

Rocks of ages

B EING a part of the second annual Burrup Heritage Tour is the closest people can get to a real life Indiana Jones Experience, according to archaeologist and Friends of Australian Rock Art (FARA) coordinator Robin Chapple.

FARA is taking bookings for its weeklong trip to the Dampier Archipelago between Sunday August 3 and Sunday August 10, the highlight being a three-day guided tour of the Burrup Peninsula Rock Art Region, the world's oldest and largest rock art landscape.

Among the 500,000-plus petroglyphs (rock carvings) contained in the Burrup are engravings dating back 30,000 years to before the last Ice Age which are the oldest human record of carvings anywhere on the planet.

Chapple attributes the longevity of these carvings to the fine-grained granophyre rock that they were made in.

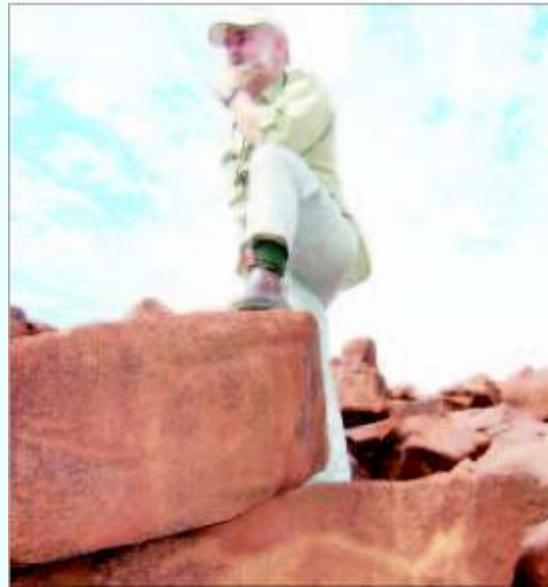
"Granophyre doesn't erode like other rocks," he explains.

"There would have been carvings like this elsewhere in Australia and around the world, but the nature of erosion in rocks is that in most cases, we lose them.

"This group of mountain and islands with these carvings on them will remain for another 10 or 20 thousand years."

The carvings cover a range of depictions and application methods with engravings of extinct fauna species such as fat-tail wallabies and thylacines as well as incredible geometrics on display in Mother Nature's own West Australian gallery.

Tour numbers are limited to 60 people and last year many were sadly turned away.



Friends of Australian Rock Art coordinator Robin Chapple

"The reason we've restricted numbers is that it's pointless having lots of people on the tour and we want to get out on the country and let everybody enjoy the real experience without having to deal with hordes of others," he said.

"We split everyone up into four or five groups with 10 to 12 people in each who get shown the carvings by guides including anthropologists and archaeologists."

The tour costs \$1250 per person and includes a two-day coach ride, food and camping accommodation.

Call 9332 2815 or 0411 669 128 for more details.