



Understanding Natural Stone

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Introduction

Natural stone has long been the material of choice for spaces built to endure. For centuries, it has been laid across the world — from cobbled European laneways and bustling plazas to grand courtyards and timeless public squares. These enduring surfaces are a testament not only to the strength of natural stone, but also to its ability to age with grace, developing a rich patina and character that only deepen its beauty over time.

Today, it carries that same prestige, regarded as a luxurious choice that enhances the aesthetic of private developments while enriching the character and longevity of public spaces — adding enduring value to every project it forms part of.

Whether for driveways, courtyards, or high-traffic public spaces, selecting the right stone is essential to performance and lasting satisfaction.

This guide explores the stone types we commonly use, outlining their distinct characteristics and best-use scenarios to help you select, with confidence, the perfect natural stone for your project.



1 Key Factors in Natural Stone Selection

Choosing the right stone for your environment is about more than appearance — it's about lasting performance.

An unsuitable material can cause premature wear, structural issues, and safety risks, leading to costly repairs, ongoing maintenance, or even full replacement in severe cases. Selecting the right stone for your project ensures long-term durability, reduced maintenance, and a paved area that remains both beautiful and functional for years to come.

Factors to consider when choosing natural stone:

AESTHETICS

Colour, texture, and finish, and how the stone complements the surrounding environment.

INSTALLATION SUITABILITY

The stone must be appropriate for the intended installation method and location, e.g., steep driveways, raised balconies etc.

DURABILITY

Resistance to wear, traffic, water, and UV exposure.

STAIN RESISTANCE

Consider potential staining risks, e.g., rust, tree sap, or falling flowers from trees like Jacaranda.

SLIP RESISTANCE

Especially important in public spaces and high-foot-traffic areas.

POROSITY

Especially important in public spaces and high-foot-traffic areas.

WORKABILITY

Ease of cutting, shaping, and installation.

AVAILABILITY

Consistency of supply, particularly for large-scale projects.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUITABILITY

Coastal/Marine Areas: Stones should resist salt attack and weathering in saline air environments.

Flood Zones and Wet Areas: Low-porosity stones are preferred to withstand prolonged water exposure and reduce the risk of mould or mildew.

Thermal Conditions: For barefoot areas, such as pool surrounds, stones should remain comfortable underfoot. Stones in high-heat zones must maintain structural integrity and resist thermal expansion or discolouration.

2 Common Stone Types and Their Applications

Bluestone (Basalt)

POROSITY

Low

APPEARANCE

Deep blue-grey hues with a consistent texture, gentle tonal variation, and can have natural “cat’s paw” markings (small holes).

STRENGTHS

Dense and hard, low porosity, good weather resistance, zero crystalline silica.

IDEAL FOR

Dense and hard, low porosity, good weather resistance, zero crystalline silica.

EXTERNAL FINISH OPTIONS

Sawn, Sandblasted, Bush Hammered, Natural Split, Tumbled

INTERNAL FINISH OPTIONS

Leather, Honed, Polished

Granite

POROSITY

Very low

APPEARANCE

Speckled and sometimes veined, available in a vast range of colours from greys, blacks, whites, creams, greens and pinks.

STRENGTHS

Extremely hardwearing, low porosity, weather resistant.

IDEAL FOR

High-traffic areas, streetscapes, kerbs, commercial paving, and driveways.

EXTERNAL FINISH OPTIONS

Exfoliated, Sandblasted, Bush Hammered, Natural Split, Tumbled

INTERNAL FINISH OPTIONS

Honed, Polished, Leathered

Porphyry

POROSITY

Very low

APPEARANCE

Grained, natural colour variation from strong reds, yellows, purples, and greys.

STRENGTHS

Grained, natural colour variation from strong reds, yellows, purples, and greys.

IDEAL FOR

Laneways, driveways, plazas, heavy traffic zones.

EXTERNAL FINISH OPTIONS

Exfoliated, Tumbled, Natural Split

INTERNAL FINISH OPTIONS

Honed, Polished, Tumbled

Quartzite

POROSITY

Very low

APPEARANCE

Subtle or strong sparkle with crystalline structure, available in a range of whites, greys, and earthy tones.

STRENGTHS

Exceptionally hard, durable, and resistant to scratching, heat, and weathering.

IDEAL FOR

High-traffic outdoor areas, driveways, pool surrounds, commercial paving

EXTERNAL FINISH OPTIONS

Natural Split, Flamed, Tumbled

INTERNAL FINISH OPTIONS

Honed, Polished

Sandstone

POROSITY

Very high

APPEARANCE

Gritty sand like texture, generally veined, available in earthy colours — beige, pink, brown, cream.

STRENGTHS

Easy to cut, visually warm and natural.

IDEAL FOR

Heritage works, low-traffic residential use, retaining walls and walling.

NOTE

Higher porosity needs regular maintenance, cleaning & sealing for longevity.

