



PRADIS CAVES CAVE MUSEUM

Pradis Caves: a thousand year old work of waters and karst erosion

The Pradis Caves are a complex of karst caverns of different width and depth, positioned at several levels along a deep canyon carved by the Cosa Torrent. Their origin dates back to the emergence of limestone from the sea during the formation of Alps (Late Cretaceous) and at a later stage, to their slow chemical erosion due to the karst phenomena.

Studies, which have been done in the Pradis area, estimated a rock dissolution rate of 1-2 hundredth of millimeter per year. This mechanism, in addition with the strong erosive action of the Cosa Torrent that hauls boulders, pebbles and sand, increases the mass of calcareous rock which is periodically eroded. Further studies attribute the excavation of the canyon of the Cosa Torrent to a recent period, which is compatible with the last glaciation occurred about 100,000-130,000 years ago.

Don Giacomo Bianchini, Pradis di Sotto priest, understood the beauty of these places already in 1921 and foretold a future enhancement. In 1965 don Terziano Cattaruzza inaugurated the cavern that hosts the Virgin Mary of Caves and, in 1969, completed the path to descend into the canyon. Recently has been built a ring path surrounding the canyon, crossing upstream the Cosa Torrent through an ancient stone bridge and downstream through a suspended steel bridge, offering to the visitors a unique perspective, an open book about geology, karst and the erosive power of meteoric and flowing waters.



The paths

The descent to the canyon The Cosa Torrent into the Pradis canyon

By a long staircase, visitors are into the canyon. Beyond a bridge, on the right, there is a cavern and a tunnel (around 100 meters long), which was an ancient river lately "cut" by the canyon. Towards back to the bridge, the path continues ahead until the bronze Crucified Christ and, after a natural arch, a grove. From here is visible the confluence between the Molat Brook and the Cosa Torrent. Visitors return back from staircase used to descend.

Virgin Mary Cave

Once reached the open space, on the left, there is the Virgin Mary Cave, inside of it a statue of Our Lady depicted by the sculptor Costantini from Assisi. Of particular interest is the structure of the underground vault originated by the karst dissolution.

The ring around the canyon The canyon and the nature

Out of the Virgin Mary Cave, starts the ring path surrounding the canyon. In a fifteen minutes walk it is possible to perceive the greatness of this dissolutive/erosive incision and the variety of flowers of microenvironments that typify the whole complex.

The Pradis Caves are also known as an important archaeological Paleolithic Age site. Many finds have been discovered here, especially rests of animals and stone tools. Some of them are conserved in the near Cave Museum and in the Archeological Museum of Torre, in Pordenone.



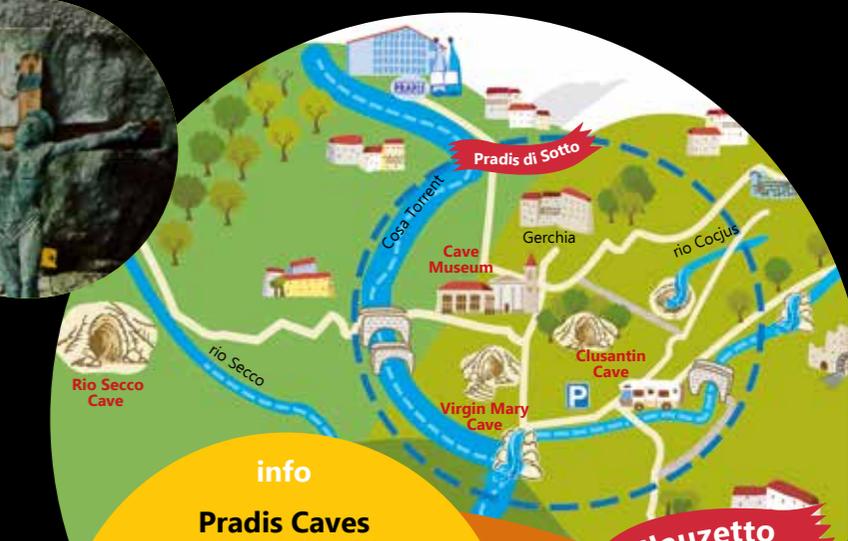
Visits and
archaeological laboratory
for schools and groups

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Visit our web site
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- Opening times of the Caves and the Museum
- Tickets and reductions



info

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coord. GPS
46°14'43844"
12°53'17624"



The archaeological material conserved in the museum and on this flyer graphically reproduced is courtesy of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities Authority for Archaeological Properties of Region Friuli Venezia Giulia.

