

The Iconic Florida Swimming Pool

To many the swimming pool is the play toy of fun and sun. To others it is viewed as a therapeutic necessity. And to others it is viewed as a nuisance with a trip to the clubhouse pool viewed as a more palatable option. However, whatever your particular outlook may be, the glistening water of a swimming pool indisputably remains an iconic symbol of the Florida lifestyle experience. Having dealt with homebuyers over the last three decades, the mandate of having a swimming pool remains among the most sought after features in a home.

Like so many other aspects of a home, the swimming pool takes on a number of common formats of construction.

The most popular pool installed in homes is a gunite/shotcrete pool. This is considered the most enduring and highest quality and, as you would expect, the most costly. A newly installed gunite pool with screen enclosure typically runs between \$45,000 to \$65,000. More elaborate designs incorporating larger size pools, whirlpool spas and expanded decking area can rack up a bill upwards to \$100,000 or more.

Other pool construction formats include vinyl lined pools, fiberglass pools and affordable above ground pools. Each of these second tier pool options offer greater affordability but do not accommodate the need for a customized design. It should also be noted that use of above ground pools are often prohibited in communities where deed restrictions are enforced.

When considering a pool for your home there are a variety of upgraded features available designed for comfort and ease of maintenance.

The use of pop-up cleaning heads installed during construction of a gunite pool help with the chore of keeping a pool clean by using the water circulating action of the in-floor heads to move debris into pool drains and skimmers. This option greatly reduces the need for sweeping the pool and is the automated alternative to robotic “kreepy crawlers” and their meandering hose.

Another popular option is a salt pool system that converts salt in the water into low levels of chlorine. This is an alternative to the more traditional practice of directly placing chlorine into the water via liquid or tablets. A salt system reduces the harshness often associated with chlorine and minimizes the need for more frequent monitoring of pool water chemical balance.

To enhance the use of pools and spas during chilly times of the year three types of optional heating systems are available. There is the solar system installed on a home’s roof, a natural gas/propane heater and electric heat pump. Generally, the least costly to install, but most costly to operate is a gas heater. Choice of an electric heat pump, similar to the equipment used in home heating systems, offers the benefit of effective heating that is less costly than gas but is the most pricy system to install. The solar alternative offers the benefit of relying on the sun for heating and therefore, the least costly to operate. However, solar heaters have restricted maximum heating capability and its maze of rubber hoses where water is circulated for heating is subject to decay from sun exposure and leaks perpetrated by birds and squirrels.

Sooner or later all pools must come to terms with deterioration of its surface. Vinyl lined pools and above ground pools both use a vinyl membrane to create a sack where the water is

held. Although the stated warranty for such liners can be as long as 25 years, the reality is that replacement often needs to take place between 8-12 years.

Fiberglass pools also ultimately cave in to the deteriorating effects of the sun in about 15 years. Unfortunately, resurfacing of fiberglass pools has not proven to be particularly successful.

The conventional concrete pool is distinct in its capability of being resurfaced. Traditional white plaster or Marcite finishes will generally last about 8-10 years. Newer aggregate finishes such as Diamond Brite offer an alternative with a wider spectrum of colors and somewhat longer life cycle.

Two final points to consider about any in-ground pool is the type of decking and enclosure. The most commonly used decking is a concrete surface finished with a decorative acrylic paint or polymer coating. The other which is increasingly prevalent in newer homes is brick-style pavers set over a sand or crushed stone bed. The esthetics of a paver deck tend to enhance the appeal of homes on the resale market.

By law a pool must have some barrier protecting young children from wandering into a pool. This is handled via a screen enclosure or perimeter fencing. Obviously to minimize pool debris the screen enclosure is the overwhelming preferred choice. Further required by current law are supplemental door alarms triggered by doors opening to a pool or temporary barrier system separating a pool from areas where accessible from the home.

Whatever your outlook about private swimming pools they continue to embody the essence of Florida living. With well over a million existing it remains a popular appendage to homes throughout the Sunshine State.