"Please Look After This Bear" Celebrating World Bear Day and The Gift of Freedom for Retta, from Broken to Beautiful

Friday 20 March, 2026

World Bear Day (23rd March) is the perfect time to reflect on International Animal Rescue's (IAR) work with bears, and one extraordinary tale of hope stands out. Back in 2024, the IAR team met Margaretta (Retta), an ex-circus bear who spent years confined in a tiny cage, serving as a sad spectacle for visitors at a tourist resort in Armenia. The tale was tragic and, as the photo clearly shows, heartbreaking for poor Retta.

But today, Retta's life has been transformed. Thanks to an extraordinary rescue mission by International Animal Rescue (IAR) and its Armenian partners, FPWC (Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets), Retta now roams freely.

Retta's heartbreaking journey began in captivity, where she suffered for many years of neglect and isolation. Her cage, a small concrete closet, became her entire world; with no opportunity to explore, play, or feel the earth's warmth beneath her paws, Retta's life was a shadow of what it should have been.

This changed when animal protection and conservation charity International Animal Rescue (IAR) and FPWC launched a daring rescue to free Retta from her cage and transport her to safety. Working tirelessly with local authorities and the police; the team navigated logistical challenges to ensure Retta could begin a new chapter of life.

Two years on, Retta now lives a life where she is cared for and looked after at International Animal Rescue and FPWC's bear sanctuary, where she can finally live as nature intended, enjoying a life she never knew existed.

International Animal Rescue's President, Alan Knight OBE, reflects on the mission: *"Rescuing Retta was a monumental effort, but seeing her rediscover her instincts and joy make it all worth it. Her resilience inspires us to keep fighting for animals like her, who desperately need a second chance at a life worth living."*

Sharing Retta's story this World Bear Day couldn't be more timely, as Paddington the musical celebrates award wins sweeping across the board, Retta's story echoes this famous bear's plea: "Please look after this bear." Retta reminds us that acts of kindness, big or small, can create miracles. But our work and Retta's journey doesn't stop here Retta will need daily care and support for the rest of her life, which is only possible because of our wonderful supporters.

International Animal Rescue invites you to read more inspiring stories or support our bears at www.internationalanimalrescue.org.

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