

DIGGING • MAKING DEEP • MINES

The most commonly used metal ores within the earth's crust contain iron and can be found in various shades of red, yellow, and brown.

These pigments, later called ochres, are still used to colour artists' oil paints today. Next time you are in an art shop look out for them on the shelves, and remember, rust is also a kind of iron ore!



Leave us a handprint in ochre paint or charcoal at our craft station near the front entrance of the museum and tell us what you thought of the day!



Iron ores can often be found on the surface, but we know that particularly precious ores were also dug out from beneath the ground.

Weathered green malachite, a common form of copper ore, can be collected from surface outcrops for use as a pigment, but to get solid, stable material suitable for carving into beads or pendants people had to dig down.

You can find lots of modern carvings in malachite and other ores around the museum, but we know that it was being used in this way from at least 7000 BC!