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Institut national
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préventives



Press release
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Under Montpellier, the last great hunters of the Languedoc region

In advance of work on line N° 2 of the Montpellier tramway, an excavation, curated by the Regional Archaeology Service, was carried out at Fontaine de Pila street by archaeologists from the Institut National de Recherches Archéologiques Préventives (INRAP) and the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). Together, they discovered the oldest traces of human occupation in Montpellier, dating back to well before the creation of the city!

Hunters at the end of the Palaeolithic in Montpellier

11,500 years ago, on the bank of the Verdanson River, a group of hunters set up their camp. A stone tool kit they abandoned is characteristic of the Epipalaeolithic, a purely Palaeolithic culture that existed just after the disappearance of reindeer, 12,000 years ago. These stone tools include numerous end scrapers, backed bladelets, small points with curved backs, and a few rare burins. The presence of one small bone point makes the assemblage particularly interesting.

The raw materials used (mostly flint, but also some quartz) are very diverse and of varied provenance. Detailed study of these objects will allow archaeologists to reconstruct the movements of these hunters across their territory.

Faunal remains are abundant in the camp. They include red deer, aurochs, wild boar, ibex and wild ass (*Equus hydruntinus*). Though reindeer were still present in the Final Magdalenian period (12,000 years ago), they had already deserted Mediterranean France. These few elements indicate a rather temperate (forested) climate. The remains of a few smaller animals (rabbit and hare) were also found, along with numerous fish remains. This new excavation will contribute fundamental data about the climate and environment between the end of the Ice Age and to-day.

One of the rare Epipalaeolithic sites in the Eastern Languedoc region

The site of Fontaine du Pila Saint Gély contributes significant new data concerning the last great prehistoric hunters of the Languedoc region. Sites from this period are very rare in the Languedoc. Along with Baume de Valorgues at Saint-Quentin la Poterie (Gard), excavated in the 1950's, the only other notable site is Grange des Merveilles II at Rochefort du Gard, excavated in 1996 before the construction of the Mediterranean TGV railway line.



Montpellier
Agglomération



Transports de l'agglomération de Montpellier

Client: Montpellier Agglomération
Contractor: TaM
Curation: Regional Archaeology Service (DRAC Languedoc Roussillon)
Preventive archaeological research: Inrap, CNRS
Co-site directors: Olivier Ginouvez, Inrap
Frédéric Bazile, UPR 516, CNRS
Specialists: Michel Brenet, Inrap, Catherine Cretin, SRA Languedoc

Inrap

With 1,800 collaborators and researchers, Inrap is the largest archaeological research structure in France and one of the most important in Europe. This national public research institution undertakes the majority of archaeological evaluations and excavations in partnership with private and public developers, a total of nearly 2,500 sites per year in mainland France and its overseas territories.

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