

What is Travertine

Travertine is an interesting natural stone, generally harder than limestone but softer than marble. It is a kind of limestone deposited by springs, or more precisely travertine is a calcareous rock, i.e., composed almost entirely of calcium carbonate. It takes its name from "Lapis Tiburtinus", the stone deposited around the Tibur river that was widely used in Roman times, including building massive walls whose remains can still be seen in Rome.

Travertine is usually used as a decorative material for interiors, both for walls and floors. In countries such as Italy and Turkey travertine is also routinely used outdoors, even for pavement. Travertine has been used a lot in traditional Italian architecture, with perhaps one of the most beautiful examples being Fontana di Trevi in Rome as well as various palazzos. Coliseum is another historic building built largely from travertine. Travertine is widely used today as well in various commercial and residential properties.

Travertine is a fairly enduring material not very sensitive to weather, and can in fact be considered one of the longest-lasting despite its porous, non-resistant appearance. In reality, water doesn't manage to penetrate it very far, due to the largeness of the cavities and to the fact that its porosity is internal, mostly below the surface. Like any natural stone, travertine nevertheless ages: the ivory/white/light beige varieties tend to bleach on the surface, a phenomenon typical of calcareous rock especially in polluted environments. Travertine also absorbs dirt and polluting particles and this particle-absorption capacity makes dirt deposit permanently on its surface, creating deposits that, if neglected, can lead in time to black crust formation, which can be seen on Italian travertine buildings.

Travertine comes in a large variety of colours. Most common types of travertine are beige, white, off-white or ivory, and brown. Other popular colours are yellow or gold and red.

Travertine is mined in three major areas, Iran, Italy and Turkey. Iran is the only area that produces red travertine. Both Iran and Turkey produce yellow travertine. Iranian yellow travertine is richer in colour and typically more uniform than yellow travertine mined in Turkey.

Travertine can be filled (with cement or resin) or unfilled. Generally speaking, cement-filled travertine is the most popular alternative. Travertine can be vein-cut or cross-cut. The former is more rare and when applied correctly helps create unique interiors.

Different colours of travertine can be combined to achieve various design patterns, from traditional to modern. Patterns can be made more sophisticated by combining also tiles of different sizes. Users, however, should watch out for too busy patterns that may understate the richness of the natural stone.




Due to its texture, as well as typical colours, travertine would add warmth to most interiors. It also goes well with other materials, in particular parquet, and glass.

Users are advised to consult their stone supplier for suitability of different types of travertine for different applications. As a general guideline, it is not advisable to use filled travertine inside swimming pools, whereas it is a good option for the area around a swimming pool.

When travertine tiles are used in a bathroom, it is advisable to consider using custom-made shower-trays or bath surrounds or vanities from matching or contrasting travertine.

Travertine commands different prices, depending on the type of travertine and its grade/quality. More common types of beige travertine present budget opportunities, whereas luxurious white travertine is a high-end option. Budget varieties of travertine can be a good option but quality cannot be underestimated, as with any other type of natural stone. Usually you get what you paid for.

Some examples of travertine we have in stock:

Examples of Travertine	Picture [a rough guide only]	Technical characteristics – extracts [provided in good faith & to the best of our knowledge]
Light travertine HA		Bulk density: 2,450 kg/m ³ Compressive strength: 115 N/mm ² Water absorption: 2%
Red travertine		Bulk density: 2,500 kg/m ³ Compressive strength: 119 N/mm ² Water absorption: 1.8%
Gold Persico		Bulk density: 2,300 – 2,500 kg/m ³ Compressive strength: 120 N/mm ² Water absorption: 2%