

*Archaeology-focused tours for the curious to the connoisseur.*



ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE  
OF AMERICA TOURS

# Prehistoric Cave Art of Spain & France

September 17-29, 2025 (13 days | 20 guests)  
with prehistory expert Paul G. Bahn

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*“It was one of the best trips  
I’ve ever taken, and I’ve been  
traveling for over 50 years.”*

- Lynn, Ohio

Santillana del Mar



Investigate southwestern Europe's most extraordinary prehistoric caves, including Lascaux IV, a new, exact reproduction of one of the most remarkable prehistoric sites ever discovered; Altamira II, a precise replica of the original that is often called the "Sistine Chapel of Prehistoric Art"; Atapuerca, the most significant early human site in western Europe; Las Monedas Cave and Cueva del Castillo, where 455 animal likenesses were painted and engraved some 22,000-14,000 years ago, but other motifs such as hand stencils and red dots have been dated to more than 40,000 years ago, meaning that they may well have been made by Neanderthals; Cognac, which features paintings of extinct megaloceros and mammoth; Pech Merle, known for its "negative handprints"; and others.

- Enjoy excellent accommodations in fine hotels and charming inns, as well as fine wine and cuisine.
- Travel with world-renowned archaeological author Paul Bahn, a gifted and popular lecturer who regularly leads tours to study the prehistory of Spain and France, including this program. Dr. Bahn will enhance your understanding of the sites with lectures and informal discussions.
- Tour archaeological and ethnographic museums with superb exhibits of prehistoric artifacts, including the Museum of Human Evolution in Burgos, Altamira Museum, Museum of Les Eyzies, and the Musée d'Aquitaine; plus the modern art collections of Bilbao's Guggenheim Museum.
- Explore charming villages and cities, including Santillana del Mar and San Sebastián.

## The Archaeological Institute of America & AIA Tours

The Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) is the oldest and largest archaeological organization in North America. The AIA seeks to educate people of all ages about the significance of archaeological discovery. For more than a century the AIA has been dedicated to the encouragement and support of archaeological research and publication, and to the protection of the world's archaeological resources and cultural heritage. By traveling on an AIA Tour you directly support the AIA while personally gaining the benefit of the AIA's network of scholars and worldwide contacts.

*"It was a trip of a lifetime. Dr. Bahn was a magnificent guide, absolutely enthralling. The sites we visited were exceptional and well selected to show the great varieties of artistic expression. Overall the trip greatly exceeded my expectations."*

- Viola, California

Cover: Examples of perfect replicas of prehistoric paintings from Lascaux II

# Archaeological Institute of America LECTURER & HOST



**Dr. Paul G. Bahn** is a leading archaeological writer, translator, and broadcaster in the field of archaeology. He is a Contributing Editor of the AIA's *Archaeology* magazine, and has written extensively on prehistoric art, including the books *Everyday Life in the Ice Age* (co-written with Elle Clifford), *Images of the Ice Age*, *The Cambridge*

*Illustrated History of Prehistoric Art*, and *Cave Art: A Guide to the Decorated Ice Age Caves of Europe*. Dr. Bahn has authored and/or edited many books on more general archaeological subjects as well, bringing a broad perspective to understanding the sites and museums that we will visit. Such titles include *The Cambridge World Prehistory*, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Archaeology*, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice*, *Archaeology: The Essential Guide to Our Human Past*, and *The Penguin Archaeology Guide*. Dr. Bahn has also taken a humorous approach to the field in his books *The Bluffer's Guide to Archaeology*, *Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction*, *Disgraceful Archaeology* (with Bill Tidy), and *Dirty Diggers: Tales from the Archaeological Trenches* (also with Bill Tidy).

Born in Kingston-upon-Hull, Britain, he holds a Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge, and is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, a Corresponding Member of the AIA, and a member of numerous international professional organizations, including the Prehistoric Society and the Société Préhistorique Française. Dr. Bahn has been involved in bringing the field of archaeology to television in various capacities. He was an advisor in the Dordogne and Pyrenees on the BBC production of *The Making of Mankind*; he was a consultant on a segment of WGBH's Nova trilogy *Human Origins*, filmed in France; he appeared as an expert in the 2022 British mockumentary series *Cunk on Earth*; and he is currently filming a series of television documentaries on world rock art. Dr. Bahn's research and lecturing on archaeological study tours have taken him to important archaeological sites around the world in Europe, North America, Africa, and Polynesia. He is a gifted and popular lecturer who regularly leads AIA tours to study the prehistory of western Europe. Dr. Bahn's broad expertise in the area of prehistoric art, combined with fluency in French and a deep regard for the regions we will visit, uniquely qualify him as a lecturer *par excellence*.



Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain



© Edwin Poon

# Itinerary

(B)=Breakfast, (L)=Lunch, (D)=Dinner

## Wednesday, September 17, 2025: Depart home for Spain

### Thursday, September 18: Arrive Bilbao, SPAIN | Santillana del Mar: Walking tour | Welcome dinner

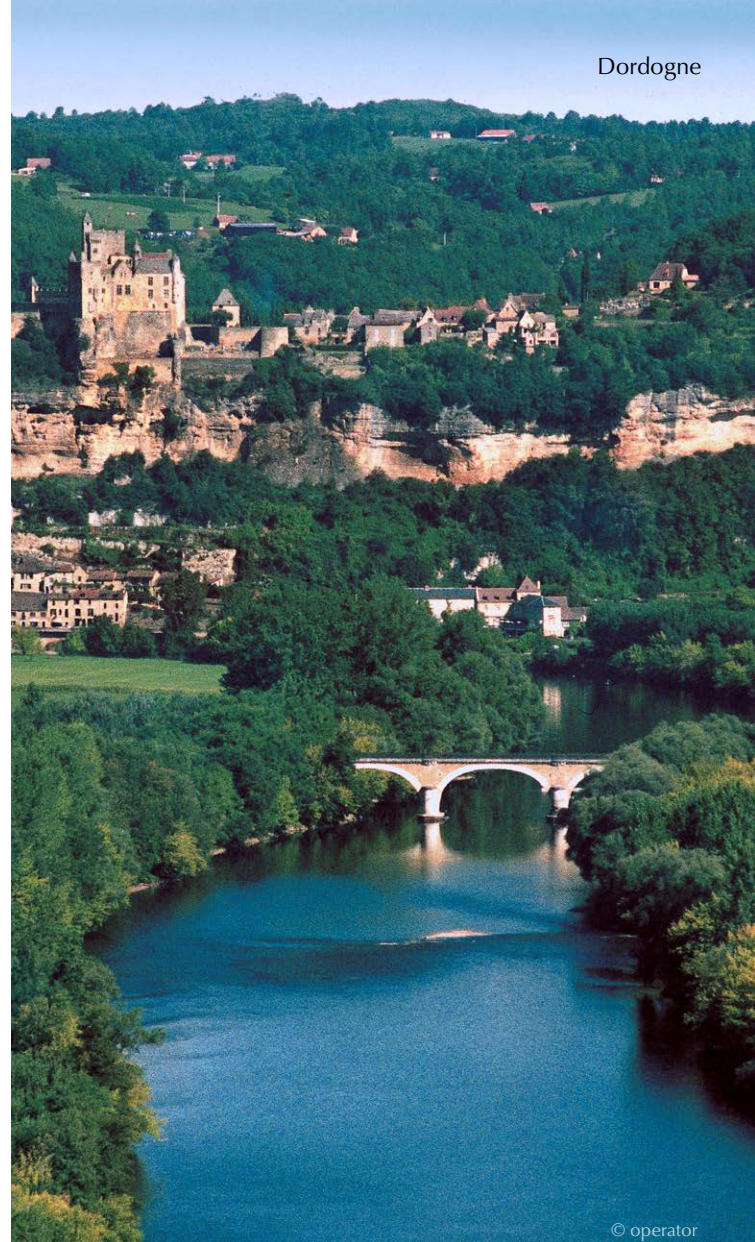
Arrive at Bilbao Airport (BIO), and take a group transfer (time TBD) to the charming medieval town of Santillana del Mar. One of Europe's most perfectly preserved medieval villages, Santillana del Mar retains a romantic ambiance. After checking in at our hotel, take a walking tour of the village, noting its roots from the early Middle Ages when the first dwellings arose in the shadow of the Romanesque monastery of Santa Juliana. Gather for a welcome dinner at our hotel this evening. *Two nights at the 4-star [Parador de Santillana Gil Blas](#).* (D)

