

GOBIERNO DEL PRINCIPADO DE ASTURIAS

Human Heritage Site.*Altamira Cave and Palaeolithic Cave Art of Northern Spain (declared in 2008).*

LOCATION: San Román de Candamo, Candamo District.

DIRECTIONS: From Oviedo, take the A-63 (Oviedo-La Espina) to Grado. From here to San Román, take the AS-237 and AS-236. From Avilés, take the A-8 to Soto del Barco. From here take the AS-16 towards Pravia. In Peñaullán take the AS-236 to San Román.

CO-ORDINATES: 43.4562,-6.07266

OPENING TIMES: Easter holiday and from 15 June-15 September. closed.

VISITS:

children under 7 years. Visits must be pre-booked.

ENTRANCE FEE: Free.

INFORMATION AND BOOKING: Candamo Local Council (Ayuntamiento); Tel: 985 828 056.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Wear warm clothing and suitable footwear. Not recommended for persons with reduced vision or reduced mobility. Visitors are asked to be punctual.

- Candamo Cave Interpretation Centre. Open all year. Open from 10.00 to 14.00 h. Mondays closed. ENTRANCE FEE: €1.20 Adults. €0.60 under-16s. Free on Wednesdays. Tel: 985 829 702.

Mondays

No



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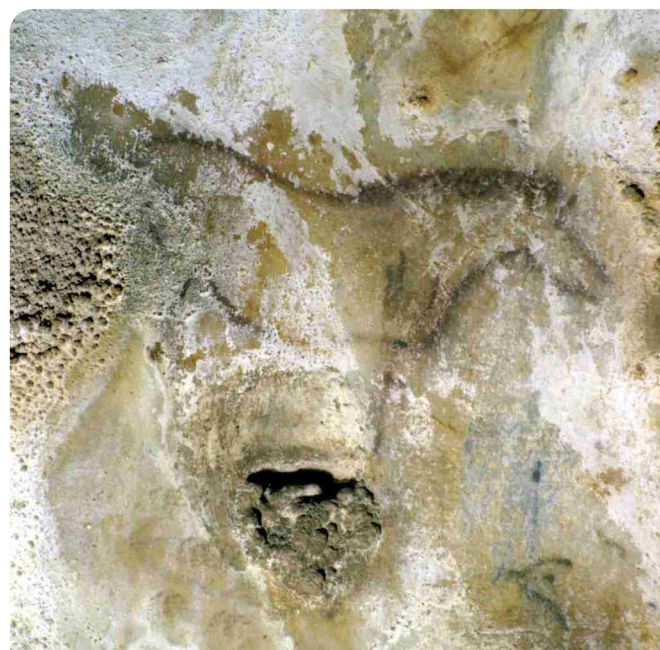


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DESCRIPTION OF THE CAVE

This cave is situated in the lower reaches of the Nalón River, not far from its mouth, and constitutes the westernmost example of Palaeolithic cave art in Europe.

It is set into a limestone outcrop, known as *La Peña*, and is about 70 metres in length. Visitors enter the cave through an artificially enlarged reception chamber; this leads to a gallery which has, set into the right hand wall, a small chamber with a number of red coloured markings on the ceiling (*the Chamber of the Red Signs*). The gallery then leads to the main chamber, where we can observe most of the rest of the cave's art works (*the Chamber of Engravings*). This chamber, the size and height of which take the visitor by surprise, is ringed by spectacular geological formations (columns, deposit flows and stalagmitic outcrops). At one end there is another small chamber (*the Baticias Gallery*), the name of which derives from the large number of cave insects found here. It was originally thought that there were no Palaeolithic art works in this chamber; however, recent investigations suggest that there is indeed some graphic content.



