

Plan ahead

With so many different elements involved in creating a dream bathroom it pays to start every project with a detailed plan

Report: Elspeth Pridham



Retro from Vitra offers optimum use of wall space, with wall-hung furniture, bidet and WC as well as countertop basins. Prices start at £227 for the basin plus £812 for the under-basin unit



Left: Looking for something futuristic? The Ondus collection from Grohe includes a digital bath mixer, £4775, 400mm showerhead, £1473, and matching champagne bucket, £1950 **Above:** Choose taps that are compatible with your water system. Aston Matthews' Zyam range was designed specifically with British plumbing in mind and is compatible with both high-pressure and gravity-fed systems. The bath filler shown is £240



Above: Add a whirlpool bath for a full spa experience. The Centro Duo bath with Vivo Turbo whirl system, £5694 from Kaldewei, is powered by its own motor that draws in the water and pumps it back into the bath, resulting in a silent, hygienic operation **Top right:** If you don't like to bathe consider replacing a bath with a walk-through shower. The Spectra 450 Double Entry Screen, £1815 from Aqata, features toughened 8mm clear glass and is available in a variety of sizes. It is shown here with Aqata's low-profile tray, £411, which can be fitted flush with the floor **Bottom right:** A design classic, the Duravit Starck 2 bathroom collection, designed by Philippe Starck, works well in a small space. The basin is £188 and wall-hung WC £272. It is shown here with the Hansgrohe Axor Starck basin tap, £319 **Below:** This ensuite bathroom was created by interior designer Carolyn Sceales using sanitaryware from Colourwash Bathrooms. Features include bespoke storage, a walk-in shower with Bette tray, £646, and Hansgrohe Raindance showerhead, £405



The first step in planning your perfect bathroom is to create a floorplan taking note of details such as the height of the window from the floor and whether the door opens in or out of the room. Then create a wish list of the elements you would like to include and see what you can and can't fit in. Remember to allow sufficient space around the basin and WC for easy access.

Alexandra Ross Skinner of Smallbone of Devizes says, "Creating a glamorous private sanctuary is the trend for bathrooms in 2010. This means devoting as much space as possible to the layout so that all the elements, from showers to basins, can be appreciated in their own right."

Access all areas

Unfortunately space is often limited so a degree of compromise may be required, such as losing the bidet or ditching the separate shower cubicle in favour of an overbath shower. In the small bathroom wall-hung WCs create a sense of space but a false wall will need to be built to conceal the holding bracket and cistern. A half-height wall creates a useful shelf for toiletries or, if you go full height, storage units can be recessed into the space above the WC.

A big bathroom can lack character if the sanitaryware is arranged around the walls. The solution here is to create separate zones with basins and a vanity unit in one area, WC and bidet in another and a separate shower area. A freestanding bath can occupy the middle of the room. As Heather-Joy Crawford of Adamsez explains, "Freestanding baths have become increasingly popular, as people seek to create a relaxing retreat. There is no doubt that a

freestanding bath is a wonderful focal point and with some careful forward planning you can ensure that all the necessary but ugly water and waste pipes are hidden under the floorboards."

Before finalising your product choice take a moment to consider who will be using the bathroom now and in the future. Losing the bath in favour of a minimalist wetroom may not be the best option if you have very small children, although an easy-access shower is worth considering for less able-bodied members of the family.

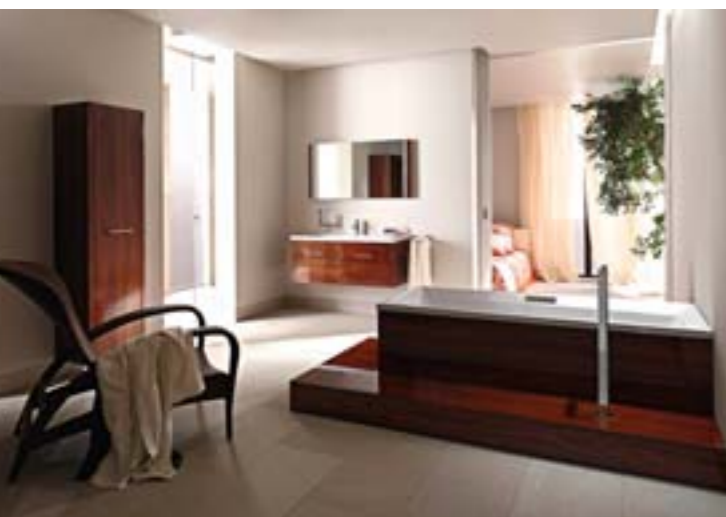
Consider the cost

Decide on a budget, as this will affect your product choice, but remember that other aspects of the project will also add to the final bill such as knocking down or building walls. It is always advisable to keep the WC in the same place as although relocating the soil pipe is possible it is also costly. Consult an architect before making any structural changes and ask them whether your walls are strong enough to support wall-hung basins and bathroom cabinets. Ask a plumber to advise you on your water pressure – you may need to install a pump to power the shower.

