

A One-Of-A-Kind Water Experience

Gib-San Pools builds an architectural marvel in the Caribbean

by Jason Cramp

Complementing the spectacular setting of a private residence overlooking the Caribbean Sea is one of the largest residential deck level gutter swimming pools in the world, ironically located on one of the smallest islands in the Caribbean.

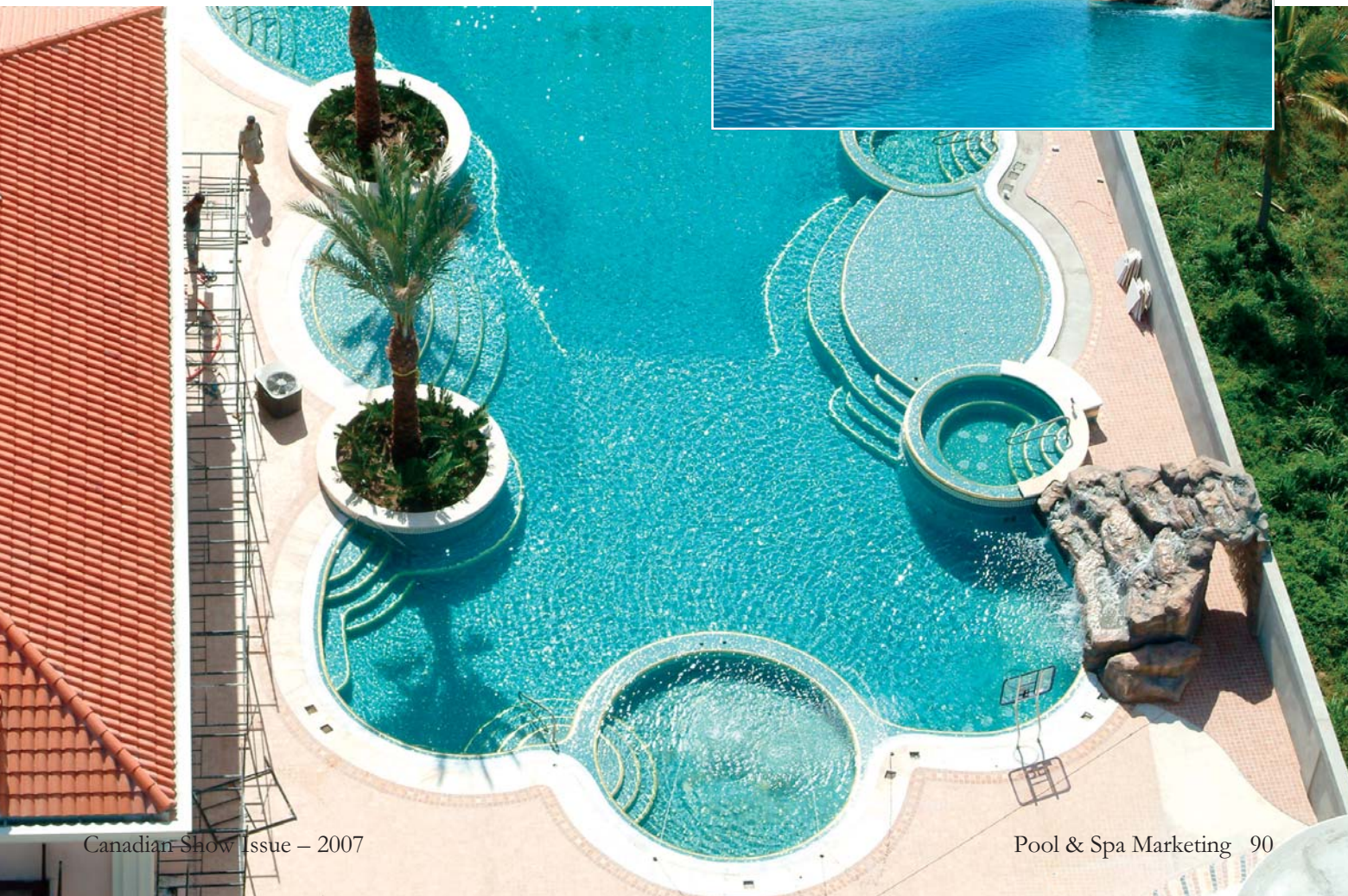
Built by Gib-San Pools of Toronto, Ontario, this 30.5 m x 15.2 m (100 ft. x 50 ft.) inground concrete swimming pool is located on the grounds of a lavish, Spanish-themed sea-side estate in St-Maarten, a 93 sq km (36 sq. mile) island in the Netherlands Antilles.

