

When screening is necessary, you can trick the eye into believing there is no spatial division with barely visible floor-to-ceiling glass partitions. →

WET ROOMS

There is a certain mystique when it comes to the term 'wet room'; it conjures up images of luxury hotel-style bathrooms with a steamy, sensual ambience. Simply speaking, it's a bathroom that has no discernible shower space. With minimal separation between zones, a small wet room utilises every centimetre of space, while expansive wet rooms evoke a grand spa-like haven WORDS **KERRY N RAMSEY**



INTO THE WOODS

A wet room encased in timber “creates a warm, unclinical environment”, says Jan Eastwood, interior designer of Bates Smart architects. To prevent rot and discolouration from constant water contact, it’s essential to get correct installation and finishes. “A Danish oil finish will seal the timber from steamy conditions, while natural oil and wax are suitable for a more weathered look,” says Sunny Wilder, of The Timber Trip. Ensure the timber is kiln-dried and sealed all round in a clear finish. Spotted gum, recycled messmate, Tasmanian oak, western red cedar and Baltic pine are recommended for their great durability.



“Choose a showerhead with a spray that offers your favourite water pressure. For the ultimate, choose a large inset shower that sits flush against the ceiling”

BELINDA GEELS, REECE

RAIN SHOWERS (Clockwise, from left) Hansgrohe ‘Raindance Classic’ 240mm diameter **ceiling shower**, \$1155, from Bathe (02) 9518 0163, www.bathe.net.au. Hansgrohe ‘Raindance Rainfall’ **three-jet shower**, \$6995, from Sea Of White, (08) 9344 1500, www.seaofwhite.com.au. Hansgrohe ‘Raindance’ 180mm **overhead shower**, \$749, from Reece, call 1800 032 566 or visit www.reece.com.au.



WALL-MOUNTED SHOWERS
 (From left) 'Hammer' hand shower set, \$242, from Abey, 1800 809 143, www.abey.com.au. Nikles 'Pure' twin water-rail shower, \$1199, from Reece, www.reece.com.au, 1800 032 566. 'Acquatonica' shower panel, \$5220, from Rogerseller, call (03) 9429 8888 or visit www.rogerseller.com.au.



LIGHT & VENTILATION

Natural light flooding into a wet room ensures a serene ambience, but opaque glass is essential for its block-out properties and privacy. "Lighting should be considered for both its task and atmospheric qualities," says interior designer Jan Eastwood, who recommends IP-rated light fittings, which are designed to withstand moisture and heat.

Light fittings need to be waterproofed in a wet room, while power points and heated towel ladders need to be safely positioned. The positioning of towel rails also needs appropriate consideration. "It's not just about the comfort of having dry towels – wherever water pools, bacteria grow. So make sure towels are hung in a splash-free zone," says Jan.

To keep the space free of condensation, an extraction fan is a necessity. This will inhibit the growth of mould and create air flow to keep walls and mirrors steam-free.

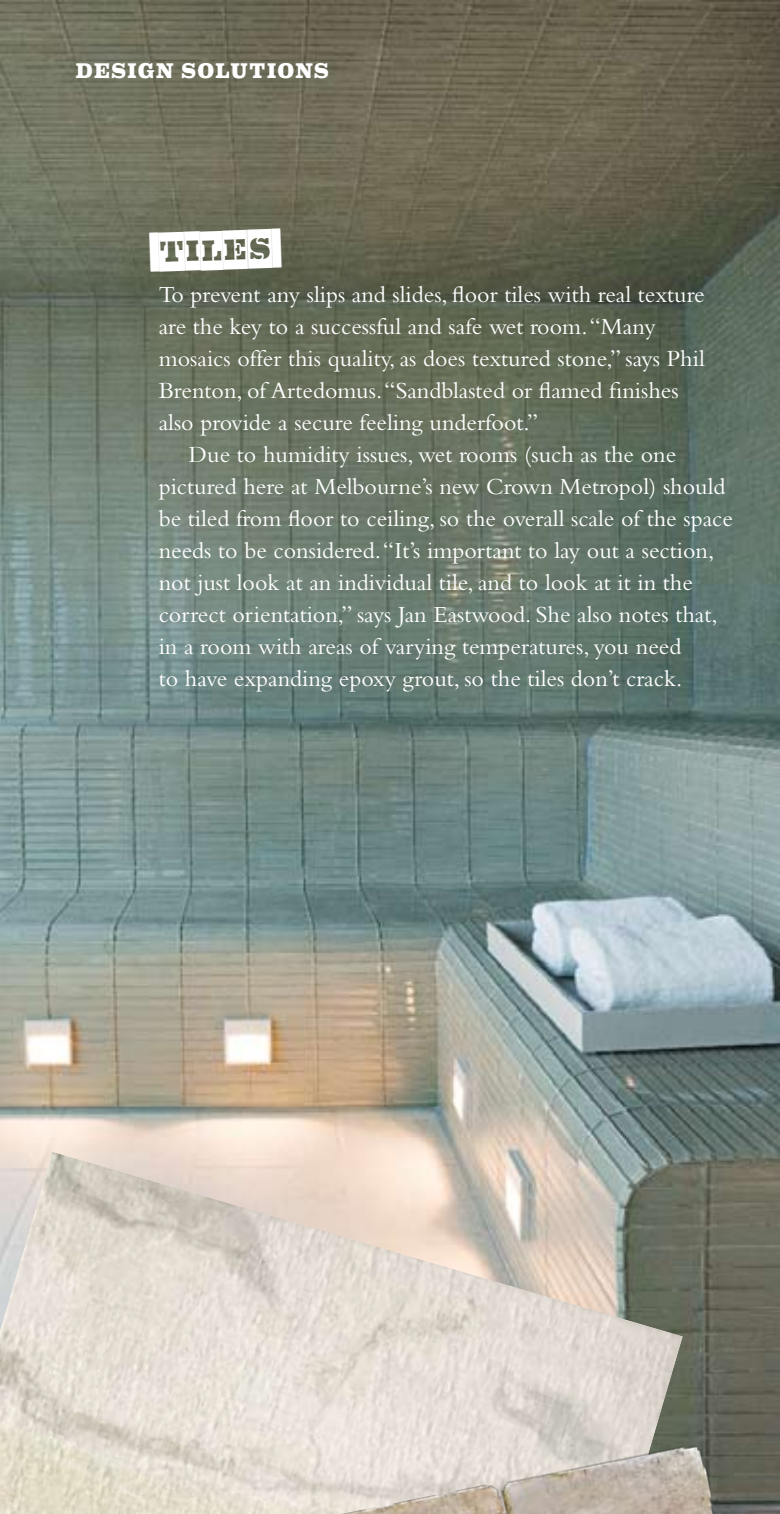
Minimal walls should mean that cleaning is a breeze but, unfortunately, you'll probably need to clean more frequently since the whole room will get wet each time you shower.

