

‘Intrepid explorers’: Neanderthals hunted their way across thousands of miles in Europe

Neandertals were epic wanderers.

These ancient hominids took a 3,000- to 4,000-kilometer hike from Eastern Europe to the Altai Mountains in southern Siberia around 60,000 years ago, a new study concludes. The evidence is in their handiwork, scientists say, though it’s unclear how long the journey took or if it involved several geographically dispersed Neandertal groups passing technical knowledge along the route.

Neandertals at sites in what’s now Crimea and the northern Caucasus, just north of the Black Sea in Eastern Europe, and others who occupied Chagyrskaya Cave in southern Siberia [crafted comparable stone tools](#) between around 59,000 and 49,000 years ago, researchers report January 27 in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

“Neandertals were intrepid explorers in their own right,” says Richard Roberts, a geochronologist at the University of Wollongong in Australia.

Eastern European and southwestern Asian Neandertals probably hunted wild horses and bison across grasslands and foothills, Roberts, archaeologist Kseniya Kolobova of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Novosibirsk and their colleagues say. Cold, dry conditions pushed at least some of those Neandertals eastward along with migrating herds of prey roughly 60,000 years ago, they suggest.

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