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A postman collected pebbles every day for 33 years and what he created is astounding

BI Talia Avakian Business Insider June 13, 2015

More than 120,000 people travel to the commune of Hauterives in southeastern France every year to see the Palais Idéal du Facteur Cheval, a stunning palace constructed entirely from handpicked pebbles.



ferdinand cheval

(Palais Idéal du Facteur Cheval) Originally called "The Temple of Nature," the man-made wonder was built one stone at a time from thousands of pebbles that postman Joseph Ferdinand Cheval collected for 33 years.

He combined the stones with mortar and limestone to create the impeccably detailed castle.



cheval

(Palais Idéal du Facteur Cheval) At 26 meters long and 12 meters high on one end, and 14 meters long on the other, the palace is complete with pillars, buttresses, a terrace, and animals constructed from the postman's memories of the postcards he delivered everyday.



cheval

(Palais Idéal du Facteur Cheval) Today, as part of the offered tours, children are challenged to play a game where they locate all of the animals hidden within Cheval's palace.

The palace has a fascinating history.

When Cheval was 43 years old, he stumbled across an oddly shaped rock while delivering mail on the same 18-mile route he took through Hauterives every day.

He was so fascinated by the rock's shape that he put it in his pocket and took it home.

"It was a stumbling block shape so bizarre that I put it in my pocket to admire at my ease ... I thought: since nature wants to do sculpture, I will do the masonry and architecture," Cheval wrote in his journal.

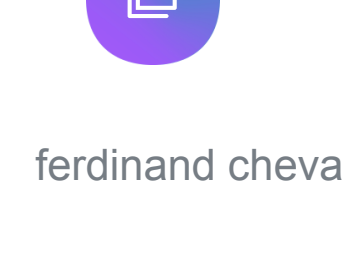
That day began the next 33 years he spent collecting uniquely shaped pebbles to construct his palace, carrying them home first in his pants pockets and eventually in a wheelbarrow before beginning work alone overnight with an oil lamp for light.

(Copyright Collection Palais Idéal - DR/Mémoires de la Drôme) Cheval at work.

He would mark the stones he found interesting while delivering mail, pick them up at the end of his work day, and take them to his collection garden, soon to be the home of his palace.

ferdinand cheval

After years of construction, the palace was officially opened to visitors in 1907.



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Story Continues

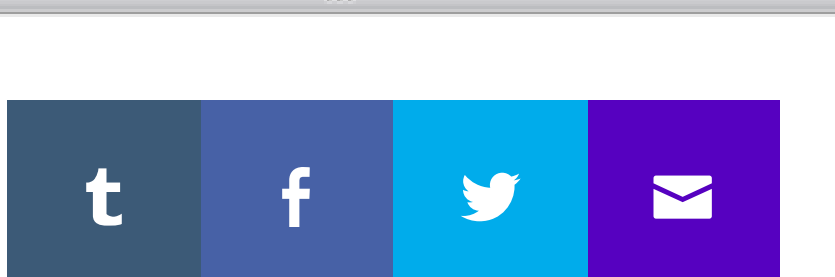
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