

Steamy Trends for Today's Bathroom

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Bath-room (n): a room containing a bathtub or shower and, usually, a sink and a toilet. Also called bath.

Not quite the definition of today's bathroom. The bathroom is still a necessary room set aside for basic usefulness but times have changed. It's not your ordinary "loo" anymore. Bathrooms were once built just large enough to house the basic necessities along with a bit of lighting with one fixture directly above the sink. For generations, this room existed as the most utilitarian of household spaces. Today's bathrooms are larger and have become resort-like escapes where homeowners want to relax and pamper themselves. With the influence from spa retreats and high-end fitness clubs, the new looks of today's bathroom design are simple, yet sophisticated and elegant on a much larger scale.

When it comes to the current bathroom trends, especially master baths, bigger has become better. Over the years, houses have grown in size so there is more space to work with and more money being spent on achieving a room of tranquility. Bathrooms in many new homes are larger and more luxurious, lending themselves to more amenities. Homeowners with older houses want the same restful retreats so they are remodeling their smaller bathrooms by expanding their current space or opting for spaceconscious design choices. "The master bathroom has become as big as bedrooms," says Craig Drimel, owner of Craig Drimel Designs. "People want opulence and the luxury of being pampered at home. Relaxing in the living room has been replaced with relaxing in the bathroom," explains Drimel. The trend in today's Zen-like bath design is an emphasis on the tranquil with a clean look, monochromatic natural tones, natural stone surfaces, and carefully placed architectural lighting. Drimel goes on to explain the importance of keeping the flow from the house into the bathroom. "Whatever your preference, the design scheme should be unifying," he says.

Bath companies are responding with a variety of options so that regardless of the square footage, going after the big luxury of today's bathroom is accessible. From sophisticated cabinetry to cavernous walk-in showers equipped for two, dynamic designs are available for those building a large new home or working with your current space. In terms of a fashionable yet functional bath, homeowners are seeking large showers including extras such as benches, multiple showerheads and body sprays mounted on opposite walls. Additionally, a whirlpool tub with jets or a soaking tub compliments the emphasis of relaxation to the space. "People really prefer the larger shower but still want their tubs," says Lynlee Overend, Realtor for Bradfield Properties. "In the higher end, they want the multiple shower heads, glass tiles, curved walls, but are also interested in things that are different like the Japanese soaking tubs and freestanding tubs. It goes back to the decedent spa. All price points want the decadence but appreciate the simplicity." Overend continues, "As the price point goes up you expand on those issues. Everyone looks to the same thing and your dollar decides how far you can go in those areas. It's all the little extras." Let's not forget about the storage. Master baths require the most storage and 'wow' factor. Designers have adapted to the more calming environment of today's bath with clever storage options as part of built-in vanities and stand-alone furniture pieces. One such design from Sonia, a Spanish manufacturer of bath vanities, incorporates the bath console with a storage shelf, pullout drawer and sleek fire-clay basin. If you are square-footage challenged, this is a great option to open up the bathroom and free up floor space. Some designs have evolved into open shelving mixed with unique drawer storage dedicated to specific sized articles like hairbrushes and grooming items. Full built-in cabinetry is still popular for a large part of the market, however, separate vanities with accessories are on the rise. Many bath collections of today have numerous components from which a homeowner can choose to suit most any installation, from powder room to master bath.

And what would a personal home spa be without going high tech? How about starting your workday by stretching your morning muscles on a heated floor, watching the morning news on your flat panel television, and enjoying a coffee from your coffee center? In the evenings you can soak your troubles away while listening to your favorite relaxing tunes through your water resistant MP3 player. Some of today's discerning bath owners also choose to incorporate fireplaces, wine coolers and refrigerators as part of their design preference. Not bad.

If all of these items seem scary on a large scale, don't fret. A number of space-conscious products to fit smaller bathrooms are available. How about a bench toilet? This is a decorative solution to a typically unattractive fixture. The Julien BenchToilet™, by Troy Adams Design™, incorporates a sliding exotic wood panel concealing the fixture, while doubling as a powder room bench. Another option for limited space is to bend the rules of the tuband- shower combo. Opt for an extra large shower and eliminate the tub. With the right type of lighting, color and material selection, the result can still be a spacious and airy feel. Vessel sinks are also a nice touch to a smaller location as they sit on the countertop of your vanity adding artful interest and counterspace at the same time.

Life is complicated enough with our day-to-day stresses. Make the most of the one room in the house where you can finally leave the world behind at the end of a busy day. Plus you don't need to make reservations.

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