

Ancient footprints open to public in Italy

October 9 2007

Italian researchers have opened two tourist paths to follow in the oldest known human footsteps at the extinct Roccamonfina volcano north of Naples.

The footsteps, which were discovered on the slopes of the volcano in 2003, were opened to the public last week and researchers said they plan to expand the attraction, Italian news agency ANSA reported Tuesday.

"We've just found another set (of footprints) and we're confident of expanding the site," said Paolo Mietto, a researcher from Padua University.

"These tracks are unique evidence of how our earliest ancestors got about," Mietto said.

The marks, which also include handprints, have been dated by Italian scientists to more than 350,000 years ago. They are currently the oldest evidence of foot travel by an early species of human, thought to be *Homo erectus*.

The Padua team said the find marks the first evidence that the early humans could use their hands to descend slopes.

"They were on slippery ground here, warm volcanic mud awash with water," Mietto said.

Copyright 2007 by United Press International

Citation: Ancient footprints open to public in Italy (2007, October 9) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2007-10-ancient-footprints-italy.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.