

exotiq

Your essential property guide | January - March 2010

Washing Away Your Sins

Open-air bathrooms



Villa Nalina

The Romans and Turks took great pleasure in bathing and built huge and ornately beautiful, multi-roomed public edifices for just that pleasure, and anyone who has been into a Japanese onsen can attest to the Zen-like process that the ritual can take at the furthest end of the aesthetic scale.

After the fall of Rome and the rise of Christendom frequent washing was frowned upon and for hundreds of years was widely believed to be a cause of disease. As a result, and in combination with other purient reasons of shame and a need for privacy, we in the West have chosen the smallest room in the house to relegate the ritual of ablutions to. In the process we have denied ourselves the opportunity to properly celebrate bathing for the cleansing and spiritual ritual that it is.

Not so in the tropical resort locations of Asia. The global spa movement that is taking the world, and particularly Asia, by storm has crossed over into the bathroom as people embrace the luxury and pampering of the modern spa and strive to adapt it into their own tropical homes. This renaissance has made the open-air villa bathroom the one place where the holiday maker can again experience the age old joy of what it means to truly indulge in the joys of bathing.

Modern topical garden bathrooms take their inspiration from the myriad resorts and villas that cover the exotic destinations of the tropics, such as Bali, Sri Lanka and Thailand. They accentuate the connection to nature with a mix of modern plumbing and fittings, and water features such as fountains to take you on a journey to the rainforests and rivers of Equatoria, especially during a tropical deluge when sheets of water pour down off the overhanging roof into the bathroom's garden.

Bathrooms can stand out as the defining feature for a villa holiday and it is important that all the en-suites have some design feature of their own with each room having its own theme to take advantage of the aspect and function of the room's colour, mood and identity. Textures are important because they add aesthetic and practical levels. The options are wide and varied with accents that include stone, sea shells, ceramics, terrazzo, glass, marble, wood, stainless steel or even copper. Other more natural features that are important to create the right mood are rock stepping stones, bamboo fittings, even waterfalls, ferns and tropical plants.

Put in a bathtub to encourage people to take a long luxuriant soak but don't go overboard with size unless you have a tap with the pressure of a fire hose to fill it. Otherwise it will not only take hours to fill, but the hot water that came out of the tap at the beginning will go cold. Make sure your hot water has the stamina to go the distance as well.

While speckled terrazzo (polished concrete) is a fantastic look, it is not at all practical on a bathroom floor. The bathroom is a wet area and you do not want to be having any kind of slippery surfaces that run the risk of slipping over and breaking a bone or two. Palimanan or slate are by far the best choices, not only because they look great, that they are also porous and non-slip.

No longer just a functional and utilitarian space, bathrooms have come out of the closet to be a place to be proud to spend time in. Light, mirrors and space and open-air elements all come together to make the tropical bathroom what it is today; an eclectic and fashionable, yet beautiful and functional place that has transformed bathing into a sensuous experience.