



# Cafe Neandertal: Excavating Our Past in One of Europe's Most Ancient Places

*Beebe Bahrami*

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**Cafe Neandertal: Excavating Our Past in One of Europe's Most Ancient Places** Beebe Bahrami  
Centered in the Dordogne region of southwestern France, one of Europe's most concentrated regions for Neandertal and early modern human occupations, writer Beebe Bahrami follows and participates in the work of archaeologists who are doing some of the most comprehensive and global work to date on the research, exploration, and recovery of our ancient ancestors. In *Café Neandertal*, Bahrami follows this compelling riddle along a path populated with colorful local personalities and opinionated, polemical, and brilliant archaeologists working in remote and fascinating places across Eurasia, all the while maintaining a firm foothold in the Dordogne, a region celebrated by the local tourist office as a vacation destination for 400,000 years. From this prehistoric perch Bahrami gets to know first-hand the Neandertals and the people who love them — those who have devoted their lives to them. She is thrown into a world debating not only what happened to these close cousins but also what legacy they have left for those who followed.

*Café Neandertal* is also a detective story, investigating one of the biggest mysteries of prehistory and archaeology: Who were the Neandertals? Why did they disappear around 35,000 years ago? And more mysteriously, what light do they shed on us moderns?

Bahrami takes readers into the thick of an excavation, neck-deep in Neanderthal dirt, and to the front row of the heated debates about our long-lost cousins. *Café Neandertal* pulls us deeply into the complex mystery of the Neandertals, shedding a surprising light on what it means to be human.

## Cafe Neandertal: Excavating Our Past in One of Europe's Most Ancient Places Details

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# **From Reader Review Cafe Neandertal: Excavating Our Past in One of Europe's Most Ancient Places for online ebook**

## **Denise says**

I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway and I'm glad I did.

This is a very enjoyable read written by someone who revels in both getting her hands dirty and then settling down in the evening with the crew to a "civilized, modern" scotch and great food.

I was pleasantly surprised that the author is able to keep to the evidence. As much as she wants to know the "story" behind the Neandertals, she doesn't lean one way or another in any of the questions that seem to keep coming up. Were they like us? Maybe no one will ever find the definitive answers, or maybe someone will find a new undisturbed site that just might.

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## **Peter Herrmann says**

Life is too short to waste reading - to the end - a book like this. Was a sort of high level 'how I spent my summer vacation' book (perhaps not completely fair on my part, I'll admit). But precious little scientific info squeezed in between ecstatic descriptions of the Dordogne region, etc. As another reader commented: unclear what kind of reader this book was intended for.

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## **Joan says**

Part history, part travel narrative. Enjoy traveling to the different Neandertal sites along the Mediterranean countries with Beebe a cultural anthropologist (aka journalist). Learn some of the latest developments in the study of our closest relatives in the history of mankind. There are still many questions to be answered but it will make you look at Neandertal's in a different light.

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## **Doug Gordon says**

I liked this book a lot more than I expected to. Normally, I don't care for books about science that are written in the first person and filled with anecdotes about the various researchers, but in this case it worked very well. The author used it as a device to present all the differing and conflicting views of the way that we view the Neandertals, which is really based on very little evidence other than bones and stone tools. I know that I certainly view them differently than I used to, no longer having that old "cave man" image in my mind.

It also makes me want to jump on a plane bound for France and to sign up for an archaeology dig in one of the charming locales that she presents so well!

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## **Catherine Barker says**

I was excited to read this book because it is such an interesting topic. However it is written in a stream of consciousness sort of way and to get to anything interesting you have to wade through a lot of tedium. I can't really recommend this book.

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## **Guna says**

The author is a cultural anthropologist turned journalist, and has interviewed and worked with many paleoarchaeologists, especially in the Dordogne, France. Not only has she talked with scientists, she has also spoken with many who follow discoveries closely, even though they are not professionals. The discoveries, observations and reflections are up-to-date, and present a completely different view of Neandertals (and us) than we were taught in school. I found the second half of the book of especial interest, though I may reread the whole thing.

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## **Annie says**

A decent journey from a fellow outsider into the complex world of anthropology, focusing on Neanderthals, their evolution, their interaction with modern humans and the resulting Neanderthal genes we carry, what caused them to go extinct, etc.