### Friday, September 19: Altamira II | Altamira Museum | Las Monedas Caves & Cueva del Castillo | Santillana del Mar

Today is devoted to visiting caves that are celebrated for their ancient rock art. This morning we visit Altamira II, an exact replica of Altamira (the "Sistine Chapel of Prehistoric Art"), decorated with vivid depictions of bison and other animals dating back 15,000 years, a testament to the artists' skill in using rock formations to accentuate perspective. We also visit the Altamira Museum, with its highly informative exhibits on Cantabrian prehistory and cave art. We then drive to the lush Pas Valley, home to the village of Puente Viesgo, the "Prehistoric Capital of Cantabria," for a group lunch before setting off again in the afternoon to explore Las Monedas Caves and the Cueva del Castillo, where 455 images of hinds, horses, bison, deer, goats, aurochs, and mammoth dating back 22,000-14,000 years cavort on the walls, while other motifs such as hand stencils and red dots have been dated to more than 40,000 years ago, meaning that they may well have been made by Neanderthals. We return to Santillana del Mar for an independent dinner. (B,L)

### Saturday, September 20: Escobedo: El Pendo | Bilbao: Guggenheim Museum

This morning we drive to Escobedo, where we visit El Pendo Cave with its nearly 30-foot-long panel of painted figures. The frieze comprises eight or nine female red deer, a horse, a goat, and some other imagery, and it dates from ca. 20,000-19,000 years ago. Continue on to Bilbao, where the afternoon is devoted to visiting the Guggenheim Museum, Frank O. Gehry's architectural masterpiece. This breathtaking modern structure has a central atrium that soars skyward for 165 feet, and its titanium roof is a unique, twisting, curving, metallic sculpture that integrates the city's industrial waterfront with the nearby historic and business districts. *Two nights at the 5-star [The Artist – Grand Hotel of Art](#).* (B,D)



© operator



Lascaux II

© HTO

*"Paul has such amazing knowledge of cave art and archaeology. Our trip manager was so warm, friendly, efficient, and organized! I loved the food and places we stayed."*

- Katharine, California

*“Paul Bahn's knowledge is amazing and he shared this in a delightful manner on site, on bus rides, and in lectures. He was available all the time.”*

- Alan and Sara, Massachusetts

**Sunday, September 21: Atapuerca | Burgos: Museum of Human Evolution, Cathedral | Bilbao**

After breakfast this morning, we visit the caves of Atapuerca, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which have provided the earliest and most abundant evidence of humankind in Europe. Continue on to Burgos, where we will have lunch before we explore the impressive Museum of Human Evolution, followed by a brief visit to Burgos Cathedral. This evening is at leisure in Bilbao. (B,L)

**Monday, September 22: San Sebastián | Bordeaux, FRANCE: Walking tour**

We depart Spain for France this morning, stopping along the way in the charming city of San Sebastián for some free time. After a leisurely independent lunch, we will continue to Bordeaux, well-known for its wine industry, which attributes its “Golden Age” to the 18<sup>th</sup> century when far-sighted city fathers redesigned its urban center to make it the classical masterpiece we know today. Its old district, which we will explore on a walking tour, is one of the largest protected architectural neighborhoods in all of France. *Overnight at the 4-star [Marty Hotel Bordeaux](#).* (B)

**Tuesday, September 23: Bordeaux: Musée d'Aquitaine | Pair-non-Pair | Les Eyzies-de-Tayac**

This morning we visit the Musée d'Aquitaine, a museum of history and archaeology exhibiting prehistoric to present-day artifacts of the Aquitaine region, including the Ice Age bas-relief of the Venus of Laussel, one of the earliest and most famous images of women in prehistory. After free time for lunch in Bordeaux, we will visit the prehistoric cave of Pair-non-Pair, known for its animal engravings and fossilized animal bones, and then continue on to Les Eyzies. *Four nights at the 4-star [Hôtel le Centenaire](#).* (B,D)

**Wednesday, September 24: Cap Blanc | Museum of Les Eyzies | Font-de-Gaume | Les Eyzies**

The Périgord Region in the southwest of France is Europe's most important prehistoric region. Its terrain, crisscrossed by gentle rivers flowing amidst extraordinary limestone formations, offered numerous shelters and caves for our early ancestors. Through expressive cave paintings, tools, and excavated remains, witness evidence of human existence and cultural evolution. Begin by exploring the shelter of Cap Blanc, which features a sculpted frieze of life-size horses, followed by a visit to the Museum of Les Eyzies, exhibiting artifacts from several millennia of prehistory. After lunch at leisure in Les Eyzies, visit the cave of Font-de-Gaume, featuring some 230 paintings and engravings, and then return to Les Eyzies for an evening at leisure. (B)



© Jebulon

The street under the cliff, Les Eyzies-de-Tayac, France



© Manfred Heyde

Sarlat, France

*“I really appreciated the flow of information and experience, from walking through a decorated prehistoric cave to walking through a modern art spiral structure at the Guggenheim; from experiencing an active trench dig to exploring a museum of human evolution. All the caves were expertly selected and information delivered in a way that could be digested and applied.*

