

Designing for Hospitality Spaces

Specifying Interior Engineered Timber Flooring and Cladding



Introduction

The foundations of good design are form and function, and this is true in the hospitality industry as well. Above all, it is critical that the interior design of hospitality spaces creates an inviting atmosphere for guests while ensuring safety and security, a smooth flow and an engaging spatial experience.

A hospitality space's foundational backdrop is made up of its flooring and walls. When choosing flooring and cladding materials, a range of considerations come into play: performance, safety, maintenance costs, and more. For high-traffic areas, they must be durable and functional, while delivering premium, on-trend aesthetics. The selection of materials that add value and improve both comfort and visual appeal is essential to the establishment's success.

The hospitality industry constantly strives to raise the bar for the guest experience, which is why surface specification is crucial. In this respect, engineered timber is one of the industry's most exciting sustainable materials. In comparison to solid wood, it has several architectural advantages, such as greater resistance to temperature and moisture changes, inherent stability, and durability. Add the natural warmth, character and the biophilic benefits of the timber look, and you have a material that can elevate any hospitality interior.

Below, we examine the key design considerations when specifying engineered timber flooring and cladding for the hospitality sector





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IS IT EASY TO CLEAN AND MAINTAIN?

Easy-to-clean flooring and walls are essential because spills, marks, and dirt will undoubtedly occur in a hospitality environment. Engineered timber excels in this regard as it provides long-lasting beauty with simple maintenance. Simply removing spills as they happen and wiping the surface with a damp cloth will keep it clean over most of its lifespan.

Depending on the product, minor scratches can frequently be repaired using a number of techniques. For lacquer-finished timber products, small surface scratches can typically be repaired with timber floor repair pens. For larger repair jobs, the affected section of the floor can be sanded and relacquered. The thicker the lamella on an engineered timber product, the more frequently it can be resanded and refinished, significantly extending

the board's life. Oiled products can be repaired more easily with products like a liquid wax cleaner or by buffing out the scratch.

Engineered timber floors or cladding that are prefinished with a lacquer offer a durable, smooth and easy-to-clean surface that can be used in high-traffic hospitality spaces. No high maintenance procedures are necessary; they only need to be vacuumed and cleaned with a damp cloth on a daily basis and occasionally deeper cleaned with a well-rung mop.

In comparison, an oiled floor requires more ongoing maintenance to keep it in pristine condition, but it can be refinished easily. A special wood oil finish must be reapplied to the hardwood floor every six months, and every two to three months in areas with high traffic.

WHAT IS THE LOOK AND FEEL OF YOUR PROJECT?

Timber flooring and cladding add a touch of warmth and nature to the space, not to mention the biophilic benefits of utilising natural materials within a built environment. Understanding your project's intended theme, appearance, feel and where you would like to feature engineered timber is critical. Leading suppliers provide a wide range of tone and texture choices to fit all styles, ensuring that the colours and feel of your project can be accommodated.

Timber floor grading is a method of classifying wood flooring products according to how prominent specific visual characteristics are. Understanding these gradings will help you narrow down which products will achieve the desired aesthetic for your project.¹ Prime, select and classic grades provide a cleaner overall finish with fewer knots and natural wood variation whereas character and rustic grades provide more texture, knots and filler for added character.

CAN IT HANDLE HIGH-TRAFFIC ENVIRONMENTS?

The construction of engineered timber boards differs from that of solid wood. They are still made of real wood, but rather than being composed of a single plank, they have a top layer of natural hardwood over an engineered base. It is much more stable than a solid hardwood floor and is less susceptible to warping as a result of its unique construction. Engineered timber can therefore be installed with less concern about future issues post installation.

It is important to consider the fact that hotels and restaurants are open areas with lots of pedestrian activity as well as being subject to moving furniture, cleaning equipment and other heavy items. High-traffic areas will need surface materials that are durable and can withstand daily use and heavy foot traffic.

The engineered timber boards you choose will be more durable than solid timber flooring as the coating is harder wearing due to its strict application and curing process in a carefully-controlled manufactured environment. Other

factors to be considered when assessing durability include the quality of the product, the level of care required, and the quality of the installation. In addition, the right finish must be chosen to ensure that your floor will last, with oil and lacquer being among the most commonly used.

It is advised to install a lacquered floor if the boards are in a high-traffic area, and you want less frequent ongoing maintenance. An additional layer of protection is created by the lacquer, which is applied directly on top of the wood. It helps guard against damage to the flooring surface, such as scratches and stains, and performs well against surface moisture. For areas where the flooring is subjected to high or heavy footfall, lacquered flooring's protective surface layer will reduce the need to refinish and replace the floor if regular cleaning and maintenance procedures are followed. The more layers of lacquer, the greater the protection provided.

WHAT IS THE COST OF INSTALLATION?

