

## EXCAVATING A CONTINENT

A number of researchers suspect that *Homo sapiens* arose not in a single place in Africa, but across the entire continent, emerging from a network of interconnected hominin populations. But for decades, archaeologists positioned East and South Africa as important places for hominin evolution and the putative birthplace of our species. That's likely because most fossils, including groundbreaking findings that have transformed our understanding of human evolution, have been found in those regions.

### AFAR REGION, ETHIOPIA, 1974 "Lucy," 3.2 million years ago

Lucy—the skeletal remains of an *Australopithecus afarensis* female—is one of the best-known hominin fossils. Studies suggest that she was both tree-dwelling and capable of an upright gait, providing an important evolutionary stepping stone from more primitive ape species to modern humans.

### AFAR REGION, ETHIOPIA, 2013 Adult jawbone, 2.8 million years ago

A mandible fragment is the earliest known trace of the genus *Homo*, although the species it belongs to is a mystery.

### NEAR SAFI, MOROCCO, 1961

#### Human remains at Jebel Irhoud, 315,000 years ago

Flint blades and *Homo sapiens*-like skeletons in a Moroccan cave known as Jebel Irhoud may represent the oldest *Homo sapiens* artifacts. The skeletons have modern features such as round skulls and modern-human-like teeth and faces.

### OMO NATIONAL PARK, ETHIOPIA, 1967-1974 Omo Kibish remains, 195,000 years ago

Fragments from two skulls, four jaws, a legbone, a few hundred teeth, and some other bones were found at a site in Ethiopia, and are classified as anatomically modern *Homo sapiens*.

### LAKE TURKANA, KENYA, 1984

#### "Turkana Boy," 2 million years ago

A nearly complete skeleton of an ancient *Homo erectus* child found near Kenya's Lake Turkana provides a rare glimpse into how quickly this species reached adulthood and how similar their skeletons were to ours.

### KABWE, ZAMBIA, 1921

#### "Kabwe skull," 300,000 years ago

Also called "Broken Hill skull," the specimen is considered a representative of *Homo heidelbergensis*.

### RISING STAR CAVE, SOUTH AFRICA, 2013 *Homo naledi*, 236,000–335,000 years ago

In 2013 and 2014, cavers found skeletons of two adults and one juvenile of what is believed to be a new species: *Homo naledi*. Its tiny brain and ape-like shoulders—indicating it was a good climber—suggest it may be an evolutionary offshoot lineage that went extinct.