Surrounded by the azure waters of the Caribbean and blessed by year-round sunshine, warm weather, lush tropical

vegetation and constant trade winds, the island of St-Maarten is a true paradise which Gib-San Pools used for inspiration when they designed this stunning, 464 sq m (5,000 sq. ft.) custom built pool, which features everything you could want in an aquatic playground.

Right: A vanishing edge makes the water from the swimming pool appear to extend into the horizon.

Below: The pool features a repeating circular design theme.



The main architectural elements of the pool include: beach entry steps, a children's play pool, an adjacent sports area set up for water basketball, two inground concrete spas attached to the pool, decorative water jets mounted in the pool floor and deck, a rock waterfall, and a grotto entertainment area with a cave, interior water slide and a waterfall that cascades over the grotto entrance, all supplied with water from 12 large pumps.

Complementing the two circular spas on the opposite side of the pool and the scalloped perimeter and semi-circular interior steps of the pool are two circular island planters with palm trees that appear to be floating on the surface of the water. The pool also features 12 underwater lights and six speakers that allow bathers to enjoy the relaxing sounds of their favourite music – even underwater. Miniature, square-shaped tiles accented with gold leaf are also used in the pool and spa to reflect the sunlight, giving the water a shimmering appearance.



Vanishing Edge Is Defining Element

The defining element of the pool is a vanishing edge and catch basin with a full-length safety ledge in the pool for relaxing and viewing the surf crashing on the jagged volcanic rocks down below and the beach in the distance. The inspired design of the vanishing edge allows water from the pool to pour over one side – seamlessly melding the water in the pool with the shimmering turquoise water of the Caribbean in the background.

Separating the pool from the Caribbean down below is a retaining wall that also doubles as one of the pool walls, allowing the Caribbean to literally lap up along one side of the pool.

Creating this architectural marvel was the job of the 'Gib-San International Task Force' – a team of trained, experienced staff who bring in all the necessary equipment by air to build pools in locations far from their home base in Canada.

Thanks to careful planning, management and logistics, Gib-San has a well-deserved reputation for doing outstanding work wherever they are sent and this private pool in St-Maarten is no exception.

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Clockwise from top left: Miniature, square-shaped tiles accented with gold leaf are used in the swimming pool and spa to reflect the sunlight, giving the water a sparkling, shimmering appearance; water cascades over the entrance to the grotto; creating this architectural marvel was the job of the 'Gib-San International Task Force' – a team of trained, experienced staff who bring in all the necessary equipment by air to build swimming pools in locations such as St-Maarten which are far from Gib-San's home base in Canada.

“The distance from the site only affects a few items in managing a project of this magnitude,” says Ed Gibbs, president of Gib-San Pools. “We follow a systematic approach to each project and prepare and execute the required procedures whether it is in Toronto or 3,000 km away. Before the project begins, the head design architect, logistics manager, project manager and site foreman make several visits to the site to gather all the information needed to develop a concept plan.

“This is followed by interaction with the client and setting up lines of communication. Our attention to project management has contributed to the success of our installations in remote locations such as this and allows us to accommodate minor design changes without interrupting the work in progress.”

Specific Details Had to be Addressed

For the St-Maarten project, there were specific details that Gib-San had to address before starting to build the pool.

“The St-Maarten pool was positioned in a specific sea-side location so we first had to gather geotechnical information before proceeding with the excavation,” says Gibbs. “Our design team then had to deal with the existing grades at the site, which required the use of jack hammers to shape the area and blend it into what had already been built.”

Gib-San Pools also had to ensure that the swimming pool conformed to the client’s vision.

“The client wanted a curved, shaped pool that would be a ‘one-of-a-kind water experience’ where people could have fun and enjoy themselves, so we

designed it with a shallow end wrap-around that extends through a transition area and into the deep end,” says Gibbs. “The client also wanted a separate area for children and access points into the pool from various locations. Colour was also important in order to complement the water in the Caribbean as was the preservation of the waterfront, nearby coral reefs and compliance with local building restrictions.”

After two years, at a cost of \$2 million US (excluding the cost for decking and landscaping, which was completed by other companies) the project was completed and the client was left with a remarkable man-made element that superbly reflects the island’s natural beauty. **PSM**



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