

St. Petersburg Curiosities Museum Adds 36,000-Year-Old Human Skull to Collection

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St. Petersburg's Kunstkamera Museum has added to its collection a 36,000-year-old human skeleton.

St. Petersburg's Kunstkamera Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography has added to its collection a 36,000-year-old human skeleton, a news report said Wednesday.

The head of the museum's anthropology department, Valery Khartanovich, was cited by the Interfax news agency as saying the skeleton was "an extremely rare thing."

The Kunstkamera museum, which boasts more than 180,000 pieces in its collection, studied the skeleton for much of this year, conducting DNA testing to determine that the ancient skull contains "a certain percentage of genes characteristic for neanderthals," Khartanovich said in comments carried by TASS.

Khartanovich said the skull was "almost whole," though offered no further details on its condition.

Currently, the oldest, most complete human skull is estimated to be between 12,000 and 13,000 years old. It was discovered in an underwater cave in Mexico earlier this year, according to National Geographic.

The Kunstkamera museum is Russia's first state public museum, established in 1714 on the order of Peter the Great. The word "kunstkamera" is a Renaissance-era term referring to encyclopedic collections of objects that had yet to be categorically defined, often relics of natural history, geology and archaeology.

The museum is one of the leading research centers of Russia's Academy of Sciences.

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