

Tile & Floor

— DESIGN · SOURCE · CREATE —



Tips article:

Is stone the right choice for you?

Marble, granite, limestone, sandstone, slate and travertine – there are so many natural stones to choose from. But what are the benefits of this enduringly popular material? *Mark Hawkins*, one of Tile & Floor's Directors and our resident stone specialist, shares his expertise on this perfectly imperfect surface.



What are the characteristics of stone?







Formed from organic materials with combinations of heat and pressure over millions of years, there is nothing quite like the character of natural stone.

It is this unique characteristic which differentiates it from man-made materials, such as ceramic and porcelain, where you'll see repeat patterns and often a more uniform, modern appearance.

Instead, no two pieces of stone will be the same - it has a story to tell from wherever in the world it was quarried. Your stone will be entirely unique to your home and will age beautifully over time, though it is also a very durable surface.

The pros of stone



-  Available in multiple designs and sizes
-  Durable
-  Ideal for use with underfloor heating
-  Low maintenance
-  Fireproof
-  Adaptable

Types of stone

Available in multiple formats and finishes, a brief run down of the core options:

Limestone: Different selections provide varying swathes of shell and fossil patterns which add interesting markings and colour tones in this typically pale cream to brown stone, popular in traditional homes.

Sandstone: Hard wearing, frost resistant and low-slip, this material is very popular for outdoor use.

Granite: Incredibly hard, it is also nearly impermeable to stains and comes in a

range of patterns and colours. Most often used for domestic kitchen worktops.

Marble: Timelessly classical, the swirling movement of the patterns in marble makes a statement like no other material. Available in a huge range of colours with both subtle and dramatic markings.

Travertine: The earthy shades have an enduring popularity and its formation in areas with springs means it has a structure similar to honeycomb. This is sometimes filled but can be left unfilled.

Slate: Natural undulations or riven texture give slate character and its dark colour makes it popular for high traffic areas inside and outside the home.



Where to use it

Stone is very adaptable so the period of your home and interior style doesn't matter as the character and ambiance of stone compliments any space. These natural floor and wall tiles tend to be subtle in tone and so can provide a neutral base for your wider design scheme.

They can, however, be found in bolder shades and patterns too; the markings and finish you choose will add texture and interest.

Highly versatile, consider stone for any of these areas:

- **Floors** – anywhere inside, including a high traffic hall, kitchen or boot room
- **Walls** – anywhere, particularly in a bathroom or wet area
- **Splashbacks** – hob, sink or other wet areas
- **Worktops** – robust enough for your kitchen or utility
- **Outside** – patios, terraces and pool or pond surround

Combine stone with underfloor heating

Stone is ambient and will sit a couple of degrees below the air temperature which is great on a hot summer's day. With its high thermal conductivity, it will combine well with underfloor heating to make a cosy floor in autumn and winter that could otherwise be chilly. You can tile directly over underfloor heating.



Patterns & layout

There are many patterns to choose from - the Roman Opus or French pattern has been an enduring favourite. To achieve a particular pattern or layout, products will be supplied with combinations of set size tiles or flagstones. Random length flags with a set width are a popular choice in the aged and rustic materials, whilst wonderful geometric patterns create stunning statements in luxuriant marbles. You should always use an experienced stone fitter who understands the complexities of the different materials, as well as preparation, underfloor heating, grouts and sealants.

Budget

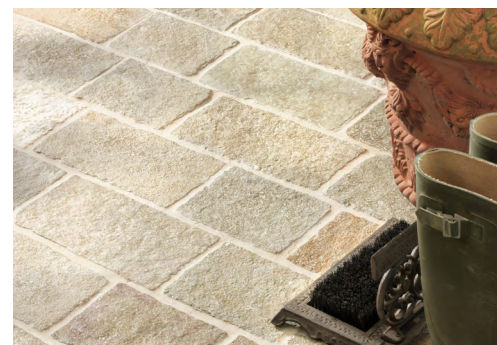
There are options to suit every budget but high quality stone can be affordable. While rare selections of material such as Calacatta can cost into the thousands per square metre, there are alternatives that work just as well. Using natural stone in small areas can also add wow factor for less - herringbone in a small utility or boot room, for example.

We'll talk you through the options and help you to find the perfect stone for your home. And of course there are porcelains and vinyls which mimic natural stone and are well worth considering for their affordability.

Maintaining your stone

As natural stone is porous, it will need to be sealed to saturation during installation. A good quality sealant can last as long as 6-8 years before needing to be reapplied.

If you use the right tile for the area, the upkeep is straightforward. Read our **Maintenance tips** article for more information.



For expert design, product and installation advice, make an appointment at our Design Centre or speak to a specialist on the phone. We'll advise on options for any scheme, style or budget.



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PORCELAIN | STONE | PATTERNED | WOOD | CARPET | VINYL

