

Sparkling Hill Resort – Vernon, British Columbia, Canada Project Summary

Sparkling Hill Resort is owned by Swarovski and combines the magic of crystal in all its designs, including Swarovski luminaires and lighting products, crystal strands, crystal art pieces and architectural elements. Plouto's Enterprises of Kelowna was tasked to supply and install various tile products related to the pools, change rooms and sauna areas, as well as installing 40,000 square feet of tile and other flooring throughout the guest rooms and common areas of the resort. Though the tile work began in 2009, the majority of the work was done over 4 months from February through May 2010. A crew of 45-60 men worked on the job from the beginning, and during the last two months the total grew to 80 installers, led by project manager Rob Kormish.

The installation crews started in the 156 guest suites, preparing the bath and shower areas. The guest suites required a lot of prep work because they were placing wire heat elements over concrete. From one end of the room to the other, there was as much as 1 1/2 to 2" dip. Because of the wire heat, they used a 4-1 mixture (Mapei 3-1 modified) to make a mud bed over a slurry of thinset. They then installed 3/4-inch thick granite tile from China on the floors and granite tile on the walls. The bath floors stretched across the entire width of the guest suite, and the crews waterproofed this area with *Mapelastic AquaDefense*. The edges of the granite tiles were square, and the installers had to bevel the edges (arris) before setting the tile. On the walls, they set the tiles with *Ultraflex LFT*. Glass mosaics were set in the guest suites for backsplashes, using *Granirapid*. On the floors, they used *Kerabond/Keralastic*. The floors were grouted with *Keracolor S*, and the walls were grouted with *Keracolor U*. The floors did not have any lippage after the work was done.

The spa was a huge project with many challenges – from the waterproofing of pools and hot tubs to the typical tile- and stone-related issues commonly seen in today's fast-paced world of construction. To ensure success, all the lead installers on the crews had a set of plans with everything mapped out. Rob constantly updated the book and worked with his lead installers to guarantee a successful installation. They waterproofed with *Mapelastic AquaDefense* in interior areas and *Mapelastic 315* in exterior areas. The crews set the tiles with *Kerabond/Keralastic* and *Granirapid* mortar systems.

The Kniepp pool was the most elegant installation. It consists of a walking pool area that has many curves in it. The slip-resistant tiles used in the pool were manufactured by Agrobuchtal in Europe and varied between 2" x 2" and 4" x 4". The crews had to install many cove caps and inside-outside corner pieces, while meeting health code requirements such as not producing any 90-degree corners. "It was a lot like doing a negative edge pool," Kormish said. "The big deck sits in the middle, then large troughs of water fill the area where you walk around. Water must fall across gutters on both sides of the walking area at the same rate. There was a lot of work just to prepare the pool before we started tiling." A great deal of cut work was needed because of the amount of detail work requested by the owners.

The hot tub also presented challenges, as Rob explained. "The water falls into gutters and grates all at the same rate. A lot of grinding, patching, filling and mathematics were required to get everything at the correct angle and at the right pitches to bring it all together." Plouto's had to supply all the grates for the hot tub from a company in Europe, and they all had to fit just right. Rob's crews tiled the tub first; then, when the grates arrived much later, they were installed them with special tile fittings, achieving a perfect fit.

For the saunas in the spa, Pluto's did tile work mostly on the floors. Workers came from Europe to install the cabins, which already contained some tile that had been installed with MAPEI products in Europe. Wherever they ran out of installation products, Pluto's crews finished the work for them, using the same MAPEI products supplied locally.

In the Orient room, there are massage rooms and hot mud rooms. The installers used *Kerabond/Keralastic* to tile floors and walls in these areas with marble. They also installed tile on the floors surrounding the Cold sauna, which operates at a temperature of minus 110 degrees. Marble was installed on the walls of the wellness treatment areas, the pool areas and all the changing rooms.

Thousands of square feet of glass mosaic were used throughout the spa and the rest of the resort. Pluto's crews used *Kerabond/Keralastic* to wrap the huge pillars near the pools in glass mosaics, plus install glass mosaics on the walls and columns in the common areas and rest rooms.

A wool Axminster carpet (custom-made in South Africa) was installed in all common areas using the double glue-down technique with MAPEI's *Ultrabond ECO 220*. All patterns and layout of the carpet were specific; the installers had to follow a colored and numbered map for the installations. "We only had to play with matching the edges a little bit," said Kormish. "There were some changes to the walls during the install, but due to the nature of the pattern, it all worked well." All resilient in the back office areas were sheet vinyl flooring from Armstrong. They were set with *Ultrabond ECO 711*. Carpet tiles in the back office area were installed with *Ultrabond ECO 810*.

Reflecting on the resort project, Kormish said, "I've been in the flooring business since 1976, and I have never been faced with a challenge of this scale and scope detail before, especially the saunas and pool areas. However, I think our crews did an exceptional job and brought real luxury to Sparkling Hill Resort."