



# Underground Society Discovered After Centuries, Say Archaeologists

## Description

Archaeologists in northern Spain have discovered the remains of a medieval society that lived underground for centuries. The skeletons show signs of disease, inbreeding, and conflict, indicating a community isolated from the outside world.

Las Gobas, a series of natural rock caves, housed this society from the 7th to the 11th centuries. Researchers have started exploring this forgotten site, uncovering the harsh and often violent conditions these people endured.

A study in the journal *Science Advances* revealed that 33 skeletons were found at the site. About 63% showed signs of inbreeding, suggesting the community had limited contact with outsiders, leading to poor genetic diversity and health issues.

Ricardo Rodríguez Varela, an expert in paleogenetics, noted the community's isolation, with low levels of North African and Middle Eastern ancestry, even after the Islamic conquest of Iberia. Evidence of fractures and wounds from swords suggests frequent internal conflicts.

The skeletons also contained traces of smallpox, a deadly disease that affected many European populations in medieval times. The disease likely spread through contaminated pork, a key food source, and easily infected the isolated community without external medical aid.

By the end of the 11th century, Las Gobas was abandoned. The reasons are not entirely clear, but scholars believe resource shortages, disease, and perhaps external pressures like invasions played a role. When the site was deserted, many burials had already taken place inside the caves.

## Comprehension Questions

### Multiple Choice

1. In which centuries did the society in Las Gobas live underground?

Option: 5th to 9th centuries

Option: 7th to 11th centuries

Option: 10th to 13th centuries

Option: 12th to 15th centuries



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2. What percentage of the skeletons showed signs of inbreeding?
- Option: 50%
  - Option: 63%
  - Option: 75%
  - Option: 85%
3. What type of evidence suggests frequent internal conflicts within the community?
- Option: Fossilized food remains
  - Option: Evidence of fractures and wounds from swords
  - Option: Artifacts resembling tools
  - Option: Burial practices
4. Which disease was found in the skeletons at the site?
- Option: Plague
  - Option: Typhus
  - Option: Smallpox
  - Option: Measles
5. Who is an expert in paleogenetics that commented on the community's isolation?
- Option: Ricardo Rodríguez Varela
  - Option: Juan Carlos Pérez
  - Option: Alberto González
  - Option: Fernando López
6. What likely spread smallpox to the isolated community?
- Option: Contaminated water
  - Option: Contaminated pork
  - Option: Airborne particles
  - Option: Human migrations

**True-False**

7. The community in Las Gobas had a high level of genetic diversity.
8. Las Gobas was inhabited from the 7th to the 11th centuries.
9. The skeletons found showed evidence of advanced medical practices.



10. The skeletons were affected by smallpox, which was common in medieval Europe.
11. The reasons for the abandonment of Las Gobas are well-documented and clear.
12. Ricardo Rodríguez Varela is an expert in archaeology.

### Gap-Fill

13. Las Gobas is a series of natural rock caves that housed the society from the 7th to the \_\_\_\_\_.
14. The study revealed that \_\_\_\_\_ skeletons were found at the site.
15. About \_\_\_\_\_% of the skeletons showed signs of inbreeding.
16. The skeletons contained traces of \_\_\_\_\_, which affected many medieval populations.
17. The community's isolation resulted in poor genetic \_\_\_\_\_ and health issues.
18. By the end of the 11th century, Las Gobas was \_\_\_\_\_.

### Answer

- Multiple Choice:** 1. 7th to 11th centuries 2. 63% 3. Evidence of fractures and wounds from swords 4. Smallpox 5. Ricardo Rodríguez Varela 6. Contaminated pork  
**True-False:** 7. False 8. True 9. False 10. True 11. False 12. False  
**Gap-Fill:** 13. 11th centuries 14. 33 15. 63 16. smallpox 17. diversity 18. abandoned

### CATEGORY

1. Health - LEVEL4

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