نـــــدوة العـلا الدولية في الحفاظ
المستدام لمواقع التراث الصخري

AlUla International Symposium on Sustainable
Conservation of Rupestrian Heritage Sites

A

Basic Information Booklet

Organized by:

In collaboration with:

Commission for Engineering Geology for the Sustainable Conservation of ancient monuments and archaeological sites

Commission on Mechanics of Ancient Rock Structures MARS

Technical Committee 301 on Preservation of Historic Sites

1
Highlights

Rupestrian sites, or rock-cut structures, represent a fascinating category of human ingenuity where natural rock formations were transformed into dwellings, religious spaces, and artistic expressions. These sites span thousands of years and offer unique insights into ancient construction techniques, cultural practices, and environmental adaptations.
Rupestrian architecture involves carving directly into natural rock formations to create spaces such as caves, tunnels, and chambers. This "negative building" technique—where material is removed rather than added—has been employed across various civilizations and time periods.
Examples include:

- **Cliff cavities: excavated horizontally or vertically into cliffs or rocky slopes, often extending over multiple levels.**
- **Mixed excavation techniques: combining tunnels and trenches with partial stone coatings for structural stability.**
- **Decorated facades: very often, in case of holy places or tombs, the external surfaces have been creatively carved, providing a very important expression of human geniality and art. A special attention will be also given to conservation of rock-art and graffiti, a special heritage for which the middle East is very rich.**

Studying these ancient feats of engineering offers invaluable empirical insights into how such structures endure environmental stresses, geological shifts, and the passage of time. By analysing their design principles, material resilience, and adaptive construction techniques, it is possible to uncover critical data to refine predictive models for modern rock engineering projects. This interdisciplinary approach not only bridges historical knowledge with contemporary science but also enhances our ability to ensure the durability, safety, and sustainability of today's infrastructure in an era of climate change and urbanization.
Studying rupestrian sites provides valuable lessons for contemporary rock engineering and rock-carved site conservation due to:

- **Long-term durability: ancient techniques demonstrate how structures can withstand environmental changes over millennia.**
- **Material adaptation: insights into the use of local materials can inform sustainable practices today.**
- **Cultural integration: rupestrian architecture exemplifies how built environments can harmonize with natural landscapes.**

In conclusion, rupestrian sites are not only remarkable for their historical and cultural significance but also for their potential to inform modern engineering practices, thereby supporting conservation efforts and ensuring long-term sustainability. By analysing these ancient structures—whether through their artistic expressions or construction techniques—it is possible gain a deeper understanding of humanity's ability to adapt to its environment while creating enduring legacies. Such data is the essential background for modern conservation and restoration projects. As the symposium will gather, experts of rock mechanics, engineering geology, history, art, and conservation science, this interdisciplinarity will provide a great benefit for the sustainable conservation of rock-art and rupestrian sites in the world.

2
The Symposium

The Symposium will last 2 days and half, on 25th and 27th November 2025 (arrival on Monday 24th and leaving on Thursday 27thafternoon). It is scheduled in two days scientific work and half day field trips to Hegra, Jabal Ikmah and Dadan heritage sites.

The Symposium is organized in different sessions to cover the innovation and advances in science and technology on mitigating the impacts of geohazards and environmental threats in rock-art and rupestrian sites from all over the world. The sessions will highlight the existing diversity in management and preservation approaches under various type of geohazards, different Countries and variety of cultures.

3
Themes and sessions

The Symposium is organized in sessions showing case studies from different part of the world, sharing experience in rock-art and rupestrian heritage conservation, under various climatic and hazardous contexts.

1. General session:

Keynote sessions of general interest in the field of rupestrian/hypogeum site conservation will feature speakers with significant experience in rock mass characterization, geohazards, climate change, weathering, remote sensing applications, monitoring, advanced modeling, cutting-edge geophysical investigations, innovative conservation projects, and more. These experts will share their insights with participants.

2. Case studies:

Researchers, conservators, and site managers will present case studies on mitigation measures implemented at various rupestrian/hypogeum sites affected by both rapid- and slow-onset geohazards (e.g., rock slope instabilities, heavy rainfall, wind erosion, weathering, rising water tables, and more). Emphasis will be placed on the conservation strategies adopted, including the application of traditional knowledge in mitigation efforts.

3. Field trip:

A half-day field trip will be organized, including visits to the rupestrian Nabatean UNESCO World Heritage site of Hegra, the ancient archaeological site of Dadan, and the rock inscription site of Jabal Ikmah.