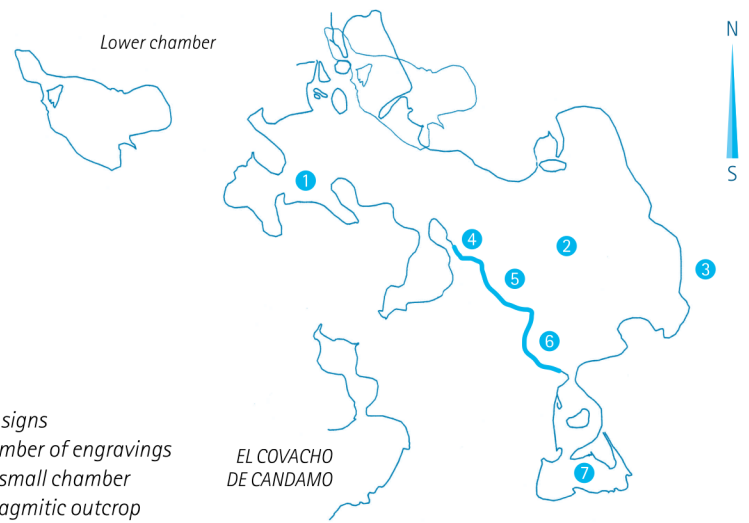
Stalagmitic rock flow ▲

DISCOVERY AND INVESTIGATION

Although the cave was already known to local inhabitants, it was not until 1914 that Eduardo Hernández Pacheco (professor of Geology at the "Universidad Complutense") discovered the existence of ancient paintings and engravings. At more or less the same time the Count of La Vega del Sella (an important Asturian pre-historian) identified the art present in the cave. Both these men exchanged their findings and it was the former who carried out more detailed research and subsequently published his investigations on the cave in 1919; this work is one of the best and most thorough monographic publications on Cantabrian Palaeolithic art.

The importance of the art found here was quickly recognised and led to the cave being declared a National Monument in 1942, thus increasing its popularity to visitors. The cave was made more accessible but there was little control over visits and this led to a rapid deterioration of the paintings and engravings. In 1980 the Peña de Candamo was closed to the public in order to protect the art work and restore the atmospheric conditions of the cave. Following this restoration work and a ten year period of rest to allow the cave to regain its natural state, it was finally reopened in the 1990s.

- 1 Red signs
- 2 Chamber of engravings
- 3 The small chamber
- 4 Stalagmitic outcrop
- 5 Wall fo engravings
- 6 Stalagmitic rock flow
- 7 The "Batiscias" gallery



▲ Wall of engravings. Aurochs

ART IN THE PEÑA DE CANDAMO

The Chamber of the Red Signs. Alongside a number of unconnected lines there are three schematic figures which were badly deteriorated due to vandalism. Due to this and to the difficulty of access, this chamber is not open to the public.

The Chamber of Engravings. This large chamber has six clearly defined areas of art works. From left to right they are as follows. *The Stalagmitic Outcrop:* this is a small deposit flow or outcrop which has two horses' heads and a female deer engraved on it in deep, wide lines. *The Wall of Engravings:* the figures here are divided into two different sections on a calcitic crust that runs along the wall. In the right hand section, in the top right corner, are the figures of a number of aurochs in ochre tones, associated with a series of black dots. To the left there are some incomplete figures of aurochs, some of them only identifiable by their horns. The rest of the panel has a confusing array of painted dots and lines next to animal engravings amongst which we can identify aurochs, bison, deer, horses, a goat and what may be a boar. The two figures that stand out in this group are the central figure of an auroch and a deer with its head facing backwards: the latter has a number of line strokes converging on its body which have been identified as possible spears. In the left section the figures are divided into three different areas. In the upper area there is a carefully drawn female deer; in the central area we can observe a large group of painted and engraved figures, including aurochs, deer, goats, horses, a human shape ("anthropomorph") and what may be a seal. On the far left of this area there is a group of super-imposed paintings and engravings, among which we can identify deer, chamois, bison (one of which appears to have human features on its head) and another

anthropomorph. *The Stalagmitic Rock Flow:* on this rock flow we can make out a number of black lines and the figure of a partially engraved and red painted horse. *The Small Chamber:* this is a small recess set high in the cave and bounded by two stalagmitic deposit flows. Although there are only six animal figures in this area (four horses, an auroch and a bison), the artistic quality of one of the horses makes it one of the most striking parts of the cave. This horse, painted in ochre tones and situated in the centre of the recess, was created as part of an ambitious pictorial project which involved the removal of certain natural elements (calcite deposits) in order to make the figure perfectly visible from the floor area of the Main Chamber. *The Goat Panel:* as part of a group of striking rock formations above the floor of the chamber we can observe the figure of a single goat. *Columns:* a group of calcite columns which contain red discs carefully distributed along their lower third.

The Batiscias Gallery. Recent studies suggest the existence of red stains and lines associated with mineral deposits as well as engraved lines which may correspond to animal figures.

The artistic analysis of the cave art together with radiocarbon dating carried out on certain samples allow us to define a prolonged period of artistic activity in La Peña de Candamo cave from the Gravettian period to the end of the Magdalenian period (from 22,590–10,870 BP—before present) This extended period of activity together with the quality of some of the art work have led La Peña de Candamo cave to be considered as one of the great sanctuaries of European Palaeolithic art.

Horse in the small chamber ▼

