegetation, which results from the combination of three natural elements: the mixture of salt and fresh water, the relief of the soil, shaped by the waves, and the silt brought by the sea. Wild boars, shelducks and geese benefit from the richness of the soil to feed on.

A shuttle of the AL LARK association is speeding through the waves off the bay. Morgane Perri is using her binoculars and her camera to document the dorsal fin of the individual she has spotted. It belongs to Argos, one of the bottlenose dolphins that the association often sees. Stéphanie Maubé came to settle in the region to start a traditional breeding of Avranchin sheep. She now knows everything about this species that she now tries to protect. Romain Pilon is a naturalist guide. To him, the Bay has no secret...except that it is a traditional salmon fishery! Aboard a microlight, Audrey Hémon and her team from the Chene Association participate in the rescue of seal pups. A beautiful example of what man can do for nature...





# EPISODE 2 - PIC DU MIDI

## SUMMARY

When approaching the Pyrenees, this jagged wall of snow-capped peaks, one of them immediately catches your eye: the Pic du Midi. Scientific sentinel and emblem of the Pyrenees, it is the witness of a long natural history and a formidable human adventure. However, the best kept secret of the Pic does not reside inside the Observatory, where astronomers, physicists and biologists carry out the most advanced research, but on the slopes of the massif, from its foothills to its summit, where an unsuspected wild life abounds. Seas of clouds as far as the eye can see, deafening storms or merciless winters, we are here in the front row of an incredible wild spectacle.





A large eagle with brown and white feathers is shown in flight, wings spread wide, against a backdrop of a rugged, snow-covered mountain. The eagle is positioned in the upper right quadrant of the frame. The mountain's surface is a mix of white snow and dark, rocky outcrops. In the lower left, a small, rounded snowdrift is visible. At the very bottom of the image, two small figures of people are seen walking on a snowy slope, providing a sense of scale to the vast landscape.

# THE EPISODE'S HIGHLIGHTS

In the middle of August, the sun hits hard on the heights of the Pic du Midi, which seems more than ever to be worthy of its name. The gaze looks out over the Pyrenees and the surrounding **peaks of over 3000 meters**. Reminding us of the altitude, a fresh wind gently sweeps the flowers, such as the Pyrenean poppy, only present in the mountains. The Pyrenees ridges are outlined in infinity, floating like islands on a sea of cottony clouds. The drone skirts the forests, climbs the scree slopes and goes upstream with disconcerting ease, like a bird. This aerial exploration of the site, thanks to the drone, allows us to observe the strange geological formations of the massif, ridges similar to stone snakes. An altar of science and a renowned observatory, the Pic du Midi is a real little city in itself, at an altitude of almost 3000 meters. It remains today one of the last high altitude observatories, a window on the universe, and abounds in untamed fauna, capable of surviving in a hostile environment, a few meters from the beaten track and cable cars.

Let's now observe the Bearded vulture, a vulture that slowly ascends a warmer air stream, letting itself be carried, its silver feathers quivering in the wind. In the early morning, in a breeding located on the massif, a young Patou has just been born, this cute puppy will become a formidable guard of ewe's flock. We discover the life of the herd in estive. One day, this one rubs shoulders with strange neighbors, who also graze the fresh grass of the slopes of the Peak: llamas! Thanks to the young dog Patou, we understand the cheese making process, the importance of the bells, or how they are designed by the bellringer, its role of protection of the herd against predators, such as the Bear, of which all speak, but which remains a ghost... In autumn, Mélanie Nemoz and her team track down another river dweller, the Pyrenean desman, even more mysterious than the calotriton. Halfway between a rat, a mole and a shrew, this strange, mysterious and rare animal has a real trunk like the elephants'. As the first snows sprinkle the summits, cries shake the red slopes of the Pic. A male Pyrenean chamois is tumbling down the meadow at full speed, and in spite of his speed, we cannot catch him: it is not a fall but a frantic race to seduce the females.

Gilles Pottier loves to observe birds of prey but he explores the territory in search of the Pyrenean brook salamander, in the Oncet lake, located under the Pic, this little-known amphibian is nevertheless a symbol of the purity of the water. Constant Perry, accompanied by Gilles Potier, a herpetologist with a strong accent, try to make themselves invisible so as not to frighten the animal they have come to study: Pyrenean rock lizard, also called «snow lizard». This struggle at the top also takes us inside the walls of the Observatory, where we meet astronomers, physicists, and star dreamers. Among them, Miléna, a naturalist and astrophotography enthusiast. Grégory Tucat and Nicolas Thion, two hunters, do not only kill game, but also watch over populations of Pyrenean chamois. Today, they settle down on a «lek», the place where the capercaillie lives.





