

EN

LA LLUERA CAVE

GOBIERNO DEL PRINCIPADO DE ASTURIAS

LOCATION: Priorio. Oviedo.

DIRECTIONS: From Oviedo take the N-634 towards Grado; then take the AS-322 towards Las Caldas. From here take the road to San Juan de Priorio.

CO-ORDINATES: 43.33467, -5.93395

RECOMMENDATIONS: Wear warm clothing and suitable footwear. Visitors are asked to be punctual.



COLLECTION DESIGN: Kalatos s.l.

PHOTOGRAPHS: José A. Fdez. de Córdoba y Marc Groenen
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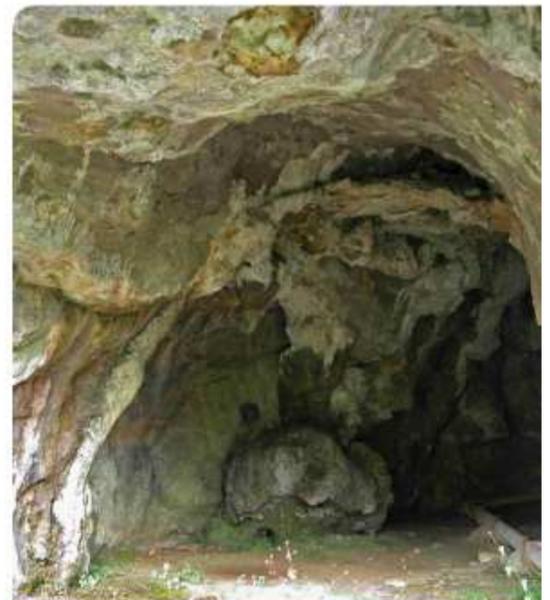
GOBIERNO DEL PRINCIPADO DE ASTURIAS

DESCRIPTION OF THE CAVE

The cave is set into a small limestone cliff on the right bank of the middle-lower reaches of the Nalón River. Although it is known as the La Lluera Cave it would be more correctly named as the La Lluera Caves, since it consists of two different caverns, neither of which goes very deeply underground. The main La Lluera I cave forms an inverted "U" shape, the two arms of which are 15 and 13 metres long respectively. The La Lluera II cave is a small recess (about 70 metres away, upstream, from the other cave) which is about four metres deep and is not open to visitors.

Being so near to the River Nalón, they have been subject over time to frequent flooding. Following the period of occupation in Palaeolithic times, the La Lluera I cave was filled with layers of fluvial deposits which were then sealed with a calcitic crust (this can still be seen in certain areas of the cave ceiling). These deposits filled the grooves of the cave's engravings, helping to preserve them over a long period of time. However they were subsequently worn away by a water course which ran from the inner part of the cave and which has now been channelled away.

Nearby, also in the lower reaches of the same river valley is one of the finest sanctuaries of Cantabrian Palaeolithic art: La Peña de Candamo Cave (San Román, Candamo), which is also open to visitors.



General view of Cave Entrance [J.F.C.]

DISCOVERY AND INVESTIGATION

Although the caves had been known for generations, the recognition of the value of the engravings to be found here came about in 1979 during intensive research in the middle course of the Nalón valley which brought to light numerous examples of Palaeolithic art.

Following their discovery a number of archaeological campaigns were undertaken to study the art works that were revealed and to excavate the eastern gallery of the cave. Various archaeological levels were identified containing stone and bone artefacts from the Solutrean period (21.000-17.000 BP-*before present*) contemporary with the cave's engravings, together with other remains from the end of the later Magdalenian period.



The Great Recess. Aurochs [M.G.] ▲

ART IN THE LA LLUERA CAVE

One significant aspect of the La Lluera I art works is that they are all engravings and all are situated in the threshold of half-light of the entrance area of the cave: it could therefore be defined as a truly Exterior Sanctuary.

The Palaeolithic engravings are located exclusively on the side walls of the western gallery of the cave. Some of the panels are difficult to interpret in iconographic terms while others are of excellent composition.

The left wall. Near the current entrance (*the Porch*) is the figure of horse together with a number of lineal signs. A short distance away, in another angle of the wall, there is a panel with an array of superimposed lines amongst which we can make out the figures of an auroch, a horse, a doe and a ram (*the Entrance Panel*). Next to these are a number of engravings of dorsal lines that appear to be the unfinished outlines of a female deer.

Further in from this panel, the wall curves into a concave recess which contains the most singular and best organised group of figures: this is *the Great Alcove*. In the centre of this recess there are six aurochs of different sizes (from smallest at the top to biggest at the bottom) arranged in a slanting line that coincides with a fissure in the wall. This arrangement, which is unusual in Palaeolithic art, gives the group a sense of perspective. The layout and the way that the engraved line is modelled clearly



▲ Left Wall. Engraved lines and the figures of deer and horse [M.G.]

give the impression of a moving herd. In the spaces between the aurochs we can see the figures of a number of female deer that are drawn in a way that suggests that they are in movement and a figure of a horse.

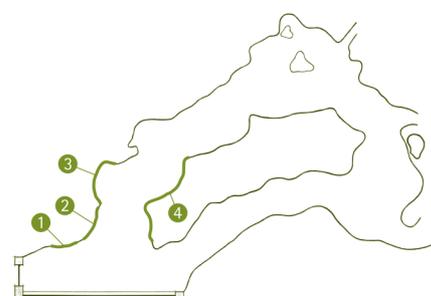
Next to the alcove wall there is a space in the centre of which we can make out two figures of bison together with a small frieze higher up which contains some non-figurative lines, a female deer and another small bison.

The right wall. The figures on this wall are in three bands or horizontal friezes: the upper band has a confusing array of engravings amongst which we can make out some female deer; the middle band is divided into three parts which coincide with the relief of the wall and, although the engravings are equally confusing, we can make out a number of female deer which decrease in size as they get further from the mouth of the cave towards the interior.

Of special importance is the figure of a large female deer with a deeply engraved line on its chest: the inner lip of this line has been masterfully moulded. There are also two notable small female deer near the threshold of shade which are more finely and less deeply drawn than the other figures. Finally, in the lower band, in a small recess, there are a number of different markings together with a figure which may be the representation of a mammoth.

The La Lluera II cave has only a few figures: a number of triangular shapes of different sizes (which have been interpreted as possible vulvas), arranged around the figure of a small female deer.

Female deer in the Great Recess [M.G.] ▼



- 1 Porch
- 2 Entrance Panel
- 3 The Great Recess
- 4 Friezes Right Wall