

Neanderthal 'butcher shop' found in France

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French and Belgian archaeologists say they have proof Neanderthals lived in near-tropical conditions near France's Channel coast about 125,000 years ago.

In a dig at Caours, near Abbeville, France, archeologists found evidence of a Neanderthal "butcher's shop" to which animals as large as rhinoceros, elephant and aurochs, the forerunner of the cow, were dragged and butchered, The Independent reported Wednesday.

Jean-Luc Locht, a Belgian expert in prehistory at the French government's archaeological service, told the newspaper: "This is a very important site, a unique site. It proves Neanderthals thrived in a warm northwest Europe and hunted animals like the rhinoceros and the aurochs, just as they previously, and later, hunted ice-age species like the mammoth and the reindeer."

Scientists said the animal bones showed signs of having been sawn, crushed or stripped of their meat by flint tools.

Patrick Auguste, an expert on archaeozoology at the French Center for National Scientific Research said: "You have to wonder at the artistry, the exceptional skill, with which the flint tools have been shaped. The Neanderthals may have had thicker fingers than us but they were certainly not clumsy."

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