4
Who can Participate?

The Symposium is mainly addressed, but not exclusively, to expert of rock mechanics, engineering geology and geosciences in general, as well as to Conservators and Managers of UNESCO World Heritage Sites and of Monuments and Sites affected by geo-hazards. The participation will be limited where priority is given by the Organizing Committee to candidates presenting and submitting case studies on rock-art and rupestrian site conservation, affected by geo-hazards and geo-environmental threats.

It is expected a maximum number of 70 participants.

5
Grants

Grants are provided for about 20 participants, including 10 key experts that will be selected by the scientific committee, covering local expenses (accommodation, meals, local transportation, etc.), excluding international transportation to and from AlUla (Saudi Arabia). Local transportation and meals are provided for all participants.

Grants priority will be given to conservators, managers, or the key experts who deliver a presentation and submit a full paper.

There are no participation limitations for conservators, managers, or experts who fully cover their own mission expenses. However, if the maximum number of participants is reached, priority will be given to those delivering a presentation and submitting a full paper.

6
How to Apply?

Applicants shall fill the registration form (attached) and upload the below listed documents at the conference website (www.scrh.org) by 30 September 2025, also requesting the grant and declaring the availability to submit the full paper by 30 January 2026:

1. CV (max 1 page)
2. List of publications
3. Abstract (only for potential speakers)

<u>Registration fees:</u>
No registration fees are required

<u>Poster Sessions:</u>
Available for the entire duration of the Symposium.

7
Publication

<u>Proceedings:</u>
Author (s) of the selected abstract shall submit a full paper by 30 January 2026 - All papers shall be reviewed for the publication in a book with an international Publishing Company.
Excellent presentations can be accepted without submitting full paper.
Abstract and full paper shall be written based on the guidelines reported on the website.

<u>Timeline:</u>
Abstract Submission (maximum 200 words): September 30th , 2025
Notification of Acceptance: October 15th, 2025
Symposium November 25th, 26th, 27th
Full Paper Submission for accepted presentations: January 30, 2026

8
The Team

Chairpersons:

Adnan Adas, Saudi, Saudi ICOMOS (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) aadas@saudi-icomos.org
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Claudio Margottini (UNESCO Chair University of Florence, IAEG Italy) claudio.margottini@unifi.it

Organizing Committee:

Jose Ignacio Gallego Revilla, Royal Commission for AlUla (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)
Claudio Margottini UNESCO Chair, Florence University (Italy)
Adnan Adas, Saudi ICOMOS (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)
Daniele Spizzichino (ISPRA Geological Survey of Italy – ICOMOS Italy)

Scientific Committee (in alphabetical order):

Adnan Adas, Saudi ICOMOS (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)
Abdul Naser Alzahrani, Saudi ICOMOS (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)
Ömer Aydan, University of the Ryukyus, Okinawa (Japan / Türkiye)
Maurizio Di Stefano, ICOMOS Italy, Rome (italy)
Alessandro Flora, University of Naples Federico II (Italy)
Jose Ignacio Gallego Revilla, Royal Commission for AlUla (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia / Spain)
Gad El_Qady, National Research Institute of Astronomy and Geophysics (Egypt)
Renato Lancellotta, emeritus, Polytechnic of Turin (Italy)
Lihui Li, Chinese Academy of Science, Beijing (China).
Claudio Margottini, UNESCO Chair in Florence University (Italy) and IAEG Italy.
Vassilis Marinos, International Association for Engineering Geology and the Environment – IAEG (Greece)
Dominique Ngan-Tillard, Delft University of Technology, Delft (The Netherland)
Daniele Spizzichino, ISPRA Geological Survey of Italy (Italy)
Samer Sahlah, Saudi ICOMOS (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)
Takafumi Seiki, Utsunomiya University, Tochigi (Japan)
Kyriacos Themistocleus, Cyprus University of Technology (Cyprus)
Myrto Tsitsinaki. Royal Commission for AlUla (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia / Greece)

Symposium management:

Turki Alkadi (Saudi ICOMOS)
Marie-Line Farah (Royal Commission for AlUla)

Symposium Logistics:

Wael Alanezi (Saudi ICOMOS)

9
Where and When?

Date of the Symposium:

The Symposium will be organized during the period of 25-27 November 2025. Arrival date in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be scheduled on 24th of November and Departure on 27th of November, in the afternoon. The Symposium will take place in AlUla, one of the most beautiful historical and environmental location in Saudi Arabia. The venue will be the Tourism Building Auditorium, Royal Commission for AlUla.

Venue of the Symposium:

- **DAPA7942, 5898 طريق موسى بن النصير, 7942, AlUla 43563, Saudi Arabia**
- **MW55+V5 AlUla Saudi Arabia**
- **https://maps.app.goo.gl/cATTtCvPqDn2JWSr9**

For more information, kindly visit:

www.scrhs.org