

Europe's Oldest Map Found In Spain

Ancient Hunters Marked Animal Locations On Stones

Ever Been Lost?

Imagine leaving home and travelling to a new area and suddenly discovering you're lost, bad news.

Now go back 14,000 years and imagine the same scenario, even worse news!

An area in the winter rains may look completely different in hot summer.

But now archaeologists have matched etchings, made on a polished chunk of sandstone in northern Spain, to the landscape in which it was found.

They claim this is the earliest known map of a region in western Europe, a prehistoric hunting map.

The piece of rock, roughly hand-sized and 14,000 years old, has scratched into its surface a mass of overlapping etchings.

It was found in a cave in Navarre on the southern side of the Pyrenees and it took Pilar Utrilla of the University of Zaragoza and colleagues the better part of ten years to disentangle the lines and make sense of them.

Above recognisable likenesses of reindeer, a stag and some ibex are what Pilar Utrilla's team believe is a depiction of the landscape



surrounding the cave.

Several etched lines resemble the shapes of mountains that are visible from the cave.

Long, wandering scratches match the course of a river that runs at the foot of one of the mountains and splits into two tributaries.

A series of strokes that cut across the river near the mountain could represent places where it was easily crossed the researchers say.

"This is a pretty spectacular find," says prehistoric archaeologist Lawrence Straus of the University of New Mexico. "It may give us a glimpse into the ways in which people navigated and explained their territories."

He says the slab was etched during a period of enormous cultural activity in northern Spain.

"The human range was expanding northward and population density was increasing after people nearly died off in the last glacial maximum about 20,000 to 17,000 years ago.

People were perhaps having to cooperate, carving up territories among different bands.



we are and were constantly moving around the landscape."

But according to Jill Cook, head of the prehistory division at the British Museum in London, hundreds of similar etchings have been found sprinkled across Europe.

"Multiple lines positioned over animal figures are not unusual in slabs of this period. We haven't traditionally considered them to be maps.

"Their intimacy and knowledge of the landscape, including the location of individual trees and plants, would be such that maps would be less vital to them.

"On the whole, art of this period doesn't include landscape elements, any trees, rivers or hills, so this interpretation is very brave

Oldest known map examples include:

- The oldest map found in Europe, discovered in Pavlov in the Czech Republic, is about 25,000 years old.

It depicts a mountain, river, valleys and routes around the region.

- A schematic 6200-year-old drawing of Çatalhöyük in Turkey may be the oldest known city map.

- The oldest known map of the world dates to 600 BC. It is inscribed on a clay tablet discovered in the city of Sippar in southern Iraq, is centred around Babylon and shows the world as a circle surrounded by "bitter water": the salty sea.

- The oldest complete star atlas, measuring 2 metres across, was discovered in China in 1907.

It dates from the 7th century AD and marks the position of 1339 stars, including clearly recognisable groups such as Orion and the big dipper.



They had to live by their wits and what the landscape provided."

This significant find may give a glimpse into the way people navigated and defined their territories

"The interpretation is, of course, pure speculation, as with all other such claims for Ice Age maps," says Bahn.

"On the other hand, it would be extremely surprising if these people did not produce rough maps. They were as intelligent as

A Royal Bounce Last days of Mary, Queen of Scots.

At 2 a.m. on a frosty February morning in 1587, Mary Queen of Scots sat at her writing desk and penned a last letter before her execution in the great hall of Fotheringhay Castle in the English midlands.

A regal lady, fragile with age but remarkably well kept, she wrote to her brother-in-law, the King of France, "Tonight, after dinner, I have been advised of my sentence: I am to be executed like a criminal at eight in the morning".

Kept in a dark air-conditioned safe, the letter is rarely seen.



Mary, who had briefly been Queen of France, was removed from the Scottish throne by a rebellious aristocracy and fled south in 1568 at the age of 25, throwing herself on the mercy of her cousin, England's Queen Elizabeth I.

But Mary was an unwelcome visitor to England. Many thought throughout Europe that she had a better claim to the English throne than Elizabeth herself.

So she was confined in various English castles and prisons, convicted of plotting against Elizabeth, condemned to death for treason on

charges she denied and finally executed in 1587.

In her last letter, Mary complains she had been deprived of her papers with which to make a will and asks the French king to pay the wages and pensions of her servants.

She was regal and brave to the end, writing: "...I scorn death and vow that I meet it innocent of any crime..."

First Dawn Nerves!

Her nervous executioner made a right pig's ear of removing her head on the morning of



February 8.

He swung his axe at least twice before his deed was done.

He then seized her head to display it to the onlookers, but all that the audience saw was the auburn wig the young queen had worn to conceal her greying locks.

It was not old age that had turned it white, as she was only forty when she met her death, but the troubles, misfortunes, and sorrows which she had suffered, especially in her prison.

In 1603, Mary's son James VI of Scotland acceded to the English throne as James I on the death of Elizabeth I, so uniting England and Scotland under one monarch.

He then took Mary's remains to London's Westminster Abbey, where they lay till this day.

Her letter had been kept in the French royal archives, from there they were taken to a Catholic seminary in Paris, until the French Revolution in 1789.

Finally a group of sympathisers bought the letter in 1918 and presented it to the Scottish nation.

The Queen was showing the Archbishop around the Royal Stables when one of the stallions close by farted so loudly it couldn't be ignored.

"Oh dear," said the Queen, "How embarrassing. I'm frightfully sorry about that."

"It's quite understandable," said the Archbishop, and after a moment added, "As a matter of fact I thought it was the horse."

A young virgin marries a Greek man.

Before the wedding her father tells her that, being Greek, her husband may ask her to turn the other way in bed one day, but she doesn't have to do it if she doesn't want to.

Sure enough, after a couple of months, her husband asks her to turn over and she says "No, my father said I don't have to do this."

Her husband says 'OK, that's fine by me, but I thought you wanted children.'

"Off with his head", said the seven year old Prince. This worked fine.

But the young Prince threw a right royal tantrum when he discovered that the words, "On with his head", didn't work!