

Humans lived in caves in Africa and used fire and tools as far as two million years ago

A large cave nestled in South Africa's Kalahari Desert might be the first on Earth to have housed human activity, providing a fascinating look into human evolution while simultaneously raising more questions to answer.

By analyzing layers of soil in the Wonderwerk Cave, the researchers found some of the earliest evidence of fire use and the shift in tool-making capabilities, explained [researcher] Liora Kolska Horwitz...

"What we have here in the cave are milestones of these very dramatic events in human evolution," she said. "I can't think of any other site I know of, certainly not in Sub-Saharan Africa, that has a complete sequence of two million years of human occupation."

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In the oldest layers lies evidence of Oldowan tools — mainly sharp flakes and small, simple chopping tools. Newer layers have uncovered early hand axes over one million years ago, as well as evidence of fire use revealed through burnt bone, burnt stone tools, sediment and ash.

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It's not just Earth's earliest hominids that occupied the Wonderwerk Cave. The last people who were there were European farmers who resided there until they built their farm house in the early 1900s, she said, adding this ability to track humans over such a long period of time is "very unique."

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