*It was deeply moving and meaningful.”*

- Deborah, Oregon



Pech Merle

**Thursday, September 25: Cougnac | Sarlat | Rouffignac | Les Eyzies**

Begin the day with a drive to the prehistoric cave of Cougnac, known for its paintings of extinct megaloceros and mammoth. After lunch on your own in Sarlat, we drive along country roads to the prehistoric cave of Rouffignac. Explore its galleries onboard a train, admiring the numerous engravings of mammoth, rhinoceros, horse, bison, and mountain goat represented on its walls. We return to our hotel for some time at leisure and gather this evening for dinner. (B,D)

**Friday, September 26: Le Thot | Lascaux IV | Lascaux II | Les Eyzies**

Our day starts with Le Thot, a museum and animal park of living species similar to those that occupied this region during the Upper Paleolithic, such as reindeer, European bison, aurochs, Przewalski horses, ibex, and red and fallow deer. We continue on to Lascaux IV, the newest replica of one of Europe's most significant prehistoric sites, famous for the profusion of high-quality and multi-colored animal paintings on its walls. It is the most complete replica to date, representing nearly all of the original cave's paintings, and includes an interactive exhibit. End the day with a visit to Lascaux II, an earlier exact replica of the famous cave, where we will have more time to study the many figures in some detail. Return to Les Eyzies for an evening at leisure. (B)

**Saturday, September 27: Pech Merle | Vers | Toulouse: Walking tour**

Depart Les Eyzies after breakfast and visit the cave of Pech Merle, particularly known for prehistoric paintings of mammoth and horse, as well as “negative hand prints.” After lunch in the town of Vers we continue on to Toulouse, for a walking tour and then the balance of the day at leisure. *Two nights at the 4-star [Le Grand Hôtel de L'Opéra, Toulouse](#).* (B,L)



Lascaux II

**Sunday, September 28: Niaux | Toulouse: Farewell dinner**

Visit the outstanding cave of Niaux, perched high above the river and comprising a vast network of galleries that stretch over a mile. The exquisite paintings within represent bison, horse, and ibex. We enjoy a light lunch nearby. Gather this evening for our farewell dinner. (B,L,D)

**Monday, September 29: Fly home**

Transfer this morning to Toulouse-Blagnac Airport (TLS) for flights home. (B)



Niaux

© HTO

## What to Expect



**ACTIVE:** Must be able to walk three or more miles per day on mostly uneven terrain, and up and down inclines and steps.

All participants are expected to be physically active and not be an impediment to others on excursions, to enjoy traveling as part of a group, and to be ready to experience cultural differences. Participants who are not able to walk or stand unassisted for extended periods are kindly advised not to join this tour. All participants will be required to follow safety/sanitization protocols set forth by Sponsors/Operator, local staff, and host country laws. Any participant showing signs of illness will be asked to wear a mask when in close proximity to others. If the tour manager decides that a participant cannot visit a site safely or in a timely manner, their judgment will be final. Where possible, an alternate activity may be suggested; additional costs may apply. If you have any questions about your ability to participate, we suggest that you visit your personal physician with this brochure in hand, and discuss whether or not the program is appropriate for you. **Visits to the caves and other archaeological sites necessitate walking quickly and climbing unassisted, without handrails, sometimes over steep or slippery terrain and in dark or dimly lit spaces.** Please note that walking sticks are rarely, if ever, allowed inside the caves, and no photography is allowed inside the caves. Hotels and inns have been carefully chosen for their charm, comfort, and location. Included meals are of a high quality and will include local dishes and regional flavors.

Weather in Spain and France at the time of our visit is generally pleasant, with average temperatures ranging from the low 50s to high 70s F. Cave temperatures average 55° F and humidity levels reach 95%. *Complete pre-departure details will be sent to participants.*



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A view of the Dordogne, known to the French as the Périgord

## Accommodations



**Santillana del Mar, Spain:** *Two nights at the 4-star [Parador de Santillana Gil Blas](#)*



**Bilbao, Spain:**  
*Two nights at the 5-star [The Artist-Grand Hotel of Art](#)*



**Bordeaux, France:**  
*One night at the 4-star [Marty Hotel Bordeaux](#)*



**Les Eyzies, France:**  
*Four nights at the 4-star [Hôtel le Centenaire](#)*



**Toulouse, France:**  
*Two nights at the 4-star [Le Grand Hôtel de L'Opéra, Toulouse](#)*





Burgos, Spain

### Tour Prices Per Person (11 nights)

Double Occupancy (17-20 participants) .....	\$8,845
Double Occupancy (13-16 participants) .....	\$9,345
Single Supplement ( <i>limited availability</i> ) .....	\$1,145

