

Caring for your tiles – Travertine

Travertine – the soft coloured tones of travertine and its marbled veins have led to a massive popularity in using this stone to decorate many buildings over the last 2 millennia.



Figure 1 - Polished travertine walls and floor

It is a sedimentary rock (formed by the deposit of materials on the earth's surface) that is a form of limestone. However, where limestone is formed from marine deposits in the sea, travertine is formed on land in mineral springs. The purest forms of travertine are actually white in colour, but are most commonly found in the soft brown tones due to impurities present during formation.

The Romans most famously used travertine extensively for construction of temples aqueducts, and coliseums. However the material is characteristically pitted with holes that are normally filled either using a resin (typically by stone processing plants preparing the stone for tiling) or with cement based grout (usually by tile

installers when fixing stone to walls and floors). Travertine is also calcium based and therefore vulnerable to acid exposure requiring cleaning with pH neutral cleaners and sealing to protect from staining after installation.

Limestone and dolomite are variations of travertine. **Limestone** is very similar in property to travertine. **Dolomite** is denser, less absorbent, stronger and less susceptible to abrasion damage – making it more suitable to be installed in more commercial environments.

Care of Travertine – clean with pH neutral (acid free) cleaning solution; seal with water or solvent based stain protector.

Looking after a travertine floor.

1. Your floor has been sealed with an impregnating sealer manufactured by Filachim. This will give your floor stain protection for up to 5 years. This effectively causes liquids to stay on the surface in globules rather than a continuous sheet of liquid. When the seal starts to break down, this effect is no longer apparent when liquids are split on the stone. To further enhance the finish, a liquid wax can be used – we only recommend Filachim's own polishes on their sealer.
2. Take care to keep the floor clear of dirt and grit from outdoors – this has the effect of scratching both the sealer and the stone itself. It is recommended that the floor is either swept or vacuumed on a daily basis to prevent scratching the surface of your tiles.



3. If any liquids are spilled on the floor mop them up as soon as possible. Coffee, tea, and red wine are particularly strong contaminants and should always be immediately mopped up when spilt.
4. The travertine should be washed regularly (2 or 3 times a week at the very least) using a mild soap based cleaner (the Ecover products sold in supermarkets are generally soap based products). This will clean the travertine without damaging the stone, grout or sealer used.
5. When cleaning the floor remember that the solution is “dirty water” and it is recommended that you rinse the floor over with clean water before allowing to dry.
6. If the floor becomes stained in a particular spot, use a neutral pH cleaner applied watered down according to the manufacturer’s instructions.
 - a. We recommend either Fila PS87 or LTP Grimex.
 - b. Allow time for the solution to “sit” and lift the dirt – normally between 5 and 15 minutes.
 - c. Use a nylon scrubbing brush to agitate the solution until the stain is lifted.
 - d. Do not allow the solution to dry out and rinse the surface with clean water.
 - e. Check to see if the stain has been removed – further application of the cleaner and scrubbing may be necessary. A badly stained floor may need over an hour of agitation to lift the stain completely. The critical point with neutral pH cleaners is that they must be given time to work and rinsed before deciding if the stain is gone.
 - f. If the stain is still not removed – **PLEASE CALL US ON 01761 438888 FOR ADVICE.**
 - g. Finally when the stain is gone and the floor completely dried, then apply two coats of sealer.
7. Do not use “mother says” suggestions for cleaning with vinegar, salt, soda, coca cola etc. These can add to the stain and may damage the surface of the stone tile.
8. This guide is to help you maintain your floor but please do not hesitate to call for advice no matter how long it is since we completed the work for you.

Travertine - warnings

Travertine is a very fragile stone, it is entirely possible to break a tile by just bending it in your hands. Your travertine tiles have been fitted on a solid bed of cement based tile adhesive, and the backs of the tiles have been back buttered to fill all the natural holes. This effectively produces a very strong surface, but if a heavy object falls on a tile, it will almost certainly cause damage. It is fairly straightforward for us to repair any tiles damaged, but we recommend that you keep a few tiles stored to assist with replacing with matching tiles.