

Luxury Housing Sets Tone For Remodeling Trends

By J. Lennox Scott

Americans spent over \$160 billion in home improvements last year, and a significant portion of that money was invested in luxury upgrades to the upper echelon of housing. Granite countertops, Jacuzzi tubs, and stainless-steel appliances—once staples of the luxury home—are now all but standard in most newly constructed homes. These days, a luxury home must go above and beyond by having the absolute finest in comfort, entertainment, and customization.

Spa Bathrooms

With today's hectic lifestyles, a spa visit is a luxury indeed. As such, some homeowners are designing spaces made specially for at-home pampering, but in order to do so, the best space and equipment is needed to do it just right. Many luxury homes already have whirlpool tubs and steam showers, so in order to fully immerse oneself in a spa experience, the addition of a river rock shower, radiant heat flooring, and towel-warming drawer can do the trick. True spa aficionados are also equipping these spaces with a massage table, sound system for ambient music, and a fully functioning sauna.

Outdoor Kitchens

Barbecuing takes on a whole new level of sophistication and ease when outdoor spaces are as well equipped as indoor kitchens. Stainless-steel grills, refrigerators, and sinks join granite countertops, electrical outlets, and deluxe seating areas to create the ideal inside-out setting. Also, an outdoor space that features both covered and open areas ensures that a rainy afternoon or evening—of which we have many here in the Pacific Northwest—won't ruin the fun.

Custom Wine Cellars

Wine storage has come a long way from the kitchen pantry or wine fridge. A custom-made wine cellar gives homeowners the ability to proudly display their collection while ensuring that it is well preserved in a temperature-controlled environment. A personalized cellar can also include entertainment space for intimate gatherings or a larger gathering area for dinner and tasting parties.

Screening Rooms

Screening rooms are intended for savvy homeowners who want a private space reminiscent of a traditional theatre to enjoy movies with friends and family. The most sophisticated screening rooms are outfitted with cushioned recliners or couches, custom cabinetry, mini-bar, special lighting, and a large viewing screen with corresponding sound system.

Going Green

Another trend that is increasing in popularity, especially in the "green" states of the Pacific Northwest, is luxury remodels using the finest eco-friendly materials. Builders say that high-end homeowners are increasingly concerned that their homes contain only chemical-free glues, recycled or refurbished glass and metals, and U.S. Forest Service-approved wood. Solar power is also gaining popularity as a growing number of homeowners seek ways to become less dependent on traditional energy sources.

What's Next?

As with all real estate, luxury home trends are constantly changing. What is considered avant garde one day is conventional the next. The desire to stay on the cutting edge will drive luxury homeowners to seek ever more exclusivity. "Smart" homes with the technology to act like personal assistants—creating grocery lists, monitoring for potential intruders, dimming lights—are already here, and are sure to be the next big "must have" for the high-end market. Where technology takes us from there is anyone's guess.

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