# EPISODE 3 - CHÂTEAUX OF THE LOIRE VALLEY


## SUMMARY

Seen from the sky, the Château de Chambord reveals its harmonious lines, its striking beauty. A ballet of aerial shots magnifies the architecture of these countless towers, keeps and gardens with an impeccable geometry. As you rise, this exceptional building soon reveals the immensity of the nearby Loire River and its meanders that stretch as far as the horizon. They make up a rare ecosystem: that of the last wild river in Europe... True marvels of our cultural heritage, visited by millions of curious people every year, the châteaux of the Loire Valley have also become sanctuaries for this threatened bestiary.



# THE EPISODE'S HIGHLIGHTS

Historically, the abundance of deer in the region certainly determined the choice of Francis I to establish a royal residence for hunting: the Château de Chambord. Stags were once considered royal emblems and can still be found today symbolized in the stones of the castle, on tapestries or on silverware. Imagine, two red deer, confront each other in a clearing, their antlers clash, in the middle of a rut, this animal is a fierce fighter, who does not hesitate to multiply the jousts in order to impress the herd of hinds. Alongside the stag, king of the forests, the more discreet Salamander also occupies a special place in the medieval bestiary. This mysterious animal, to which magical powers were once attributed, fed many fantasies. We fly in FPV drone over the Domain of Chambord, along the towers of the castle before getting closer to a grove of magnificent Scotch pine trees. On a natural perch, 25 meters high, curled up in a nest of branches, eggs are hatching, protected by their mother. If they manage to survive, these Osprey chicks (only 50% reach adulthood!), will be able to throw themselves out of the nest to make their first flight, under the watchful eye of their parents. The camera located in a specially designed aerial mount, offers images of this spectacle. The last character is a well-kept secret. This one lives neither in Chambord nor in Chenonceau, but in the very attic of the Château de Villandry! It allows us to visit this lesser known but equally spectacular building, through the servants' entrance: it is the greater mouse-eared bat. An impressive colony of more than 150 individuals has clandestinely settled in the roof structure, and returns every year from March to September to take advantage of the quietness of these places to reproduce. The swallows also have a taste for luxury! A huge colony has indeed established more than 170 nests in the smallest corners of the château de Chenonceau. In the window frames, on top of the facades, the turrets and the Tourdes Marques.



Architectural masterpieces, the Châteaux of the Loire Valley are symbols of the French cultural power of the Renaissance. But, not far from the hordes of tourists who come to visit them every year, a completely different population has taken up residence in these royal domains... From Chambord to Chenonceau via Villandry, from the majestic forests to the very heart of the old stones, and from the emblematic species to the most mysterious, we will reveal the wild secrets of the Châteaux of the Loire Valley. The Châteaux of the Loire Valley are in close symbiosis with water. By following the waterways of the Loir-et-Cher, we naturally arrive at the key places in history: the banks of the Château d'Amboise. Francis I admired salamanders and chose this emblem to make his coat of arms: wearing a crown and accompanied by the motto «Nutrisco et Extingo» («I feed on the good fire, I extinguish the bad»), the Salamander is one of the main animals in the Chambord emblems.

Christian Gambier and his team climb every year the trees to bring down the fledglings and ring them as quickly as possible, in order to put them back in their nest before the parents return. They have very little time to perform this perilous operation! In order to preserve the remaining populations of black bees from the crossbreeding, the only solution is to succeed in isolating them in a sufficiently large area, where only colonies of the species will be brought in, without competition from other races of domestic bees... The 5,000 hectares of the Chambord estate are naturally suited to the protection of these bees! On the other hand, for Natacha Griffaut, the greater mouse-eared bat has no more mystery. For months, with her team from the LPO (League for the Protection of Birds), she follows this population to protect them.





# EPISODE 4 - THE ALHAMBRA

## SUMMARY

The Alhambra is one of the masterpieces of Spanish-Arabic architecture. Listed as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, this «city within a city», symbol of the Muslim West, welcomes more than **7000 visitors every day**. This prestigious monument is not only a place of history, it is also a hotspot of biodiversity, a true oasis teeming with wildlife in the heart of arid and mountainous landscapes! From the gardens of the Alhambra and their astonishing luxuriance to the walls of the fortress that turn red at sunset, more than 150 species of animals live in the Andalusian city.



