

## History of the Museum

The National Museum and Research Centre of Altamira was created in 1979 for the conservation, study, dissemination and enjoyment of the knowledge it contains. It is an institution devoted to discovering everything about Altamira, a masterpiece in universal art history and our most remote past.

The cave of Altamira was declared a World Heritage Site (UNESCO) in 1985.

The new facilities were the joint endeavour (1997-2001) of the Government of Spain, the Regional Government of Cantabria, the Santillana del Mar City Council and the Marcelino Botín Foundation.

The museum has the services necessary to conserve and fully investigate its reason for existing: Altamira. Researchers and students have access to a workshop and a laboratory to do their work in addition to a library specialised in prehistory, rock art and museology.

The museum offers all its visitors a permanent exhibition, guided tours of the Neocave, children's workshops and experimental archaeology activities for those over twelve as well as unique temporary activities. A parking area, cafeteria, museum shop, customised visits and events for companies, etc. complete this offer.

The museum also provides full accessibility and guaranteed enjoyment, making its surprising history and fascinating prehistory available to everyone.

## The Building

The Museum of Altamira is endowed with all the facilities necessary for the study, conservation and dissemination of the Palaeolithic Age and its art. Researchers have access to a restoration workshop, laboratories, storerooms, documentary archives, lecture halls and a library specialised in prehistory, Palaeolithic art and museology.



### Opening Hours

- 9.30 to 20.00 from May to October
- 9.30 to 18.00 from November to April
- 9.30 to 15.00 on Sundays and holidays

Closed: every Monday; 1 and 6 January; 1 May; 24, 25 and 31 December

### Cultural Programme

- Prehistoric workshops for everyone. Booking: call (+34) 942 818102
- Museoteca for families
- Prehistoric workshops for scholars. For further information, please visit our website.

### Visits to The Museum of Altamira

Upon arrival at the museum, visitors will receive a ticket giving the exact hour of their visit to the Neocave. Guided tours should be requested upon arrival at the museum and will be assigned according to the space available.

### Available services

- Videoguides in SSL
- Cafe-restaurant
- Pic-nic area
- Shop

### Admission Fee

General ticket: €3, reduced ticket: €1.50. Annual admission card: €25. The ticket shows the time of access to the museum. You may stay as long as you like.

### Free Admission

Saturdays from 14.00 to closing, Sundays and 18 April (World Heritage Day), 18 May (International Museum Day), 12 October (Spain's National Holiday) and 6 December (Spanish Constitution Day).

### Advance Ticket Sales

Through the Banco Santander: offices, automatic tellers, by calling 902 24 24 24 and at [www.gruposantander.es](http://www.gruposantander.es)

### Group and Workshop Bookings

Telephone No.: (34) 942 81 81 02  
[reserva.maltamira@mcu.es](mailto:reserva.maltamira@mcu.es)  
Fax: (34) 942 81 88 36

### Group Visits

These visits should be arranged a minimum of 15 days in advance.

### How to get to the Museum

Santillana del Mar can be reached from Santander and Castilla-León on the A67 motorway and from Oviedo on the A8 motorway.  
Santillana del Mar, 39330 Cantabria  
Tel. No. (34) 942 81 80 05  
Fax No. (34) 942 84 01 57  
[información.maltamira@mcu.es](mailto:información.maltamira@mcu.es)  
<http://museodealtamira.mcu.es>



MINISTERIO DE CULTURA





### The Neocave

The Neocave shows Altamira just as it was during the Palaeolithic Age, with its natural geological architecture and without the rock falls that have occurred since then. It provides detailed knowledge about all of Altamira's art, including the most remote, inaccessible works.

In its luminous entrance hall, we see and hear members of a family group as they go about their daily activities around the hearth.

The Great Ceiling surprises us with its bison, horses, deer, goats and signs. This is prehistory's great shrine, the expression of an emotional, non-scientific thought that tried to understand and explain the world - a symbolic expression filled with transcendence and religiosity.