At times a little repetitive, and food is described in painstaking, obsessive detail. Every meal the author or the anthropologists or the locals consume, you will know about it. But overall, interesting review of the developing understanding of Neanderthals.

Audiobook reader's voice starts off as annoying, but as time goes on becomes oddly comforting, like the familiar voice of a favourite aunt.

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## **Charles Percy says**

I have spent some time in southwest France and in northern Spain. This great book certainly takes me back, and not just to my own experiences in these fascinating areas, but way back in human history. I have always had a hard time understanding prehistory but this book took me there in ways both clear and very enjoyable. I also greatly enjoyed reading about the people who strive to uncover and analyze the evidence from prehistory. This is a great read for anyone interested in what it is to be human.

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## **L. Stephen Wolfe says**

Based on the material and the experts interviewed, I would have given this book five stars. But the author spends too many words talking about herself and her experiences. Because the book follows her life instead of making sense out of the material, the book's organization suffers. A book like this should not be about the

writer.

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### **Vanessa says**

I picked up this book because I wanted to know more about current work on Neandertals. What I got was a travel memoir with about ten pages' worth of actual data sandwiched between massive spreads of scenery fluffed with dialogue. The reviewer who said this was like "Eat Pray Love" isn't far off: like that author, this one exoticizes and stereotypes nearly everything. (She's SO Thai! They're SO Spanish! OMG France is adorbs!) Neandertals are treated like spiritual advisers on some kind of paleoquest (one of her chapters is literally titled "A Different Sort of Pilgrimage"). And hey, if that's your thing, this book is for you. It certainly wasn't for me.

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### **Aleca Jarvis says**

I very much enjoyed this book for a number of reasons, some sentimental and some for aspects of the book itself. Most important to me, it brought me back into area of archaeology, my first major in university, before I changed it to something more "sensible" and "employable". It was wonderful to read the details of a dig worked entirely by people completely committed to the search for history in the realest and most physical way and who were entirely enamored with the history itself.

The author's love for prehistory and the Neandertals was unrepentant and proudly shown, and her care for the Dordogne region was enough to keep me reading forever. Her descriptions of the nature, the towns, and the locals and their dedication to the magnificent history of their home were splendid and one of my favorite aspects of the book.

Additionally, this was a book that lured me out a stubbornly persistent period of not-reading and that alone speaks volumes.

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### **Byron Laursen says**

I got captivated by Anthropology during my senior year of college, which led to a Peace Corps tour of duty right after graduation. It was just wonderfully mind-opening to go beyond my own time and culture and get a sense of how wide the possibilities are for human existence.

Cafe Neandertal gave me another fix of that same kind of experience, and I came to it straight out of reading another of Dr. Bahrami's books, her extended love letter to life in the Dordogne region of France, *Cafe Oc*. She is unafraid to write with an open heart at the same time she very effectively and memorably opens the doors to the workings of science-devoted minds. You get to meet some remarkable people in these pages, and to share some of their passions and devotion. Your imagination gets to experience a sense of what it might have meant to be a Neandertal and/or a Homo Sapiens in the world as it existed hundreds of thousands of years back.

Not for the sake of boasting, but just to establish that I know my way around with the printed word, I've co-authored nine books for major publishers, including three best-sellers, and I scored 100th percentile on a test of overall literature knowledge and teaching ability. Beebe Bahrami is a writer worth tuning in to. Wise without being cynical, expressive and yet in her own way rigorous, both inviting and rewarding.

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**Captain Sir Roddy, R.N. (Ret.) says**

Nicely written kind of travelogue of France's Dordogne region with a focus on the archaeology and current research associated with the Neanderthal peoples that occupied the area.

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**Pat Carson says**

Wonderful combination of new updates on Neandertals and a romance with southern France

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**Kathryn says**

I enjoyed reading this exploration of the world of Neanderthal paleontology. Bahrami is a cultural anthropologist and journalist who immerses herself in one dig in particular, but also visits several others and discusses the findings, theories, and facts with many of the experts in the field. However, the cafe of the title is about the many discussions that take place, not only among the experts, but also the local communities in France, Spain, and elsewhere, where people are proud of the Neanderthal sites in their areas. Bahrami's writing style is rambling, much like sitting across from a friend in a cafe and talking about many things between sips of wine.

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