

"Traveling" Neandethals

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.archaeology/2008-02/msg00445.html>

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 - *Date:* Sun, 17 Feb 2008 11:45:41 +0100
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"Neanderthals travelled more than first thought

Analysis of a 40,000-year-old tooth found in southern Greece suggests Neanderthals were more mobile than once thought, paleontologists said. Analysis of the tooth – part of the first and only Neanderthal remains found in Greece – showed the ancient human had spent at least part of its life away from the area where it died. "Neanderthal mobility is highly controversial," said paleoanthropologist Katerina Harvati at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany. Some experts believe Neanderthals roamed over very limited areas, but others say they must have been more mobile, particularly when hunting, Harvati said. Until now, experts only had indirect evidence, including stone used in tools, Harvati said. "Our analysis is the first that brings evidence from a Neanderthal fossil itself," she said. The findings by the Max Planck Institute team were published in the *Journal of Archaeological Science*.

The tooth was found in a seaside excavation in Greece's southern Peloponnese region in 2002. The team analyzed tooth enamel for ratios of a strontium isotope, a naturally occurring metal found in food and water. Levels of the metal vary in different areas. Eleni Panagopoulou of the Paleoanthropology–Speleology Department of Southern Greece said the tooth's levels of strontium showed that the Neanderthal grew up at least 20 kilometres from the discovery site. "Our findings prove that ... their settlement networks were broader and more organized than we believed," Panagopoulou said.

Clive Finlayson, an expert on Neanderthals and director of the Gibraltar Museum, disagreed with the finding's significance. "I would have been surprised if Neanderthals didn't move at least 20 kilometres in their lifetime, or even in a year ... We're talking about

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humans, not trees," Finlayson said.

Sources: Associated Press, The Guardian (8 February 2008), C2008), Canadian Press (9 February 2008)"

(Stonepages Archaeo News, 10 feb)

Great science! Do they think Neanderthals just sat in front of their cave waiting for the food to arrive? 20 kilometers is nothing, not even in a day.

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