

Neanderthal Spear Tip Discovery

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Neanderthal Spear Tip Discovery Latest News

An international archaeological team has unearthed the oldest known spear tip in Europe, crafted not by Homo sapiens, but by Neanderthals.

Where and How Was It Found?

- The **spear tip was discovered in a cave** in the **North Caucasus region of Russia**, embedded in a **sediment layer**.
- The findings were published in the **Journal of Archaeological Science** and are based on materials excavated in **2003** but studied in-depth only recently.
- It was found along with **animal bones** and the **remains of a campfire**, indicating habitation by prehistoric hominins.
- The team employed **spectroscopy**, **computed tomography (CT scans)**, and **microscopy techniques** to analyse the artefact in high detail.
- **Key Features of the Spear Tip**

- The spear tip is approximately **9 cm long**.
- It was made from **animal bone**, most likely from a **bison**.
- It had been **shaped using stone tools** and **affixed to a wooden shaft using natural tar**—a sign of planned construction.
- **Micro-cracks on the tip** suggest that it struck a **hard target**, implying use in **hunting or combat**.
- Lack of wear and tear indicates the spear was **likely used successfully shortly after it was crafted**.
- **Dating and Attribution:** The artefact dates back to **70,000-80,000 years ago**, which is **much earlier than the arrival of modern humans in Europe (~45,000 years ago)**. This confirms that the **tool was created by Neanderthals**, not Homo sapiens.

About Neanderthals (Homo neanderthalensis)

- Neanderthals were an **extinct species of archaic humans**, closely related to modern humans.
- They **inhabited Europe, Central Asia, and parts of the Middle East**.
- **Genetic evidence** shows that modern humans and Neanderthals diverged about **500,000 years ago**.
- The **last known Neanderthals died out ~40,000 years ago**, shortly after Homo sapiens migrated deeper into Europe.
- **Modern humans carry 1-2% Neanderthal DNA**, proving **interbreeding** occurred.

Neanderthal Physical and Cultural Traits

- **Robust bodies** adapted for cold climates: **shorter, stockier**, and extremely **muscular**.
- **Skull characteristics:** Large middle face, **projecting nose**, **angled cheekbones**, and **receding chin**.
- **Brain size** comparable to or **larger than modern humans**, relative to body size.
- **Expert hunters:** They used **sophisticated stone and bone tools**, controlled fire, made clothing, and lived in **structured shelters**.
- Practised **symbolic behaviour:** Made ornaments, and **deliberately buried their dead**, sometimes with **funerary offerings**—a practice **unmatched by any earlier hominin**.

Source: PHY

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