



Grizzly bear vs Kodiak bear vs Brown bear — oh my! If you've ever wondered what the difference is between these bears the answer may be different than what you expect.

Grizzly bears and Kodiak bears are both brown bears, meaning they belong to the same umbrella species, *Ursus Arctos*. However, not all brown bears are Grizzly bears or Kodiak Bears. This is because Grizzly bears and Kodiak bears are considered subspecies of *Ursus Arctos*. Grizzly bears belong to *Ursus Arctos Horribilis* and Kodiak bears belong to *Ursus Arctos Middendorffi*.

Though Grizzlies and Kodiaks are subspecies of brown bears, they still share a lot in common. In fact, the differences between them are mostly geographical.

Bears in North America that have regular access to coastal resources like salmon and other fish are typically referred to as brown bears, not Grizzly bears. Only bears that live inland and rely on food resources like berries and

roots are classified as Grizzlies. These bears are found in Alaska, parts of Western Canada, and parts of the northwestern United States including Idaho, Montana, and Washington.

There is a greater difference between Kodiak bears and the others. Kodiaks are only found on the islands on the Kodiak Archipelago off the coast of south western Alaska. They have been isolated as a species for about 12,000 years and are the largest of the brown bears as well as one of the largest bear species in the world.

BROWN BEARS

BROWN BEARS OF NORTH AMERICA

Brown bears are found all over the world, in mountains and forests in Asia, Europe, and North America. Upwards of [20,000 brown bears](#) live in Canada, throughout the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, British Columbia, and Alberta.

Though they once occupied a large portion of the United States, they have lost nearly all of their previous habitat in the lower 48 states. Now they are primarily located in Alaska and in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Like their name implies, brown bears have long, thick brown fur that covers their entire bodies. The color can actually range from cream to dark brown and almost black depending on environmental factors and diet. They have a mane located at the back of their necks and in the winter, their coats become even thicker.

Brown bears are known for their strong, humped shoulders. They have a large muscle mass above their shoulders that helps them dig and forage by powering their forearms. Other bears, like [black bears](#) do not possess this hump. Another characteristic that differentiates them from black bears are their longer, straighter claws for digging and their rounder, shorter ears.

The height of a brown bear can reach about 3.5 feet when on all fours and up to 6-7 feet when standing up on their hind legs. Location can affect size though. Brown bears in the north tend to be larger, most likely due to colder temperatures.

Though brown bears are apex predators, they actually eat more plants than one might think. In fact, much of their diet is vegetation. As omnivores they eat grasses, roots, berries, fungi, mosses, nuts, fruits, insects, fish, birds, rodents, and moose and other mammals. They will also scavenge carrion left behind by other predators.

GRIZZLY BEARS

GRIZZLY BEAR VS KODIAK BEAR

Like mentioned above, Grizzly bears are brown bears that live inland rather than along coastal regions. They do not have access to the same plentiful food sources as coastal brown bears and are therefore generally smaller. However, this restricted access to abundant food also makes Grizzly bears more aggressive than regular Brown bears.

The name, "Grizzly" refers to the color of their fur rather than their intimidating behavior. These bears have silver-tipped hairs, giving them a distinct "grizzled" grayish look that differentiates them from standard brown bears.

HOW BIG ARE GRIZZLY BEARS?

Though smaller than other brown bears, Grizzly bears are still considered one of the largest predators on the planet. Adult female Grizzly bears typically weigh around 300-400 pounds, while adult male Grizzly bears weigh practically double that — around 400-800 pounds on average.

These numbers can vary pretty drastically though. There have even been some reports of male Grizzly bears weighing over 1,600 pounds. These are rare cases though. When it comes to the grizzly bear vs kodiak bear, in terms of size the grizzly is usually smaller.

Grizzlies are usually about 6.5 feet long and a little over 3 feet tall at the shoulder when standing on all fours. When standing on hind legs these bears can reach a height of around 8 feet, though larger bears can reach up to 10 or even 12 feet tall.

WHERE DO GRIZZLY BEARS LIVE?

There are roughly 55,000 Grizzly bears living in North America and most of them, about 95% of their population, are in Alaska. However, about 1,400 can be found in the lower 48 states of the United States, in Montana and Wyoming around the Yellowstone area. Some Grizzlies are also located in northwestern parts of Canada. Thanks to conservation efforts, Grizzly populations have begun to increase around Yellowstone, the northern Rockies, and also some prairie habitats along the Rockies in Montana.

Grizzly bears prefer to live in open spaces such as tundra, alpine meadows, wetlands, grasslands, mountains, forests, and alpine forests.

WHAT DO GRIZZLY BEARS EAT?

Like other Brown bears, Grizzly bears eat an incredibly varied diet. They are omnivores and will eat just about anything, including berries, insects, fleshy roots, fish, other mammals, and carrion. They hunt deer, moose, and caribou, scavenge, and forage for food, using their long, sharp claws to dig into the earth.

Their geographic location will also determine what food sources are readily available. The presence of salmon in places like Alaska and Canada offer a fat-rich food source that bears in areas such as Greater Yellowstone don't have access too. Most bears in this area instead rely on tubers, roots, and grasses in addition to rodents, insects, and carcasses. Many will also prey upon weak or young hoofed animals.

A surprising key food source Grizzlies in Yellowstone Park take advantage of during the summer is army cutworm moths. A single bear may eat up to

40,000 moths in a day, picking its way and overturning boulders and rocks to reach the moths underneath.

