

# West Coast Aerie

*Transforming difficult terrain into an aquatic work of art*

by Jason Cramp

West Vancouver, British Columbia, on Canada's Pacific Coast, offers amazing views of the Pacific Ocean outlined by dense woodlands and artistic-looking outcroppings of boulders and rock that look as though they were strategically placed for effect. With this natural setting, one would expect to see a swimming pool or spa/hot tub in every backyard along the coastline.

One reason why an aquatic setting isn't found in every backyard is that only a few swimming pool and spa/hot tub builders are capable of working with and transforming this difficult terrain into an aquatic work of art.

One builder capable of doing such work is Burnaby, British Columbia's Alka Pool Construction, which used this setting - in the Horseshoe Bay area of West Vancouver - an area notorious for steep-sloped properties - as a magnificent backdrop for their aquatic masterpiece.

## Three Distinct Purposes

The client wanted the swimming pool to serve three distinct purposes. First, as a place where they could sit and enjoy the majestic view from within the pool. Second, as a place where they could exercise using the pool's integral swim jets and finally, as a water feature that would serve as a focal point in the backyard.



To meet their client's requirements, the project called for a formed and poured above-ground 3 m x 5.6 m (10 ft. x 18 ft. 4 in.) structural concrete swim spa/wading pool.

"The requirements were for a pool to spill over on all sides and incorporate a vanishing edge, with a swim jet system that would not force pool water pass the surface gutter, bearing in mind that the surface gutter is only 2.5 cm (1 in.) wide," explains Alka Pool's Rob Danieli. "We also constructed an underwater seat that spans the entire length of the pool so that the pool owner and their guests could sit in this awesome environment while facing the view."

The unique aspect to the spill-over gutter is the fact that it was designed to sit flush with the patio on two-and-a-half sides and the vanishing edge on the remaining one-and-a-half sides – creating a sheet-glass effect that makes the pool look as though it is constructed of glass, echoing the many other glass elements used throughout the residence.

"The result is a pool that spills over on all sides," Danieli says. "We kept the slot opening of the flush-mounted gutter at a maximum of 2.5 cm (1 in.), as this distance enabled us to achieve the elegant look we were looking for while not compromising safety."

## Structural Concrete Cradle

The pool had to sit on a structural concrete cradle which in turn was anchored to rock, with the height of the supporting structure being approximately 2.1 m (7 ft.). Once the structure was finished, the pool was then formed and poured on top of the supporting structure.

"Access to the pool was awkward as it was one of the first parts of the overall house construction," says Danieli. "It was like building a pool in mid air and having to build scaffolding just to get to and from the pool."

In keeping with the elegant look the client wanted, Alka Pools used various black and charcoal tones throughout the pool.

"The pool plaster finish is a custom charcoal 3M Colorquartz blend, while the step and seat nosing tile is finished in charcoal 5 cm x 5 cm (2 in x 2 in.) porcelain tile," says Danieli. "The waterline and the top of angled ledge are made up of honed black granite with the outer wall of the vanishing edge clad with polished black granite. The catch basin and outer, lower side of the vanishing edge is filled with polished black Japanese stones. The patio that surrounds the swimming pool on two-and-a-half sides is finished in 61 cm x 61 cm (24 in. x 24 in.) honed Pennsylvania Bluestone, while immediate concrete surfaces are sandblasted.

"The dark tones were designed to give a very precise mirrored look on a calm day as the pool water surface reflects the sky very effectively."



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## Construction Schedules

Construction crews from both Alka Pools and Bussleton Construction (builder of the home), of North Vancouver, British Columbia, had to co-ordinate their building schedules so both projects would be finished as smoothly as possible, says Danieli.

In the end, the pool installation is a central and focal point from the house and virtually every view overlooks the pool. Heightening the 'outdoor living' aspect of the property is the unique architectural feature of the home's design, which includes stacking and sliding glass doors that open up the house to the pool and the breathtaking view.

As everything had to be co-ordinated and synchronized to complete this remarkable project, the elapsed time to finish the job was approximately two-and-a-half years with Alka Pool's work costing approximately \$50,000. **PSM**

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**– Rob Danieli,  
Alka Pool  
Construction**