

Discover the earliest human societies in South America



ZONA ARGENTINA

Visit the Tehuelche petroglyphs at the Cueva de las Manos (Cave of the Hands) World Heritage Site, in the Pinturas River Canyon. The site contains an impressive collection of cave art, drawn between 13,000 and 9,500 years ago.

DATA SHEET

Activity Type: Guided Tour **Sector:** Río Pinturas Canyon **Starting Point:** Parking Lot, Pinturas River Canyon **Ending Point:** Parking Lot of UNESCO Site, Pinturas River Canyon **Considerations:** You must pay an entrance for access to "Cueva de las Manos". **Distance:** The Cueva de las Manos site tour involves 1 Km of easy walking. **Duration:** The tour lasts approximately one hour. **Seasonality:** The Site is open year round however, guides work during the tourism season, November - April. **Difficulty:** This tour is apt for all.

This remarkable Canyon can be accessed from two different locations; Ruta 97 from Bajo Caracoles or on dirt paths from the adjoining Estancia "Cueva de los Manos". The first option involves traveling north on Route 40 for aprox. 3 Km, and then turn right on Provincial Route 97 northeast direction until get to the parking area of "Cueva de las Manos" (Cave of the

Hands) to begin the guided tour. 4x4 vehicle suggested. The second option is to travel north on National Route 40 from Bajo Caracoles to the Estancia, Cueva de las Manos, where you can contract a guide to provide a 4x4 tour 18 Km across the Steppe and then hike 2.5 Km through the Canyon to the start of the tour. The guide will meet you at the end to return to the Estancia, where you have the option to incorporate a night's stay. The UNESCO description for this World Heritage Site reports: "The artistic sequence, which includes three main stylistic groups, began as early as the 10th millennium BP [Before Present]. The sequence is a long one: archaeological investigations have shown that the site was last inhabited around AD 700 by the possible ancestors of the first Tehuelche people of Patagonia. The Cueva is considered by the international scientific community to be one of the most important sites of the earliest hunter-gatherer groups in South America. The paintings on the rock shelters and caves are located in an outstanding landscape, with the river running through a deep canyon. The hunting scenes depict animals and human figures interacting in a dynamic and naturalistic manner. Different hunting strategies are shown, with animals being surrounded, trapped in ambushes, or attacked by hunters using their throwing weapons, round stones known as bolas. Some scenes show individual hunters and others groups of ten or more men. The entrance to the Cueva is screened by a rock wall covered by many hand stencils. Within the rock shelter itself there are five concentrations of rock art, later figures and motifs often superimposed upon those from earlier periods. The paintings were executed with natural mineral pigments - iron oxides (red and purple), kaolin (white), natrojarosite (yellow), manganese oxide (black) - ground and mixed with some form of binder. Travelers have been visiting the Cueva de los Manos since the mid-19th century and recording their impressions of the paintings. They were first mentioned in the scientific literature during the 20th century, but it was not until the 1960s that they became the subject of serious study. The work of Carlos J. Gradin and his coworkers established the importance of the Cueva de los Manos as a prehistoric rock-art site of international scientific importance. The favorable conditions (very low humidity, no water infiltration, stable rock strata) at the rock shelter have ensured that the state of conservation of all but the most exposed paintings is excellent."

For more information visit the web site: www.cuevadelasmanos.org

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs that complement this story