Plenty of storage will also keep the bathroom clutter free, contributing to the calm, spa effect. "The bathroom should be designed as a whole," says Anil Madan of Twyford Bathrooms. "The furniture should complement the suite and make the most of the bathroom space."

The trend in bathroom furniture is for modular cabinets, rather than solid runs of fitted furniture, in either gloss or natural wood finishes. Look out ►





Hotel style

Hayley Tarrington at CP Hart was asked to create a contemporary bathroom by converting a bedroom in a listed Georgian house. "We started by building a stud wall to conceal a fireplace and this provides a void in which to hide all the plumbing and support for the wall-hung WC and shower." The floor was also raised to allow for the shower and bath waste. Steps up to the raised section are lit so that they appear to float and this area is clad in limestone with a bespoke carved shower tray.

The outsize bath was positioned to give the user perfect views of the surrounding countryside and Hayley incorporated a warm air vent into the floor to create a heat curtain in front of the sash window, in addition to two heated towel rails. "The clients travel a lot and wanted a hotel-style bathroom with the emphasis on simplicity. By incorporating plenty of storage above the basins and again above the WC the room can retain its tranquil ambience."



Top left: In a smaller bathroom a P-shaped shower bath is a useful solution. The Idealform Plus bath is £420, Sottini Santorini WC £200, and pedestal basin £141 from Ideal Standard **Middle left:** The designers at Smallbone of Devizes built a false wall in this large bathroom to separate a walk-through shower from the twin basins and dressing area. Expect to pay from £17,000 for a Smallbone bathroom **Bottom left:** To create a home spa, Taylor's Etc suggests installing an outsize bath and keeping the room simple and clutter free with plenty of storage. Duravit's 2nd Floor bath, featured here with rosewood surround, is £1810 **Below:** Freestanding baths are currently popular. The Essence composite bath, £1850 from Adamsez, measures 1750 x 800mm and has a lifetime guarantee



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Top left: The Moda Bathroom Suite from Twyford includes both sanitaryware and furniture. Priced from £91 for a basin **Left:** Urban Interior's Shape furniture collection in Merano wood includes various size options for flexible design. Items include tall cabinets, shelves, wall cabinets and sideboards. The wall-hung cabinets shown cost £543 each, while the vanity unit is £658

for multifunctional furniture such as cabinets that have internal and external mirrors or incorporate lights or a shaver socket.

Heat and light

To free up wall space consider underfloor heating instead of radiators. There are two types of underfloor heating – water-filled pipes embedded in the floor, or an electric mat that lies between the floorboards and the flooring. The first option tends to be more fuel efficient, but installation is more involved and therefore more costly. A heated towel rail is always welcome in the bathroom. There are various models available that either operate with the central heating or independently so that warm, dry towels are available all year round. Wall-mounted towel rails can be hung on vacant space, for instance above the bath.

Bright lights for shaving or applying make-up are essential around the mirror, however when you want to relax, softer mood lighting is required and for this wall and ceiling lights can be fitted with a dimmer switch or focal points can be picked out with subtle spotlights. Only buy lights that are recommended as suitable for use in the bathroom.

Surface value

Once you have decided on the fittings, it's time to consider the finishes. Ceramic tiles are still the number one choice for bathroom floors, as they are waterproof, durable and, with underfloor heating, don't feel cold. Natural limestone and marble tiles bring warmth to a minimalist scheme but carry a higher price tag and need greater maintenance. In terms of fashion, there has been a shift away from stone tiles to larger stone panels. For a softer option underfoot consider vinyl or rubber; alternatively some real wood and engineered wood flooring is suitable for use in the bathroom.

On the walls, meanwhile, shimmering glass mosaics continue to be a popular way to introduce colour and a touch of glamour. Glass and solid surface (such as Corian or Hi-Macs) panels in shower areas give a seam-free surface without difficult-to-clean grout. Tapping into the Middle Eastern vibe, polished concrete – as used in the hamam – makes an interesting alternative. "The bathroom extends beyond being a room for cleaning and grooming and into a space where you retreat to relax," says Paul Flowers at Grohe. "Raw materials such as concrete, oak and glass create a natural ambience through their honesty and simplicity." KBB