*Single room supplement will be charged when requested or required.  
With fewer than 13 participants, a small group surcharge may be added.*

### Prices Include:

- Leadership of **AIA lecturer/host Paul G. Bahn and an expert tour manager/guide** throughout
- **Eleven nights in ideally-located, 4- and 5-star accommodations** as indicated
- **Delicious meals** including 11 breakfasts, 4 lunches, and 5 dinners with house wine (includes welcome and farewell dinners)
- **Group arrival transfer** on September 18<sup>th</sup> and **individual departure taxi transfers** on September 29<sup>th</sup>
- Transportation via **air-conditioned vehicle** with bottled water
- **All gratuities** to the tour manager/guide, drivers, waiters for included meals, and porters
- Paul Bahn's **Cave Art guidebook** and a suggested reading/media guide
- **Handling of checked luggage** (two pieces per person)
- **All entrance fees** to sites included in the itinerary
- Local taxes and service charges
- **Practical and cultural information**, including a packing list, name badge, and luggage tags

### Flights & Transfers

Airfare from/to home is not included. A group transfer (time TBD) is included on your arrival day, September 18<sup>th</sup>, at Bilbao Airport (BIO), Spain. Individual departure taxi transfers are included on September 29<sup>th</sup> to Toulouse-Blagnac Airport (TLS), France. Once you have received your final payment invoice, you should book your flights. If you are considering booking your flights before this time, please contact our office first. Your flight itinerary must be provided to our office prior to departure. *We do not accept liability for cancellation penalties related to domestic or international airline tickets.*

**Prices Do Not Include:** Any airfare; private airport transfers; passport and visa fees; all airport fees and departure taxes; beverages and meals except as noted; excess baggage charges; personal, baggage, and trip cancellation insurance; any optional activities or excursions, or deviations from the itinerary; all items of a personal nature such as laundry, medical expenses, and room service.

**Payments:** A deposit of \$1,000 per person is required to reserve your space on the tour and is payable by Visa, MasterCard, American Express, or check made payable to "Eos AIA-Prehistory9/25." Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure and must be by check, ACH transfer, or wire transfer only; credit cards are not accepted for final payment. By submitting your deposit you are bound by the terms and conditions delineated throughout this brochure or elsewhere published.

**Participant Cancellation Fees:** All requests by participants for cancellations must be received in writing by AIA Tours. Cancellations received at least 180 days prior to departure (March 21, 2025) are refunded less a cancellation fee of \$250 per person. Cancellations received from 179 through 91 days (June 18, 2025) prior to departure forfeit the full deposit of \$1,000 per person. Cancellations received from 90 through 76 days prior to departure are subject to a cancellation fee equal to 50% of the total tour cost. Cancellations received 75 days or less prior to departure are subject to a cancellation fee of 100% of the tour cost. For this and other reasons, participants are strongly encouraged to purchase trip cancellation insurance. Information will be provided with confirmation of receipt of your deposit.

**Note:** Prices, lecturer, accommodations, and itinerary are subject to change. Entrance to the caves may be subject to restrictions. Prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect at the time of publication and are subject to change prior to departure. Substantial changes in tariffs, exchange rates, and the price of fuel, services, and labor may increase the cost of arrangements significantly, and we reserve the right to alter our prices.

Prices quoted are based on group participation and no refunds will be made for any part of the program in which you are unable to or choose not to participate. It is understood that refunds cannot be made to participants who do not complete the tour for whatever reason.

Due to space limitations, this is abbreviated information. Complete terms and conditions will be sent upon confirmation or upon request, and can be viewed online at [www.aiatours.org](http://www.aiatours.org).

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**For questions, and to reserve your space, please contact AIA Tours at:**  
800-748-6262 | Toll: 603-756-2884 | Fax: 603-756-2922 | [aia@studytours.org](mailto:aia@studytours.org) | [www.aiatours.org](http://www.aiatours.org)  
P.O. Box 938, 47 Main Street, Suite One, Walpole, NH 03608



Archaeological Institute of America Tours  
 P.O. Box 938, 47 Main Street, Suite 1, Walpole, NH 03608-0938

Toulouse, France



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*“Paul’s lectures were informative, entertaining, and presented with a sense of wonder, humor, insight... We were made to feel special because we were with him.”*

- Helen, New York

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Altamira

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