In order to prepare for winter hibernation, Grizzly bears need to eat an immense amount of food. During the fall they can gain up to 3 pounds a day by eating up to 20,000 calories worth of food. Throughout the entire preparation period before hibernation Grizzlies can put on approximately 400 pounds.

HOW FAST CAN A GRIZZLY BEAR RUN?

Grizzlies can run surprisingly fast. At top speed they can run up to 35 miles per hour for short bursts of time, faster than any human could sprint. In addition to being quick when it comes to running, they're also proficient swimmers.

KODIAK BEARS

Though Kodiak bears are the largest subspecies of brown bear, there are not many other differences between them and the other subspecies. There are about 3,500 Kodiak bears live today.

HOW BIG IS A KODIAK BEAR?

The main difference between a Kodiak, Grizzly, and brown bear is that a Kodiak bear can be much larger than either two. Adult female Kodiak bears often reach weights of around 400 – 700 pounds while adult males can reach 650 – 1,300 pounds — a few hundred pounds heavier than other brown bears on average.

Like other brown bears, Kodiak bears hibernate and their weight fluctuates during different times of the year. Big males can push up to 1,500 pounds at their peak weight before hibernation. Kodiaks will be at their lightest weight right after hibernation, when they awaken in the spring.

The average length of an adult male Kodiak bear is around 8 feet, with a height of around 4.5 feet at the shoulder. When balancing on its hind legs a full-grown male can stand nearly 10 feet tall.

WHERE DO KODIAK BEARS LIVE?

The reason Kodiak bears have been able to grow much larger than other brown bears is because they are only found on the islands of the Kodiak Archipelago located off the coast of Alaska. This separation from other bears has allowed Kodiak bears to slowly evolve into their own subspecies. The plentiful food available here allows them to reach sizes much larger than other Brown Bears.

Since they are confined to these islands, Kodiaks have very small home ranges — areas that they use each year. A female's home range may only be 50 square miles while a wild boar's home range could be up to nearly 100 square miles.

Though the islands of the Kodiak Archipelago only add up to around 5,000 square miles, it possess a diverse geography of spruce forests, mountains, hills, and tundra.

WHAT DO KODIAK BEARS EAT?

Like Grizzlies and brown bears, Kodiak bears are omnivores and take full advantage of all the food sources the islands have to offer.

During the spring Kodiaks will eat new vegetation and grasses as well as the carrion of animals that died during the winter. From May to late summer the salmon run offers plenty of fat-rich fish spawning in lakes and streams.

Bears may even comb the beaches from time to time to eat up seaweed and invertebrates along the coast. Deer, elk, and mountain goats are also found on the islands, though they aren't the main source of the bears' diet.

HOW FAST CAN A KODIAK BEAR RUN?

Grizzlies aren't the only bears that can run fast. At short distances brown bears can reach speeds of 35-40 miles per hour, so a large Kodiak would most likely be a little slower than a Grizzly.

OTHER BROWN BEARS FOUND IN NORTH AMERICA

Many authorities only count the two subspecies *Ursus Arctos Horribilis* and *Ursus Arctos Middendorffi* as the subspecies of brown bear in North America. However, there are a few other brown bears in North America, primarily Alaska, that are classified under *Ursus Arctos Horribilis* subspecies. These bears are very similar to each other, with location being the key differentiating factor.

DALL BROWN BEAR

The Dall brown bear, or *Ursus Arctos Dalli*, is one of the variants of brown bear belonging to *Ursus Arctos Horribilis* subspecies. They're found in the Alaskan panhandle region around Yakutat Bay and Hubbard Glacier.

They are large bears and share many of the same physical characteristics as their brown bear cousins the Grizzly and Kodiak bear. Their color ranges from light brown to nearly black, though most are usually dark brown. They may also have a grizzly appearance due to their lighter color tipped hair. Like other brown bears, they also have a dish-shaped face, a large [muscular](#) hump above their shoulders, and long curved claws.

ALASKA PENINSULA BROWN BEAR

The Alaska Peninsula brown bear, or *Ursus Arctos Gyas*, is another subspecies of brown bear that lives along the coast in southern Alaskan peninsula. The southern side of this peninsula contains mountains while the northern side is more flat and filled with marshland.

They're also a very large bear, second largest next to the Kodiak bear. Their weight ranges from 800 to 1,200 pounds on average.

The abundance of food such as clams and sedge grass found along the coast help the bears reach their large sizes. Salmon runs are another important food source for Peninsula bears, they catch them during spawning season by waiting at the top or bottom of waterfalls and snatch them as they swim and jump into the air.

SITKA BROWN BEAR

The main difference between the Sitka brown bear, *Ursus Arctos Sitkensis*, is that it lives only in the Alexander Peninsula of Alaska. More specifically on the Admiralty, Baranof, and Chichagof islands. For this reason it's also known as the ABC Islands bear.

Unlike other brown bears, these bears have a unique gene structure that relates them to polar bears. They are thought to be the result of interbreeding between polar and brown bears most likely at the end of the last glacial period.

The Sitka Brown bear has the same shoulder hump, face shape, and long claws as other brown bears, with milk-chocolate colored fur.

STICKEEN BROWN BEAR

The Stickeen brown bear, *Ursus Arctos Stickeenensis*, lives in northwestern mainland Canada, in mountainous, inland British Columbia. This area includes river valleys and lake basins such as the Skeena River, the head of the Finlay River, and also the Dease Lake region.

Like other inland Grizzly bears, Stickeen brown bears are typically smaller than bears that live along the coast. Adult males weigh 300 to 800 pounds on average, while adult females weigh in at around 200 to 450 pounds.