When choosing engineered timber floors, your budget will be among the first considerations. The cost of a product can be influenced by factors such as construction quality, sustainability, and product quality. Knowing your budget will make it easier to determine which engineered timber product is best suited for your project.

That said, one of the advantages of engineered timber is that it is pre-sanded, sealed (via lacquer or oil) and ready to install immediately, therefore leading to significant savings in after-install costs. In addition, engineered flooring and cladding can be installed quickly and easily, and in a variety of patterns, thanks to tongue-and-groove

or click systems. Solid timber alternatives require curing on site for a length of time before being laid, need to be installed, then sanded and finally sealed – all taking time, labour and money.

Compared to solid wood, engineered timber flooring has a variety of thicknesses, and often does not require the additional thickness of ply to be installed first. This not only saves costs in purchasing additional materials but this variety also allows you to better control heights and coordinate with other flooring sections. This is particularly useful in hospitality environments in which different types of rooms and spaces often flow into each other.

HOW WELL DOES IT CONTROL NOISE?

Even though they have a hard surface, engineered timber floors are not as hard as concrete or tiles, which helps them to better control noise. Installing acoustic underlay is also advantageous for projects where you want to lessen flooring noise and stop sound transfer between levels in the building.

IS IT SLIP RESISTANT?

Add some water to a surface, and it becomes an immediate slip hazard; add fat, grease, and oils, and you have a dangerous situation for staff, guests and other users of the space. To guarantee that the project uses the right, purpose-fitting products, make sure your specification includes the necessary slip resistant rating as well as additional performance and technical requirements.

IS IT SUSTAINABLE?

If sustainability of the build and ethical values of the client are an important factor, engineered timber presents a compelling option. Engineered timber is made of many thinner solid wood layers, allowing for a greater use of each tree than solid wood boards, which only uses a limited portion of each tree in their construction. The manufacture of engineered timber results in less wastage from the tree, which is better for the environment.

In addition, there are third-party certifications and labels, such as the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) schemes and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), available on engineered timber boards for both cladding and flooring. These certifications provide peace of mind that the raw material has been sourced responsibly and from sustainably-managed forests.



Specifying for Hospitality: A Case Study

Rodd & Gunn, The Lodge Bar & Dining, Fortitude Valley, Queensland

Architect: Pennant & Triumph

Builder: Twenty-Three Projects Pty Ltd

Products: Engineered European Oak HW3636B 260x19mm Amazon with UV Oiled finish (floor), HW16409C Columba Plank Character with UV Oiled finish (walls and ceilings)

The Lodge Bar & Dining, a restaurant and bar in Brisbane, is the creation of the New Zealand menswear company Rodd & Gunn. It is a venue that brings the natural materials of its clothing to life coupled with a high-end hospitality setting. With architecture by award-winning design firm Pennant & Triumph, the brief was to create a luxury lodge that was less about the mountains and more about the Queensland environment in which this project was located.

Reflecting the Rodd & Gunn brand's deep connection with nature, there is liberal use of natural, raw materials such as stone, wood, steel and brass throughout the site. To this end, Havwood's Engineered European Oak HW3636B 260x19mm Amazon with UV Oiled finish was specified for flooring, along with HW16409C Columba Plank Character with UV Oiled finish for walls and ceilings. Havwoods, a leading supplier of engineer timber floors and cladding, specialises in durable commercial flooring and was able to provide a decent width plank that was needed for the project.

As wood was a major part of the site's aesthetic it had to be beautiful and functional. The timber products used in this project needed to have a matt finish and a natural, light appearance that, without being overtly showy, embodied the brand's values of superior quality. The grain, width, colour and finish of these products all gave a sense of humanity to the design and established an allimportant connection between the brand and the natural world.

Throughout the project, Havwoods distinguished itself in terms of timing, service, and cost. Unlike companies who have not operated long in Australia, Havwoods understand how timber flooring performs in the volatile Australian climate. Havwoods staff often come from within the built environment industry, and all undergo rigorous and continuous training to ensure their knowledge is relevant and up-to-date.

HAVWOODS

Experts in Timber for Interiors

With close to 50 years' experience in sourcing the very finest engineered timber flooring and cladding, Havwoods' passion for ensuring you receive high-quality wood products that are both fit-for-purpose and fit-for-budget has made them the leading suppliers for residential, commercial, high-volume retail and hospitality projects across Australia and internationally.

With more than 300 products sourced from around the world, and every resource made available to assist with the selection, purchase, and installation of your floor, Havwoods is committed to driving innovation, outstanding product performance and superior customer service. Their collection includes many different types of wood plank construction, including engineered wood flooring, decorative herringbone and chevron patterns, parquet, Versailles, prefinished veneer panels, and timber composite decking.

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References

¹ For more information, visit: www.havwoods.com/au/news/understnading-timber-floor-grading

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Photography: Daniel Sortino