Cave Museum in Pradis

PALEONTOLOGY - PREHISTORY - ARCHAEOLOGY
HISTORY - SPELEOLOGY - MINERALOGY

The Museum was born as permanent collection set up in the old primary school of Pradis di Sotto in 1969 by means of Comitato Culturale Pradis (nowadays Associazione Culturale Pradis) and Gruppo Speleologico Pradis but it was closed due to an earthquake in 1976. The current location, that was opened in 2001, is very close to the Green Caves.



The exhibition shows the cave world from the point of view of its frequentation of animals and men, through an exposition of paleontological remains and archaeological finds, results of casual discovery and recent scientific surveys. The collection is completed by a section of fossils and minerals also of local origin.



Cave bear

The itinerary starts with a copy of the cave bear, whose remains were found in the caverns of the plateau of Pradis. There were many of these mammals during the last ice age (Würm, 100,000-110,000 years ago), up to the extinction around 20,000 years ago. The reasons of its extinction were mainly due to climatic and environmental changes occurred at the end of the last ice age.



Clusantin Cave

A marmots hunters shelter about 14,000 years ago

Subject of a large archaeological survey led by the University of Ferrara in 2005, this small cavern was the shelter for ungulate and marmots hunters, a place to light fires, splint flints, make arrows, and butch and roast their preys.

According to the first survey results, the Clusantin Cave was a well known place for Palaeolithic groups of men, who came regularly on these mountains that, at that time, were covered by coniferous forests and had open spaces along their sides. The types of splintered flint, the tools shapes and the weapons that were made here are particularly interesting.



Green Caves

From Neanderthal men to the latest Palaeolithic occupation about 12,000 years ago

Partially voided at the end of Sixties, these large caverns returned bones and flint tools thanks to the archaeological digs led by the University of Ferrara during the Seventies. A huge quantity of marmot remains, found in a perfect condition and showing many cuts occurred during the butchering of the rodent by the hunters, confirms the interest for marmot fur and meat by hunters-gatherers. Very interesting finds were two finely cut collarbones of marmot and two bone tools of wolf and elk. Together with the Clusantin Cave, the Green Caves represent something unique in the whole Italian Alps.



Rio Secco Cave

40,000 years ago, last Neanderthal men in Friuli

The Rio Secco Cave, an archaeological site currently digged by the University of Ferrara, is one of the most important sites for Neanderthals and anatomically modern West Friuli men for the studies on the life habits. This vast cave returns faunal remains, mainly belonging to cave bears, deer, elks, bison and marmots.

Many splintered flint tools, hearths and charcoal attest ancient activities dating back to thousands of years ago.

The studies indicate that Neanderthals frequented this cavern in two different moments, 47,000-43,000 years ago to hunt cave bears and brown bears. Of particular note is an exceptional discovery of a golden eagle talon extracted by Neanderthals as a symbolic ornamental custom. A hearth, nowadays conserved in the Cave Museum, was found on the upper layer of the cave. It is attributable to a group of anatomically modern men, who reached the cave around 30,000 years ago.



Mainarda Cave

The use of caves during Roman Age

In this cavern were found some bronze female bracelets that date back to the Late Roman Age (IV-V Century). They seem to confirm the use of the cave as shelter, even if it is possible that they were grave goods.



Local speleology

The collection of fossils and minerals

The exhibition ends with a section dedicated to the local ethno-speleology and to the Bear Cave and with another one dedicated to fossils and minerals. After a brief introduction on sedimentary rocks and on sea environment of the Cretaceous and the Miocene, visitors can find some fossils that come from the Pradis Plateau and from the hills around Castelnuovo del Friuli.

