The Lascaux cave paintings, located near the French village of Montignac, were discovered on September 12, 1940 by four teenagers-Marcel Ravidat, Jacques Marsal, Georges Agnel, and Simon Coencas, as well as Marcel's dog, Robot. These cave paintings, considered amongst the finest cave paintings ever discovered, date from 17,000 BCE, and contain many of the most famous Upper Paleolithic art. Famous chambers within the subterranean cave site include The Great Hall of the Bulls, the Shaft of the Dead Man, the Lateral Passage, the Painted Gallery, the Chamber of Engravings, and the Chamber of Felines.

The Upper Paleolithic period, which began in roughly 40,000 BCE, dovetailed with the replacement of Neanderthal Man with our more modern Homo sapien ancestors, and represented a giant leap in the intellectual development of mankind. The paintings at Lascaux reflect this progress; not only are many of the paintings notably realistic, but they are huge in scale (one of the bulls in the Cave of the Bulls is a whopping 17 feet wide). In all, there are roughly 2,000 figurative pictures, including 900 animals (currently 600 of these have been identified). Moreover, the site contains numerous abstract paintings and symbols.

The Lascaux cave paintings were first opened to the public in 1948. However, by as early as 1955, carbon dioxide produced by the nearly 1,200 daily visitors had visibly damaged the paintings. In 1963, the cave was closed to the public in order to salvage the paintings. However, since the construction of “Lascaux II” in 1983, an exact replica of the Great Hall of the Bulls and the Painted Gallery, visitors have been able to experience some of the magic of the caves, located only a short walking distance from the original.