# THE EPISODE'S HIGHLIGHTS

Under a blazing sun, a light breeze raises sand on a path. It is dry, the vegetation is short: we are in Andalusia, crushed by the heat and the incessant melody of the insects. The flight of a common kestrel catches our eye: in the sky, the animal hovers in a strange posture, called «holy spirit flight», which allows it to spot its prey in order to swoop down on them with implacable precision. In a water of a rare purity on which floats flowers of water lilies, six species have found refuge, including the common toad. These toads immerse us in a life of stupor: half in the air, half in the water. They are particularly fond of certain corners of the Palace, such as the interior of the Acequia del Tercio, a bypass of the Acequia Real. While the gecko is an amazing little reptile, a fascinating character, able to regenerate itself, but also a genius of camouflage and climbing... Thanks to its five rounded fingers with transverse adhesive lamellae on the lower side, the gecko can literally stick itself without any difficulty on rocky scree, trunks, walls..., and all smooth surfaces, even vertical ones. Discreet, but not cowardly, the gecko is a formidable opponent for anyone who dares to challenge its territory. The males confront each other vertically, using all their talents to outwit the enemy. A sequence that only a careful slow motion will be able to honor! At night time, when they post themselves in ambush not far from the sources of light which blindly attract the insects, the geckos are also terrible hunters. Accompanied by owls and nightjars, these fearsome predators tint the poetic Spanish night and its flamenco atmosphere with a completely different red. Mirage or reality? A group of European bee-eaters is doing its thing on the parched hills. In the heart of the canyons and ravines, these birds have found refuge. And they are not the only ones here, a couple of hoopoes are also taking advantage of the abundance of food in the area. In the arid bushes, the birds find a manna of insects able to support the 50 degrees which overwhelm them. Some have developed clever techniques, like some beetles that bury themselves in the hot sand when the sun is at its peak. Other species like the yellow scorpion are insensitive to heat. Each one has its own strength and strategy to survive in this hostile environment...



Paulino Vazquez is a falconer and manages a somewhat crazy project: to fight pigeons to prevent damage generated on the stones and gardens of the site... His activity, recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage. On the other hand, the Betic midwife toad, a species endemic to southeastern Andalusia, has been reintroduced to the Alhambra, where it is the subject of scientific monitoring, led by Juan Ramon Fernandez Cardenete, who conducts surveys, measures a few individuals, and counts the nesting sites. In the end, the historian Juan Antonio Vilar, will explain to us the marvels of ingenuity that have been implemented over the ages in the Alhambra Palace to tame the water so precious here, thanks to his great knowledge of the place and his many anecdotes of the field. Wile, few steps away from the Mexican village settings of spaghetti westerns, a man crosses an olive grove in the Tabernas desert. Rafael Alfonso, checks the state of his olives. His Asturian horses help him in his maintenance of the olive grove. The man tells the story of his family's business and how, with a little resourcefulness and respect for the harsh environment, he won a prize at the International Olive Oil Competition in New York.

A small trickle of water is heard, and we discover, nestled on a wooded hill, the magnificent Alhambra, built nearly 800 years ago by the Nasrid dynasty. In the distance, the «Snowy Mountain Range», Sierra Nevada, rises up. Thanks to the construction of canals from the Darro River that runs along the slopes of the Sierra Nevada, the site is intelligently irrigated. Water is a preponderant element of Arab culture, the architectural history of the Alhambra is inseparable from its role as an oasis, for humans ... But also for animals! The history of the Royal Acequia of the Alhambra, which for centuries was not only the hydraulic backbone of the Nasrid enclosure, but of a large part of Granada. The common kestrel takes us on a journey from the slopes of the Sierra Nevada to the Tabernas Desert. The contrast is striking. On one side, the snowy winter of the summits, on the other side, desolation and burnt earth. In the heart of the mountains, we fly over lakes and mountains, thanks to the agile movements of the FPV drone that takes us over kilometers of ridges in a few seconds... Until we reach a disconcerting and unexpected scenery. To the east of the Sierra Nevada, as if deprived by this climatic barrier that clings to the clouds, unfolds an impressive desert, the most arid in Europe. Harrowing sun, heat haze, shadows at the zenith: we are in the heart of a Sergio Leone film. A land of contrasts where Spanish and Arab culture have merged, the Alhambra, an oasis of rich and mysterious biodiversity, has preserved its wild secrets over the centuries, from the canals to the towers of the fortress, through the gardens.





