

Europe's oldest human fossil found in Spain

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In news– Archaeologists in Spain have recently found the oldest human fossil ever unearthed in Europe.

Key findings-

- According to researcher, **fossil – part of a jawbone** – was found in the Atapuerca mountain range in the north of the country.
- The **area is well known for containing one of the richest records of prehistoric human occupation** in Europe.
- Experts believe it could be **around 1.4 million years old**.
- In fact, they think the **jawbone is so old, it doesn't belong to the current Homo Sapiens human species** but to that of an older extinct ancestor!
- **Until now, the oldest human fossil found in Europe was a jawbone found at the same site 15 years ago**, which was determined to be **1.2 million years old**.
- It is very likely that the jawbone fragment “belongs to one of the first populations that colonised Europe”.
- Researchers will now use scientific dating techniques to analyse the jaw and work out if they're correct with their estimate for the age of the jawbone.
- If they are correct with their 1.4 million-year-old prediction, the fossil would be the oldest one ever discovered in Europe.
- **In 2000 the archaeological site of Atapuerca was included on Unesco's list of world heritage sites**, giving it access to UN conservation funding.
- It contains thousands of hominid fossils and tools including a flint discovered in 2013 that is 1.4m years old.