



# OVER THE TOP POOL HOUSES

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Perhaps the only thing more luxurious than lounging by a shimmering pool is knowing that a fruity beverage, a fluffy towel or bathroom are just a few steps away from your chaise. Although a pool house might seem like an extravagant frill, a well-designed one can certainly boost your poolside enjoyment exponentially.

A pool house is typically built to address the needs of support space to a pool when

the pool itself is located some distance from the house. You may wonder what creates the desire for a pool to be some distance away? It is typically because the property owners do not desire the pool to be in the immediate proximity and view from inside the house. Therefore, the pool is either placed down a series of steps or terraces or it is rotated off to one side of the house. When this happens, along comes the pool house. It is the structure that first

and foremost holds a bathroom. Then, depending upon the amount of open land around it, it may house the pool equipment to some extent. Lastly, it can become the center for all entertaining at the pool. It is this last function that allows the creation of amazing structures. Further, in some cases, these mini-homes also become guest suites. In my professional experience, the cost of these bigger buildings can range from \$200,000 to \$1,000,000.



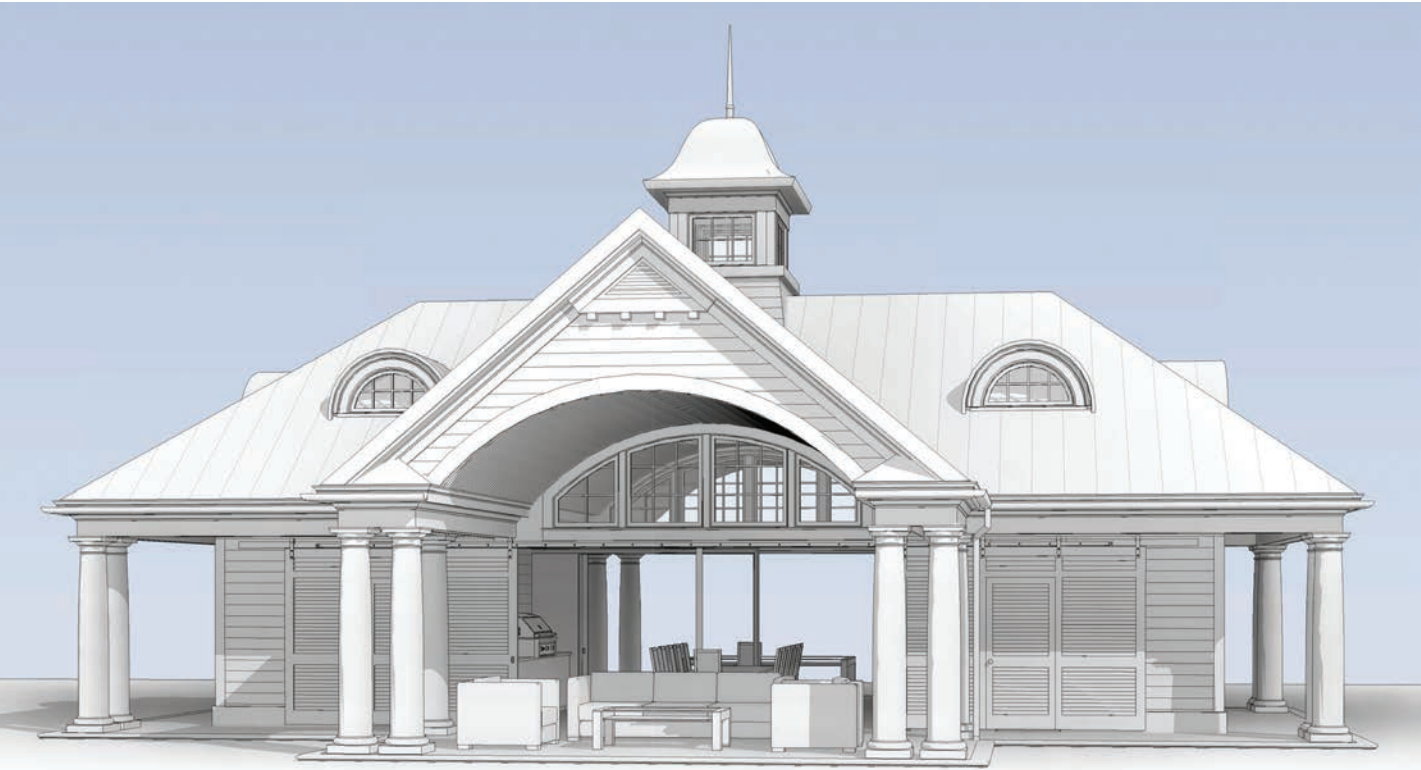
When determining if you want a pool house, you must critically think about why you are wanting it and what it is to do for you. In one case, our clients wanted a separate structure for the in-laws to stay in when visiting. In another case, the owner wanted a soul-searching reflection room. Again another desired mostly screening from the sun and a place for the pool toys. Big pool houses that include entertainment areas with a large screen TV, a large grill and a long bar are full-blown commitments to continuous use. Otherwise, they become vacant remote buildings on the land. So, plan on entertaining if you build one of these amazing buildings.

