

## **Understanding natural stone: General information about stone**

Stone is a lifestyle choice. It represents who you are. It's a good choice too, as it is strong, stable and exudes an organic feel that can create a timeless presence in any room. Stone really is the perfect example of how Mother Nature can produce such beautiful things. When you stroke the smooth surface of natural stone remember to appreciate that its process actually began millions of years ago, deep beneath the surface of the earth.

Heat and pressure being forced together created blocks of natural stone, including granite, travertine, marble, limestone and slate. From the force of these elements mixing, the earth's crust began to grow and erode; it pushed minerals up from its core, forming massive rock deposits, which are now known as 'quarries'.

Stone has always played a huge part of our lives from ancient monuments like the pyramids in Egypt and the majestic Greek and Roman temples, to the great civilizations of India and China. It's only now that recent trends for larger bathrooms and kitchens, that stone is well and truly making its come back. Stone is available in a vast range of colours, styles and sizes. Just take a look through each of our sections to see what stone type will suit you best. It's readily available and with the invention of under floor heating, the worry that it will feel cold underfoot no longer exists. We also sell a huge range of under floor heating that can be tailored to your specific needs.

Before you fall in love with our range of natural stone it may be worth learning a bit more about 'the nature of stone'. It's an article that details how stone is made and tips on maintaining it.

## **The Nature of Stone**

Choosing to have stone in your home is a choice that comes with responsibilities. In order to get the most out of your natural stone flooring we feel it is important that you understand the true nature of stone, where it comes from and how to take care of it.

## **Things you should know about stone**

### **1. All stones are different...**

You need to expect the unexpected as no one tile will be the same as the other. Each tile will exhibit natural and geological variations occurring in terms of colour, markings, texture, and movement in background. These elements all vary from batch to batch. This unpredictability also effects the current production techniques which means even sizes can't be exactly as specified, therefore tolerance levels are set in manufacturing processes as well. As we want to make sure we still maintain high standards despite these natural occurrences, we only work with selected and known suppliers all around the world. We also employ 2 full time inspectors that travel around the world, who will go and inspect orders before they are shipped.

### **2. Samples are for guidance not insurance...**

Use samples as a guide, not as a guarantee of colour. Samples may not always show full characteristics of a particular stone. For instance, if you are buying a multi-colored slate, and purchasing it off only a 10x10 sample, you will be quite surprised to see the full display of different colouring inherent in that particular stone. Therefore, we suggest you look at array of samples or tiles before you purchase stone. Being aware of this, (and hence we are an Internet company, we cannot possibly offer full sample service) we have developed a system in which:

- You look at real life pictures to see the effect stone creates.

- You order a sample free of charge to see the background colour so that you can cross-reference between the sample supplied and the photo, which will help visualise your project.
3. All stone tiles will need sealing...

Natural tiles are to a greater or lesser extent porous and need to be impregnated (or sealed). Impregnator will fill all the tiny, small voids/holes that we cannot see in the structure of the stone, therefore there will be no other place to remain than the surface for the liquid or the material that will normally stain an unsealed tile. This way, the stain will sit on top of the surface and will be easy to wipe off. Which is great news if you've got young children running around.
  4. Some corners might be chipped...

As much as you don't want to hear that some of your delivery may be chipped, it does happen. Some stones are easily scratched and / or are subject to pitting /chipping. Especially soft limestones will be susceptible to transportation and handling. No matter what you do, you will get some tiles with minor chippings, scratches etc. Don't worry, as you will always have tiles to cut, spare them for cutting. Also, some marbles like crema marfil (English translation cream marble) are hard but very fragile. This results in many of them breaking during production. To prevent this, crema marfil manufacturers will employ a technique called "mesh backing/gluing". With this technique, a special thick chemical solution will be applied on the back of the tile to make the tile more stable. Sometimes you may see some tiles like cracked, however they just look like that due to its nature and it is OK. Some pitting/voids on the surface are very rarely seen as well, these are considered minor imperfections, and they are OK, too. From time to time due to these unpreventable but natural characteristics of certain stones, we may deliver extra quantities up to 5% for each order if we think these imperfections might create a problem in terms of fitting.
  5. Blend, blend, blend...

Sometimes, your order might be from different batches. So, we strongly recommend all tiles be blended before installation. Whilst sorting tiles to ensure suitable blending, normal practice calls for segregation of tiles with minor damages or some unusual markings. They can be used where cut tiles are required, or in less visible locations. The installer must have an understanding of blending requirements or special patterns as part of their skills.
  6. Why is my stone soaking wet?

Stone tiles are always packed in wet conditions at the factory and cannot properly dry out until unpacked; they will lighten in colour as they dry. It is therefore essential that all tiles are completely dry prior to installation to be able to assess any colour variation present. To check this, it may be necessary to place a tile in front of a direct heat source to see the true colour of the stone when it is totally dry.
  7. Have you considered your wastage?

Always calculate wastage for each project before ordering, for instance minor damage to some stones which may occur in transportation or during site handling, site cutting and grading. We always recommend an additional 10% to allow for wastage. Our sales staff can help you work this out.