In the last gallery, other figures and some ghostly masks calm and encourage us to continue on our way and return to the light and the present time.

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The cave of Altamira, the exhibition, including the Neocave, cultural activities, prehistory workshops and the environment of forest and meadows, comprise The Museum of Altamira, a venue devoted to enjoyment, experience and knowledge of the life of those who painted and inhabited the cave of Altamira.



### Before Altamira

Those who inhabited and expressed themselves artistically in Altamira thousands of years ago were *Homo sapiens* like us, with our same appearance and intellectual capacity. But other human species existed a long time before them: *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*, the *Neanderthals*... Today only one human species is left on earth.

A brief review of evolution shows us these other human beings: the first human who emerged 2,000,000 years ago in Africa (our place of origin) and the *Neanderthals*, the only human species that arose and became extinct in Europe 30,000 years ago, shown with their characteristic landscape and technological evolution, carving stones to produce tools.

Cartoons (for children and adults) summarise the social life of those groups and in a simple, evocative fashion, help us recognise and relate all the objects, documentaries and data shown in this gallery.



### Life in the Times of Altamira

Altamira was inhabited since 22,000 to 13,000 years ago, during the Solutrean and Magdalenian periods, identified by the production of objects made of flint and antlers or bones respectively.

The showcases display objects found in various caves in the Cantabrian region. This selection contains the best examples of the implements these people used daily to hunt, fish, eat and clothe or adorn themselves. These scenes reconstruct things that have not been conserved because they were made of perishable animal and plant material (skins, sinews, wood, etc.), even though sufficient traces and particles have survived.

Documentaries and cartoons show the manufacturing processes and use of the objects as well as the social activities related with them.

These humans adapted fully to the climate and the flora and fauna of the surrounding landscape and efficiently exploited their territory.

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The Museum holds the best archaeological collection on the Upper Palaeolithic and from other archaeological sites in Cantabria and Spain.



Food was obtained by hunting and gathering. The group's life was scheduled according to the seasons. In mild weather, they headed for the valleys to take advantage of forest fruits and the salmon passing by and to hunt goats. They stayed closer to the coast in the winter months in order to catch shellfish and hunt deer, which were available all year long.

During this period, the bone and particularly flint points used to hunt animals with weapons thrown by hand, by a launcher or perhaps a bow, acquired their definitive shapes, which have changed very little over the millennia.

The same can be said about the heads of the harpoons they used to catch fish, not to mention the fine bone needles, which can only be distinguished from the modern version by the metal.



### The First Art

Art is exclusive to our species. It is an original way of creating symbolic images, expressing or identifying ourselves by them and communicating through them.

Rupestrian or rock (*rupes* in Latin) art - painting, drawing or engraving figures on stone in caves and natural shelters - is one of the few cultural phenomena that is universal in time and space. It is the first art, still practiced by some groups and found in all five continents.

Four replicas synthesise the best of Cantabria's Palaeolithic art and all its techniques, subjects, styles and chronology. Together with the immobile art located in the darkness of the cave, we also find unique mobile art objects, perhaps of a great personal or symbolic value, which are real treasures from the past.

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In The Museum of Altamira you can perform some of the Palaeolithic's daily tasks, such as hunting or making fire by prehistoric methods and experimenting with the techniques of the Altamira artist, such as the airbrush.



### More Prehistory

Since its discovery, prehistory, and particularly the Palaeolithic Age, has caused widespread fascination and has been a never-ending source of inspiration for various arts and activities.

Other types of prehistory exist that are unrelated to scientific knowledge, but are inspired by it or by the fertile imagination of contemporary creators who use it as their pretext. Prehistory is found in literary or film fiction as the atmosphere or setting for very successful novels and films and it is also employed in graphic humour, comics and commercial advertising.

These other versions of prehistory encourage numerous reflections and are also present in the museum. Databases suggest only a few examples of the variety of ingenious interpretations of prehistory we can find in our everyday lives.