Now comes the fun. If the structure is to be used as a guest house, then consider it a tiny house. Local zoning restrictions often prevent larger builds. An Architect's mind searches for creative storage areas, knowing that the length of stay could be up to a month for visitors. The rooms are scaled for small furniture and the structure contains everything needed for total independence. The main difference is that the wall adjacent to the pool folds away, opening up the living and kitchen area to the pool terrace. And the party starts.

When the pool house is purely for entertaining, its design is all about big crowds, cooking, drinking and televised entertainment. A grill station, bar/kitchen spaces, and dining and seating areas are created. The structure covering these components either extrapolates its design from the main house or blends into the surrounding landscape. One pool house currently under construction is a 25 foot long by 40 foot wide flat roof canopy supported by a stone-encased "functional" wall and two custom bronze sculptural columns. The three sided open structure provides protection from the sun and rain while allowing incredible 180 degree views to the mountain range and main lawn. Recessed up into the stained douglas fir ceiling are retractable sun shades to filter the setting sun. The custom made bronze details of the columns continue at the handrails. The pool house is made to disappear into the tree line and it does just that.

The more formal structures follow the roof lines of their big brothers, the main houses. They stand with great formality reminiscent of building compounds of eras gone by. They often present incredible drama through a large curved ceiling or vertical cupola shaft intended to flood natural light to the inner core of the building. The final touches include amazing stone tops, brilliant large light fixtures and colorful, sophisticated furnishings. Again, with the newer development of fold-away walls, what appear to be french doors fold away to expose entire open sides. The longest

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wall I have opened with a hideaway door is 50 feet in length. This allows the greatest fluidity of circulation between this structure and the pool, pool deck and main house. When hosting a backyard wedding or fireworks event, this unrestrictive openness really supports incredibly successful socialization of large groups.

One element that seems to frequently happen is the boldness of the stone and tile selections in these buildings. When doing our own homes, we often feel restricted to pushing outside of the box, either because of our traditions or because our existing furnishings set the tone. In a pool house, the sky is the limit! Owners are willing to push to more non-traditional elements—acid-washed metal tiles, backlit glass countertops, or hammered bronze hardware. All on the edge of our typical rote choices.

The most amazing pool house we have completed is a 12 foot by 12 foot square of full sheets of fixed glass on a three-sided reflection room. Slotted in the low stone wall is a 6 foot long gas flame for the fire to be experienced from both sides of the window. The flat roof then extends in two directions. One end covers an amazing glass-tile coated bathroom with indoor and outdoor showers surrounded by natural stone. The other end of the roof covers first an open sitting area. The roof element provides protection from the rain at this section. The roof then extends further with only the structural elements providing partial shade with a trellis-like affect.

The building is flanked by the amazing pool measuring 20 by 50 feet, that recirculates water off a waterfall element cantilevered from a stone wall with stone

diving steps. The other side of the pool house is imbedded into the landscape to allow an intimate visual connection with the ever-evolving plantings. The building is all about serenity and nature. It's the place we all want to run to when life overwhelms us. A pool house can obviously serve as a special place to party but also a serious space for respite too.

The only thing better than a pool on a hot summer day is a pool house with extraordinary design.

Born and raised in Virginia, **Cathy Purple Cherry** ultimately landed in Annapolis where she grew a large architectural firm specializing in high-end custom homes and estates. A talented architect, visionary, and three-dimensional thinker, Cathy is able to marry clients' dreams with the reality of the built environment. Cathy's intense love for the mountains has always been deeply rooted in her, and as such, Cathy is passionate about extending her 27-year old practice through DC and down the range to Charlottesville. She and her husband are building their second home, which they will one day retire in on Ennis Mountain. While Cathy revels in the intricate design opportunities presented by high-end residential architecture, Cathy is equally passionate about her philanthropic efforts and her work serving the special needs community through the firm's Purposeful Architecture studio.

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