

MORE TRAVEL 12-day tour from Provence to Burgundy

Day 5 :

What were you doing on December 18, 1994?

While I was getting ready for my first Christmas break of my first year in High School, Jean-Marie Chauvet, along with two other spelunkers, discovered a new cave in the Ardèche department. Its natural entrance had been blocked for about 17,000 years, leaving prehistoric art intact. They discovered paintings representing more than 400 animals, of 14 different species: cave bears, woolly mammoths, lions but the horses are the most emblematic in this cave.



The “*Grotte Chauvet*” or “*Cavern of Pont d’Arc*” (named after the nearby arch we saw yesterday) is the oldest decorated cave known so far in France. Guess what, within a week after the discovery the state closed it to preserve it forever, and not repeat the mistake of Lascaux (a cave in south-western France Dordogne area), damaged by the high concentration of CO₂ due to the presence of too many visitors.



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Before the “*Grotte Chauvet*” was discovered, archeologists thought that anything before Lascaux’s art (~17,000 years old) would be cruder, more basic, but 36,000 years ago the techniques were already mastered. Our question now: when is the beginning of art?

In 2014, 20 years after the discovery, a magnificent state of the art replica opened a couple miles away from the original cave. Scientists and artists have faithfully reproduced what our ancestors created 36,000 years ago, in order to let us appreciate their art...

Only about a hundred people a year can enter the original cave, you either have to be a scientist, one of the three discoverers (or one of their close family members) or the French President...

But you can still visit it silently with this video...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGn7KnAxUT8>

After our comprehensive tour of pre-historic art, we make our way north driving through the Ardèche department, admiring the nature surrounding us and stopping at one more “*plus beau village de France*” before reaching the Rhône river again in Tournon-sur-Rhône, our new home.



Le “Mot du Jour”: “*la cave*”: that’s where we store our wines; we see pre-historic paintings in “*la grotte*” ...

We are all caveman and cavewoman these days, hopefully with lots of wine stored...