

# Ancient giant tortoise fossils found in Colombian Andes

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Giant tortoises discovered in Socha, Boyacá, about 1.5 meters long. Credit: University of Rosario

Paleontologists have discovered giant tortoise fossils in Colombia dating back some 57 million years, the university leading the excavation said, with the findings key to understanding South America's prehistoric eras.

The fossils of the extinct reptiles—*Puentemys mushaisaensis*—were

about 1.5 meters (5 feet) long and were found in the mountainous municipality of Socha, in the country's northeast, the University of Rosario said in a [statement](#) Wednesday.

The discovery is unprecedented in the Andean area, as the nearest other excavations of the species are hundreds of kilometers away near the Caribbean sea.

"Finding them 500 kilometers (310 miles) to the south... allows us to reconstruct and understand what the landscapes were like" in northern South America during the Paleocene and Eocene epochs, when the Andean region was a lower-elevation range with interconnected lakes, said paleontologist Edwin Cadena, who headed the research.

The epochs are parts of the Paleogene period from 66 million to 23 million years ago, the first geological era after the extinction of the dinosaurs.

**More information:** Edwin Cadena et al, DISTRIBUCIÓN PALEOBIOGEOGRÁFICA MÁS AMPLIA DE TORTUGAS BOTREMIDIDAS EN EL NORTE DE SUR AMÉRICA DURANTE EL PALEOCENO–EOCENO, *Publicación Electrónica de la Asociación Paleontológica Argentina* (2024). [DOI: 10.5710/PEAPA.14.02.2024.499](https://doi.org/10.5710/PEAPA.14.02.2024.499)

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