

The Modern Bathroom

by Alison Macpherson

Making Your Home Spa Wish List

The smallest room in the house has become a big focus for creating a home environment that promotes relaxation. From twisting, twirling water in the bath to racks that warm your towels, there are more luxurious options than ever before to transform an ordinary bathroom into a corner of paradise. And now, bun-warmers are no longer found only found in the kitchen. What's on your wish list?

Whether you're starting from scratch in a new home or renovating an existing bath, you'll need to become familiar with terms like "vertical spa" and "shower panel" to help you choose just the right look and luxury for your bathroom. But before you get carried away with dreams of waterfalls and heated floors, check your bank account and line of credit. Depending on your expectations, your home spa experience could rocket from \$1,500 to \$15,000 in a single shopping trip.

Once you've decided how much money to dedicate to creating your spa, make a checklist of components you'll need to evaluate and choose. Depending on the scope of your project, this could include flooring and wall finishes, tub, shower, sink and toilet fixtures and nuts and bolts items like faucets, fans, shower nozzles, pumps and switches. Don't forget to add finishing items such as lighting, towel bars and mirrors.

Beyond the components that go into your bathroom, there will be costs related to installation. This can be a significant portion of your budget if you're renovating a bathroom in an older home. Electrical, plumbing, heating and carpentry experts don't come cheap, so thoroughly explore these costs when determining how your budget will be spent. If you're undertaking a complex renovation, employing a reputable contractor with plenty of experience in bathroom renovations is a wise choice. Creating a spa in a newly built home is easier and you may choose to have the help of a designer only.

Next, do some price checking on the elements you want and prioritize them to determine which features are most important. This will help refine your budget by assigning dollar amounts to the various components in your bathroom project. Now comes the fun part of finalizing your wish list with the makes, models and colours that will go into your personal oasis.

If you're at the upper end of the scale of elaborate home spa options, a spacious steam shower with multiple shower nozzles is a "must have", along with a separate jetted tub. Add radiant heat in the floor, a seat warmer for your toilet and a towel warmer in drawer or wall mount form and you have all the makings for top notch pampering. Flooring and wall finishes like ceramic, porcelain tiles and marble are popular or you might consider a wood laminate floor for a warmer look. Pay particular attention to lighting options that allow you to create the right mood for relaxing.

In the mid range, what's likely to give you the most mileage is sticking to options that require the least amount of labour and products that fit your space without much customizing. If you can wait and watch for special pricing on big-ticket items and be flexible with colour choices of your fixtures, that can help too. If you're choosing to splash out on either the tub or the shower, base your pick on which will give more value for your personal priorities. If the shower tops your list, it should at least have two showerheads with settings to customize the water flow to your liking. Don't be shy about getting into the tub in the showroom to give it a test drive for size and comfort.

An economical solution to getting a touch of the spa treatment at home is as simple as a few amenities that go a long way. Even the basic bathroom can be made more comfortable with a quality showerhead with massage jets, adjustable lighting, relaxing colours, scented candles, plush towels, accessories that make you feel good and lots of storage to keep it uncluttered. Top it off with a beautiful, comfortable robe for a spa package that's soothing to both the soul and the pocketbook.

Regardless of the amount you intend to spend on creating your spa, if you set your budget, work your wish list within that range and look after your top priorities first you'll already have a start toward making your home spa a successful project.