

NATURE . WILDLIFE

AMUR – ASIA'S AMAZON

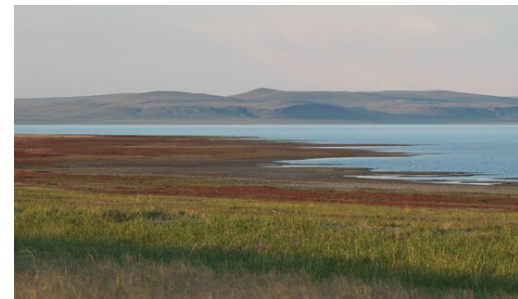
3 x 50', 90' (ENG, GER, FRA)



The Amur river is among the ten mightiest rivers of our planet – yet hardly known to westerners. For two thousand kilometres, it forms the border between Russia and China – and here lies a lost world, long inaccessible to foreigners but home to millions of wild animals.

The river's headwaters are in Mongolia; and some 5,000 kilometres from its source, it eventually feeds into the Pacific Ocean. The richly varied wild ecosystems along its course include expanses of steppe, mountain tundra, virgin boreal forests, vast floodplains and wetlands, subtropical forests, and the pristine coast of the northern Pacific. Its western half is under the regime of a harsh and extreme continental climate; its eastern half, with China's and some of Russia's vastest wetlands, belongs to the realm of the monsoon.

In three episodes, 'Asia's Amazon' explores the unspoilt natural world along the river and its tributaries and tells amazing stories of the wildlife and traditional communities that battle to survive in a unique and, to western eyes, largely unknown environment. This is a visual and dramatic journey of discovery along the mighty Amur river, an expedition into a lost and exotic world.



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Produced by:	Terra Mater Factual Studios, Interspot Film
Partners:	NDR Naturfilm/Doclights, Arte France

1. The Far East

The Amur's coastal delta is one of the richest ecosystems on earth. Nourished by the mighty river's enormous sediment load, the Sea of Okhotsk is a marine hotspot of biodiversity with arctic and subtropical species living side by side. Likewise, the land of Russia's Far East is a unique meeting place of northern and southern plants and animals, boasting the planet's most diverse woodlands. These wildwoods are still inhabited by Amur tigers, Asian black bears, brown bears, Siberian and Sika deer, sables and otters, and countless species of wetland birds. And they are home to the traditional forest and river cultures like the Udeghe and Nanai. The Pacific rim is both the end and the beginning of the Amur River system: It's the massive monsoon clouds the Pacific sends inland that keep the thousand tributaries of the Amur flowing.

2. The Black Dragon

The middle course of the Amur which is called Heilong-jian or Black Dragon River in China, runs through ancient Manchuria and forms a natural border between China and Russia. Until recently, this was a restricted military zone – restricted for humans but a blessing to wildwoods, wetlands, and wildlife. Primeval forests and sprawling wetlands offer habitats to rare species like the Manchurian crane and several of its relatives, white-tailed eagles, soft-shelled Chinese turtles, giant sturgeon and Siberian taimen, Amur leopards and tigers. The border also marks the sharp contrast between Russia's raw wilderness and China's farmland with the continent's biggest and northernmost rice fields.

3. The Secret Springs

Episode 3 follows the massive herds of Mongolian gazelles on their seasonal migrations and the trails of nomadic herdsman through wilderness regions that are home to steppe eagles, wolves, black vultures, Asian marmots, and black-billed capercaillies. This episode shows how the rhythm of all life inhabiting one of the planet's greatest networks of waterways, lakes, and wetlands is driven by climatic cycles. It shows the timeless flow of a mighty river in the sky flowing thousands of kilometres from the Pacific to the harsh, cold desert heart of the continent and of a thousand rivers uniting into a single giant one which drains this immense volume of water back to its true source, the ocean.