# EPISODE 5 - THE BASTEI BRIDGE

## SUMMARY

There is a region nestled on the border of the Czech Republic whose landscapes are as grandiose as they are mysterious: **Saxon Switzerland**. In this mineral setting, a true «**German Grand Canyon**», where imposing sandstone cliffs rise up, is perched a witness to the history of the region: the Bastei Bridge, one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country. The Bastei Bridge and the Elbe Sandstone Massif are not only cultural heritages, they are also natural heritages, havens of peace for numerous species that hibernate, nest, hunt, and shelter from formidable predators.





# THE EPISODE'S HIGHLIGHTS

A sea of clouds covers the sandstone cliffs, sculpted by natural forces for millions of years. In the middle of winter, they are draped in a thick coat of snow. The clouds are torn by rocky needles, where small pines mark the battle zone between the forest and the rocks... In the reliefs, impressive gorges, caves and waterfalls adorned with ice stalactites during the harsh winters, take shape as the drone progresses through the valleys. The landscape of Saxon Switzerland is fascinating and unique in Central Europe. The Bastei Bridge is located above the hiding place of the garden dormice in the cliff, and is anchored in the same rock as the cliff. **The seven arches of this almost 80-meter long structure**, 40 meters above the valley, are firmly anchored in the rock and seem to defy time. The Bastei Bridge was originally a strategic defensive bastion of the largest castle in Saxon Switzerland: Neurathen. Initially made of wood, when it was an integral part of the castle's architecture during the Middle Ages, it was only in 1849 that it was rebuilt, this time in stone, to support the influx of tourists who have been visiting it for the past 200 years, attracted by its breathtaking panorama... And by its wildlife, which is more discreet than the colorful group of onlookers who marvel at the relief. Seen from the air, this bridge perched above the void offers an incredible architectural spectacle. We walk along its arches, the vaults, the crenels, and fly towards the cliffs. In a green setting, this mineral fortress seems to have found its place in the middle of the sandstone rocks rising towards the sky and defying gravity. If Germany is known for its black forest, its cosmopolitan capital, or the emblematic Rhine River, the Bastei Bridge has nothing to envy them. A true architectural feat, it sits at the heart of an incredible ecosystem, an undeniable must-see place in Germany and in Europe!

Huddled in a rocky cavity, a family of **garden dormice** spends seven months hibernating, waiting for the return of the good weather. But, when spring appears, and the melted snow feeds the streams of the gorges, this little rodent resumes its habits and takes its snout out of the nest, impatient to get back to the table. In search of food and hanging on the steepest walls, the four legs stretched, it progresses incognito taking advantage of the darkness. During its hunts, its agile and lightning wanderings between the rocks, but especially, its constant dodging of the nocturnal birds of prey like the little Eurasian pigmy owl, one of its most serious predators in the region, promise breathless sequences. A few meters from the bridge, other inhabitants defy the void. On their return from migration, the black storks settle there in March and have prepared everything for the arrival of their precious offspring. In this fabulous landscape, the young **black storks** will soon share the sky with high-flying neighbors, such as the **swift Peregrine Falcon or the swarms of starlings**. After the harsh snowy winters, spring is more than welcome for the **red frogs**. Everywhere, wildlife has managed to establish itself, even in the sandbanks formed in the cliff, and resulting from millions of years of decomposition of the rock. This astonishing environment is the scene of merciless hunts. The larvae of ants develop formidable traps for ants that venture too close to the conical holes they have dug. When the latter perceive a cave-in to their ambush, they hurl streams of sand to drown their victim. In the wild, even the most insignificant places are the promise of thrilling, and ruthless, adventures...



Climbers like Felix come from all over the world to challenge the walls. They often spend several days in the park, looking for the best spots and sensations. And at night, there is no way they leave this natural paradise: they prefer the «Boofen», a local practice which consists in sleeping under the stars, under the shelters of the caves, around a campfire. While, Heike collects the information from a network of more than 4000 permanent vantage points. This monitoring provides him with information on the development of destructive bark beetles in spruce forests or on the influence of deer and roe deer on the vegetation cover and the regeneration of the forest. In the Saxon Switzerland National Park, nature is left to evolve freely, without human intervention. Few places in Europe are that lucky. In the end, Anja a herbalist will aware us of the richness of this environment, and of the importance of working to preserve it.



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