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Institut national de recherches archéologiques préventives
Inrap

Press release
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A Neandertal occupation is discovered on the the bank of the Saône river

APRR

A team of Inrap archaeologists is excavating, under curation by the State (Drac Rhône-Alpes), a Middle Paleolithic site in Quincieux in conjunction with work on the A466. Following the decision by the Interregional Committee on Archaeological Research and in the framework of a procedure for "exceptional discoveries", the prefect has extended the duration of this excavation of one hectare.

An exceptional stratigraphic sequence

This prehistoric site is located on a loess butte overlooking the ancient bed of the Saône River. Unique in the Rhône-Alpes, its sedimentary sequence associating fluvial and eolian deposits provides information on the evolution of the Saône during the Upper Pleistocene (128 000-11 000 BP). Initially 8 m high, it is composed of a succession of paleosols and loess: the earliest one, more than 2 m thick, is dated to between 55,000 and 35,000 years ago, and thus to the end of the Middle Paleolithic. The excavation has yielded a rich faunal assemblage distributed throughout three levels and associated with flaked flint objects discarded by Neandertals.

A cold climate fauna

All of the animal species discovered are associated with a cold climate and steppe environment. The several hundreds of bone remains belong mostly to large herbivores: mammoth, wooly rhinoceros, horse, bison and reindeer. The less numerous carnivores are represented by a cave bear skull and a few wolf bones. These bones are often isolated, and less often in anatomical connection. Most of the accumulations resulted from human actions: the animals present were hunted and/or scavenged by Neandertals that used the carcasses, with some bones displaying the marks of human induced fractures. At the same time, the archaeologists have observed a lack of long bones, indicating that the meat rich parts were exported, probably to a habitat site.

Evidence of Neandertal subsistance activities

The site of Quincieux thus provides an opportunity to study the subsistence behaviors of Neandertals away from the habitat sites or hunting camps that archaeologists usually excavate. The lithic industry is poor and is composed of a few cores and flakes in flint and hard limestone. Future paleontological and zooarchaeological studies will provide essential information on the exact nature of the site and the activities carried out there.

L'Inrap
With nearly 2000 collaborators and researchers, Inrap is the largest archaeological research structure in France and one of the most important in Europe. Each year, this national research institute realizes approximately 1,500 archaeological diagnostic operations and 250 excavations in partnership with private and public developers in metropolitan France and its overseas territories. Its missions also include the scientific exploitation of the results and the diffusion of archaeological knowledge to the public.

APRR
With more than 21 billion kilometers traversed per year on the 2,300 km of its road system, APRR and its subsidiary AREA are ranked 4th among European motorway operators. The 3,800 collaborators of the group work 365 days per year, 7 days a week and 24 hours a day to make possible all of the desires and needs of motorway users, with the main objectives of ensuring security, accompanying and facilitating mobility.

Developer **APRR**
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