

## Neanderthal ancestors closer than previously thought, new fossil evidence shows

Modern humans and Neanderthals interbred in Europe, an analysis of 40,000-year-old DNA suggests.

The study suggests an early Homo sapiens settler in Europe harboured a Neanderthal ancestor just a few generations back in his family line.

Previous work has shown our ancestors had interbred with Neanderthals 55,000 years ago, possibly in the Middle East.

The new results reveal there was additional mixing once modern humans pushed north into Europe.

An international team of researchers [has published its analysis](#) of the ancient European genome in Nature journal.

The group successfully extracted and sequenced genetic material from [a jawbone found in 2002](#) inside the cave system of Peștera cu Oase in south-west Romania.

The ancient man was found to be more closely related to Neanderthals than any other modern human (Homo sapiens) who has previously been analysed.

Between 6 percent and 9 percent of the Oase individual's genome is from Neanderthals – an unprecedented amount. By comparison, present-day Europeans have between 2 percent and 4 percent.

As DNA is passed on from generation to generation, segments are broken up and recombined, so that genetic material inherited from any one individual becomes interspersed with that of other ancestors.

The scientists found segments of Neanderthal DNA in the fossil that were large enough to indicate that the ancient man had a Neanderthal ancestor just four to six generations back.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Modern humans and Neanderthals 'interbred in Europe'](#)**