



GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR STONE BUDGET

Having stone counter-tops in your kitchen is something most people aspire too. Not only does it add to the sophistication of the kitchen but also the perceived value. However, with stone being a finite resource it is not something everyone can afford. The price of both natural and engineered stone will climb as resources become scarcer and the cost of transporting the heavy material rises.

So, how do you ensure you can afford the stone tops you want? A stone budget can be managed if you do your homework and empower yourself with some industry knowledge. By selecting the right stone, booking your slab early, designing to maximise slab usage, and considering the thickness, profile and joints you can make the stone more affordable.



The cost of a slab of natural stone depends primarily on where it comes from and its scarcity. Stone that comes from Europe and South America will be a lot more costly than stone coming from China or Southern Africa. The more exotic the stone the more it will cost. With engineered stone the

pricing will often be dictated by the value of the natural materials used in the manufacturing process. The more design elements that appear in the stone the more expensive it will be. Take the time to meet with your stone fabricator and visit the stone supplier to identify stone that appeals to you from the more cost-effective regions. It may mean compromising a little on the aesthetic but it will help keep the budget under control. If the most cost effective option is not in stock it may be worthwhile putting down a deposit and waiting for new stock to come in.

The availability of different types of stone varies with demand and the time of year. Once you have selected what stone you want it is a good idea to book your slab by paying a deposit. This way the fabricator can purchase your stone and protect you against any price increases that may come to bear from the time you start the process to the time you are ready to install the stone. By taking the time to visit the stone supplier you can personally choose the slab you want. This will ensure you are aware of any nuances to the slab that may appear on your worktop.

The way your kitchen is designed will also affect the cost of the stone. There are ways to specifically design the kitchen worktops to get maximum usage out of a slab of stone and minimize wastage. It is vital you discuss these with your kitchen designer who should liaise with the fabricator for assistance on how to lay out the counter-top overhangs, nooks and islands to get the best use of the slab. The best use of the slab will vary depending on the size of the slab (different suppliers manufacture / import their slabs in various sizes) hence it is vital the kitchen designer consult the fabricator before the design is finalised.

The thickness you opt for as well as the profile you choose will also affect the final cost. The thicker the top the more expensive it usually is. However, in certain materials the ultra-thin tops need the support of a substrate and this will push the price up again. The most economical thickness for natural stone tops is 30mm, while engineered stone can go as thin as 20mm with extra substrate support for long runs of stone. Similarly the more intricate your profile the more the work will cost. This is because the cutting and finishing of the stone becomes more complex and time consuming. Simple profiles like the pencil edge, one quarter bull nose and ten by ten bevel edge are usually the most cost effective.

Everyone likes their stone tops to look sleek and uninterrupted by joints but if you can be a little flexible on the joint placements the fabricator will be able to get more out of the stone. This is not to say that a join every meter is acceptable but, if the fabricator can have two joints in a long run, rather than one, he may not have to buy an extra slab to complete your work.

If you are using stone elsewhere in your home it is advisable to try and stick with the same stone throughout. This way the fabricator can

use waste from one project to complete the next. When there are multiple types of stone in one project the price will sky rocket as the fabricator will have to buy a new slab for each type you have selected. There will also be a lot of waste.

Consider the time of year. Products and services will always be more expensive towards the end of the year. This is the busiest time for the kitchen industry where demand is high and stock low. If you can plan your kitchen for the slower winter months you are less likely to pay a premium for both the stone and the fabrication and you are more likely to experience a calm and precise installation.



Lastly, ensure you read the terms and conditions set by the fabricator carefully. You need to ensure there are no hidden costs if you change or delay the installation. You also want to ensure that the fabricator is insured for resulting damages just in case something goes wrong on site resulting in damage to your home or possessions during or after installation. Protect yourself and your investment by ensuring you are dealing with a professional company who has trained staff, proper equipment and is legally compliant. Remember, if the fabricator is a KSA member you will have the full support of the KSA to assist you should something go wrong.

Thanks to the Western Cape KSA stone and surface fabricators forum for their help with this article