

Beat: News

French cave containing prehistoric paintings added to World Heritage List

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USPA News - A cave in southern France that contains some of the world's oldest known and best preserved figurative drawings, dating back up to 32,000 years ago, was inscribed on the prized World Heritage List on Sunday, the UN's cultural agency UNESCO said. Grotte Chauvet-Pont d'Arc, which is internationally better known as the Chauvet Cave, was granted inclusion on the World Heritage List during Sunday's meeting of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee.

The committee is meeting in Doha, Qatar, from June 15 through June 25 to consider 36 sites around the world. Chauvet Cave, located in the Ardèche department of southern France, dates back to the Aurignacian period, about 30,000 to 32,000 years ago, and contains more than 1,000 images on its walls. The cave was closed off by a rockfall approximately 20,000 years ago and remained sealed until its discovery in December 1994, which helped keep the drawings in pristine condition. "They are of exceptional aesthetic quality, demonstrate a range of techniques, including the skillful use of color, combinations of paint and engraving, anatomical precision, three-dimensionality and movement," UNESCO said in a news release. "They include several dangerous animal species difficult to observe at that time, such as mammoths, bears, wildcats, rhinos, bison and aurochs, as well as 4,000 inventoried remains of prehistoric fauna, and a variety of human footprints." Chauvet Cave is not open to the public, but a replica of the cave is under construction nearby and due to open in April next year. Upon completion, the replica - along with a discovery center and a permanent exhibition - will be the biggest perfect replica of a prehistoric site in Europe. The French government hopes to welcome 300,000 to 400,000 visitors a year to the site, which covers 29 hectares (71.6 acre). French President François Hollande welcomed the committee's decision to add Chauvet Cave to the World Heritage List. "It is a pride for our country that the treasure of our heritage, a true artistic masterpiece and a unique testimony to the history of humanity, is thus recognized," the presidential palace said in an e-mailed statement. The Cave of El Castillo in northern Spain contains the world's oldest known cave art, dating back 40,800 years. Also on Sunday, the Okavango Delta in Botswana became the 1,000th site on the World Heritage List. Among other sites added during the annual meeting so far is the 'Burnt City' in Iran, the Pyu Ancient Cities in Myanmar (Burma), the mountainous park Namhansanseong near Seoul, and the Grand Canal in China.

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