EXTERNAL FINISH OPTIONS

Sawn, Sandblasted, Bush Hammered, Natural Split

INTERNAL FINISH OPTIONS

Honed

Limestone

POROSITY

Very high

APPEARANCE

Smooth to fine-grained mottled texture with subtle natural fossils and veining, organic appearance, available in a range of soft creams, greys, greens and white colours.

STRENGTHS

Timeless organic look, cool underfoot, easy to cut.

IDEAL FOR

Pool surrounds, patios, and residential outdoor areas.

CAUTION

Softer and more porous than most stones, can be prone to staining and requires regular cleaning and sealing.

EXTERNAL FINISH OPTIONS

Sandblasted, Bush Hammered, Tumbled, Natural Split

INTERNAL FINISH OPTIONS

Honed, Polished, Tumbled

Travertine

POROSITY

High

APPEARANCE

Available in pink, silver, and beige tones, in both cross-cut and vein-cut, defined by its layered texture and distinctive natural holes.

STRENGTHS

Naturally slip-resistant due to holes, lightweight, thermally resistant.

IDEAL FOR

Internal walling and flooring, pools surrounds, courtyards, patios and entertaining spaces.

NOTE

Highly porous, needs regular sealing, especially for outdoor use. Filling holes is option but removes some slip resistance.

EXTERNAL FINISH OPTIONS

Honed & Unfilled, Tumbled, Sandblasted

INTERNAL FINISH OPTIONS

Honed, Polished

3

Finishes and Treatments

Smooth → Textured



Polished

TEXTURE

High gloss, extremely smooth and reflective

LOOK

Deep colour enhancement

USE

Interior flooring, countertops, wall cladding

Honed

TEXTURE

Matte, satin and smooth but not reflective

LOOK

Softer appearance, less colour contrast

USE

Interior flooring, countertops, wall cladding

Leathered

TEXTURE

Soft sheen with subtle "leather" texture, slightly undulating, tactile

LOOK

Enhances natural grain, more organic

USE

Countertops, feature walls, internal flooring, transitional areas

Sawn

TEXTURE

Flat, raw, can have subtle saw marks

LOOK

Soft, industrial look

USE

Paving, cladding, architectural elements



Sandblasted

TEXTURE

Uniform, fine, grainy texture

LOOK

Lightens colour, makes colour variation more uniform

USE

Outdoor paving, pool surrounds

Exfoliated

TEXTURE

Coarse, rough, and uniform texture

LOOK

Natural stone character with muted tones

USE

Outdoor pavers, steps, public spaces

Bush Hammered

TEXTURE

Pitted, heavily textured, very tactile

LOOK

Weathered, rugged surface, lightens stone colour

USE

High-slip resistance areas, urban design

Natural Split

TEXTURE

Irregular, raw, naturally split along natural layers

LOOK

Authentic, rustic and rugged

USE

Steep driveways, wall cladding, garden paths, natural landscapes

4 Maintenance and Longevity

Different stones require different levels of maintenance:

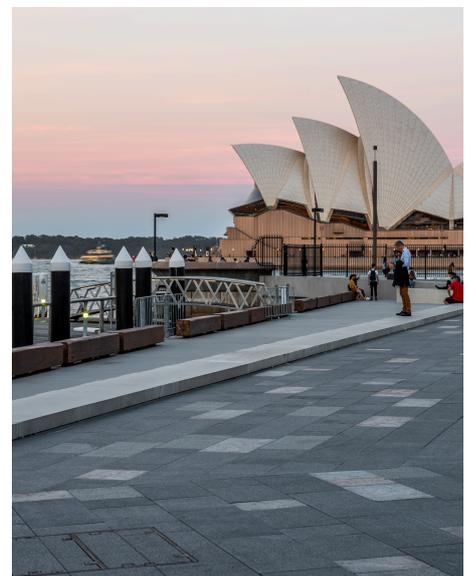
Basalt, Granite, Porphyry, Quartzite

Lower maintenance. Their dense composition makes them highly resistant to staining, scratching, and weathering, requiring only basic cleaning and occasional sealing.

Sandstone, Limestone and Travertine

Requires a higher level of cleaning and regular sealing. Being more porous and softer, they are more susceptible to absorbing moisture, staining, and erosion, so consistent care is essential to preserve their appearance and performance over time.

It is important to remember that all stone requires regular maintenance to not only protect the stone but also enhance its natural beauty and extend its lifespan in both residential and commercial applications.



Need Help Choosing?

At Sam the Paving Man, we combine decades of experience with a deep understanding of material performance to guide your stone selection. Whether it's modern design, traditional stonework, or functional paving — we ensure the right stone is used in the right place.

Contact us to discuss your project — we're here to help you lay the foundation for something timeless.

→ CALL US

→ EMAIL US



See our [Guide to Installation Methods](#), for detailed information on ensuring proper stone installation.