Plan your wet room carefully. "It's worth getting a licensed plumber, builder or tiler to look at the floor prior to deciding if a wet room is appropriate for what is to be installed," says Belinda Geels, of Reece. And before committing to any structural work, it's essential to check with your local building authority regarding council regulations. →

TILES

To prevent any slips and slides, floor tiles with real texture are the key to a successful and safe wet room. “Many mosaics offer this quality, as does textured stone,” says Phil Brenton, of Artedomus. “Sandblasted or flamed finishes also provide a secure feeling underfoot.”

Due to humidity issues, wet rooms (such as the one pictured here at Melbourne’s new Crown Metropol) should be tiled from floor to ceiling, so the overall scale of the space needs to be considered. “It’s important to lay out a section, not just look at an individual tile, and to look at it in the correct orientation,” says Jan Eastwood. She also notes that, in a room with areas of varying temperatures, you need to have expanding epoxy grout, so the tiles don’t crack.



ZONING

The key is a well-thought-out configuration, making sure the spray is kept in the right spots. Ultimately, the shower area should be open or, if necessary, partly sectioned off with a screen or half-tiled wall. “Consider using a translucent or sandblasted glass fixed panel instead of clear glass,” suggests architect Andrew Waller, of Waller Design.

Luxury fittings can transform a space into a sanctuary. “A large overhead shower will ensure the water stays within the shower area,” says Belinda Geels. If you prefer not to get your hair wet each day, a combination of overhead and rail showers provides a happy medium.

When positioning a toilet, place it as far from the shower splash zone as possible, otherwise, steam will ruin countless toilet rolls and spray will constantly drench the toilet seat.

Underfloor heating adds warmth to a wet room, but it also has a sanitary benefit, helping excess water evaporate. →

“Use of large-format stone tiles, strip drains and tiling with minimum joint widths will all add up to a more luxurious finished product in a wet room”

PHIL BRENTON, ARTEDOMUS

TILES (From left) Del Conca ‘Nat’ tile in Alaska, \$96.80 per sqm for the large (600 x 600mm), from Tile Boutique, www.tileboutique.com.au. ‘Mosaic Fingers’ tiles in Warm Grey Matt (22 x 145mm), \$61.95 per sqm, from Beaumont Tiles, (08) 8292 4444, www.beaumont-tiles.com.au. Glazed ‘Cotto’ tiles in Platino (105x105mm), \$9.35 per piece, from Aeria Country Floors, (02) 93262444, www.aeria.com.au.



SHELVES & STORAGE

Thoughtful shelving brings function and personality to a wet room, but make sure the unit is positioned well away from steam and splashes. Meanwhile, sealed doors on vanity cabinets are essential so items don't get soaked. "Ensure your joinery is finished and sealed on all edges, not only the ones that are visible," says Darren Genner, of Minosa. Visually, recessed or cavity cabinets can make storage disappear, complementing a minimalist aesthetic.

PRACTICALITIES

In a streamlined wet room, the shower unit is undoubtedly the star attraction, where its high-tech fittings encourage you to be soaked, sprayed and de-stressed. "Some rooms have the shower located in the corner, allowing water to flow into troughs placed along the base of the two walls," says Tim Dawson, of Tradelink. "Others have the shower located in the centre, against a wall. Either way, a rail or overhead shower works well, as the water is directed downward, not on an angle."

Before tiling a wet room, the space must be completely waterproofed, so it is essential to leave the installation to the professionals. The floor also needs to have a built-in gradient, falling towards the drain to stop water pooling.

"Allowing for a strip drain situated at one wall of the room will offer the most flexibility for floor sizing options," says Phil Brenton, of Artedomus. "The entire room can then fall in one direction, so large-format tiles can be chosen." ❖



"LED lights are good for glamming up a wet room. They give off a soft glow, are long-lasting and are also great for the environment"

DARREN GENNER, MINOSA

TAPS (Clockwise, from left) 'Mare' basin mixer in Matt Black, \$515, from Rogerseller, call (03) 9429 8888 or go to www.rogerseller.com.au. Zucchetti 'Isystick' single lever basin mixer, \$759, from Domayne Bathroom Design Centre, (02) 8748 4367/(02) 8339 7103, www.domayne.com.au. 'Studio 2' basin set, \$830, from Astra Walker, call (02) 9912 8888 or visit the website at www.astrawalker.com.au.