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Warm water: Japanese landscaper Watanabe San among the limestone rocks of the creek bed he has created at Rye.
 Picture: Daryl Gordon

A really 'hot' idea

A WARM water river will soon be meandering through ancient sand dunes near Rye back beach.

Master Japanese landscaper Watanabe San has used peninsula limestone to form the 200-metre long river 'bed'.

The river's water will come from an underground spring and flow around the limestone boulders before settling into large pools.

Charles Davidson of Peninsula Hot Springs said the project was the first in limestone tackled by the famed landscaper who designed a Japanese garden at Buckingham Palace in London.

"Watanabe San was taught by his father and has been working with stone for more than 43 years," Mr Davidson said.

He said the 61 year old had been commissioned to build landscapes in Spain, Italy, Germany, Holland and Australia.

His last Australian job was at the Canberra Nara Park, on the edge of Lake Burley Griffin.

"It was a sister city project with Nara in Japan and Canberra," Mr Davidson said.

"After completing his work at Peninsula Hot Springs, he will be moving to Lithuania to build a 10,000-metric tonne garden and hot springs project that is scheduled to take two years.

"This was the first time he has worked with limestone and in his words the rocks from the property are amazing in their size, shape and character.

"The mood he has created is distinctly from the limestone region of the peninsula known as The Cups.

"So while he has a Japanese eye for detail, the atmosphere will be very much Australian and even more so, very Mornington Peninsula."

Mr Davidson said the latest additions to the hot springs would be completed by mid-2008.

"It will provide a bathing zone that will offer a huge variety of bathing experiences including specifically designed family baths.

"An additional 30 jobs will be created and the facility will be large enough to cater for more than 250 people at one time."

Mr Davidson said the existing hot springs centre, which already had a huge client base from all over Melbourne, would become "a dedicated, quiet spa zone".

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