

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

REAL ESTATE | ELEMENTS

Homeowners Discover (Again) the Luxury of Soaking Tubs

Freestanding tubs made from natural or patented materials are making a big splash as more homeowners buck the shower-only trend



PHOTO: ALESSANDRO PADERNI/EYE STUDIO

By Karen Bruno

June 14, 2018 10:30 a.m. ET

1 COMMENTS

Bathing isn't going down the drain, despite an uptick in the money spent on shower-only bathrooms, according to the National Kitchen & Bath Association.

But tastes in tubs are changing. Soaking away troubles in a freestanding tub versus an inset tub is more popular than ever. And homeowners are moving far beyond the basic white claw-foot models.

The new tubs are made of natural or patented material, or a mix. Companies that make tubs from man-made compounds say they retain heat better than porcelain-coated, cast-iron tubs, weigh less and are nonporous.



PHOTO: ALESSANDRO PADERNI/EYE STUDIO

A Slim Profile

The minimalistic Immersion bathtub designed by Neri & Hu, based in Shanghai, allows bathers to sit nearly upright. It comes with a slatted seat that is available in iroko wood or in the same composite material as the tub. The bathtub takes up less floor place than many shallower tubs because of its design. The tub is made from a patented material called Cristalplant and comes in three colors: dark grey, light grey and white.

Price: About \$7,075



PHOTO: WETSTYLE

Rosy Outlook

The Ove Floral bathtub by WetStyle, of Montreal, is crafted from a patented eco-friendly, thermo-insulating material made of soy and mineral stone and is watermarked with a floral design that can be in matte and glossy textures. The motif adds a feminine flair to what is often a blank surface.

Price: \$7,575. The floral design can be applied to any of WetStyle's tubs for an additional \$1,800.



PHOTO: ANDREA FERRARI

Trendy Troughs

This steel, enameled tub was designed by Spanish designer Patricia Urquiola for a hotel in Vieques, Puerto Rico. It recalls an old-fashioned, trough-style washtub. The freestanding bathtub is made by Agape, based in Mantua, Italy, and is available in two sizes—standard and small—and two finishes: all white or with a white interior and enameled dark exterior. A backrest and shelf in teak that fit over the tub rim can be purchased separately.

Price: About \$8,250, tub only

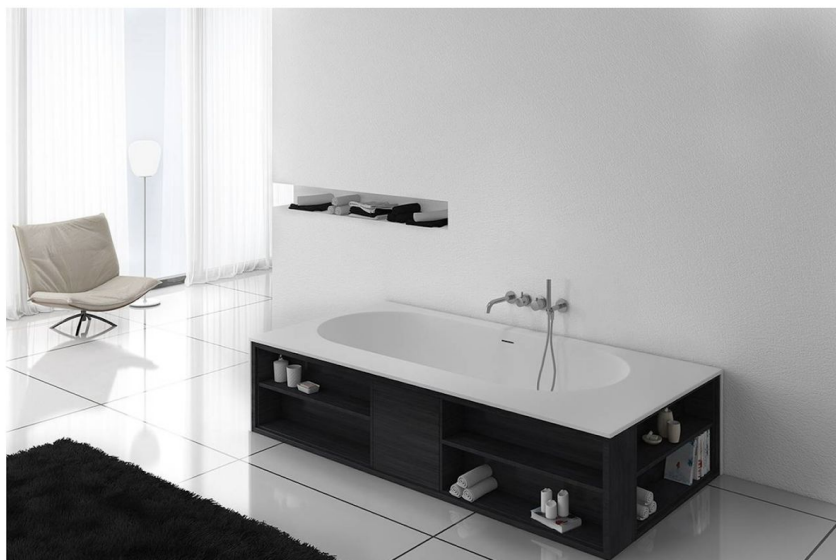


PHOTO: BLU BATHWORKS

Water on the Inside, Sundries on the Outside

The Amanpuri 7 by Blu Bathworks, based in Vancouver, is designed to look like furniture, with Italian-made recessed modular shelving on two sides of the exterior. The shelving is available in five colors: white, onyx, smoke, tobacco and silk. The tub is made of a recycled quartz material and the shelves are wood.

Price: \$15,000 to \$20,000, depending on size and shelf configuration.



PHOTO: ZEN BATHWORKS

Soak it Up

The Japanese-style, American-made Onsen Ofuro soaking tub by Zen Bathworks, based in Haines, Alaska, is made for use after a cleansing shower. The handmade tub has natural wood on its exterior, and an engineered-wood inside that makes the tub leak-proof and stable as it dries. It comes in hinoki (pictured above), which is a type of cypress; red cedar; or teak. The tub is mold-resistant and rot-resistant. The hinoki and cedar models emit a pleasant woody aroma.

Prices: Starting at \$5,400; the teak model starts

at \$7,000.