



Take the PLUNGE

Find paradise at home with backyard pool or spa

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Swimming pools and spas are gaining momentum with local homeowners.

First, in this area, the weather is ideal for owning a pool or pool/spa combination.

Second, in today's slower-paced economy, residents are choosing to travel less and stay at home more.

The "staycation" — a vacation at home — is inspiring more homeowners to make their homes more recreational.

"We are hearing it all the time," said Bill Hanson, owner of Gulf Coast Pools & Spa in Pensacola. "Homeowners are taking staycations instead of vacations. Between the higher costs they are seeing from gasoline and everything in general, staying at home and relaxing for vacation seems to be the better choice."

That home recreation area can include a furnished patio, pool and spa.

"When you have a pool at home, and you have kids, you now longer have to look for a place to take the kids for

some summer fun," Hanson said. "Patios are now being set up so you have your barbecue grill, refrigerator, bar area and comfortable sofas, loveseats and chairs. People put stereo systems and television sets in their patio area. The kids or adults can get out of the pool and sit down to have a snack, rest and watch TV before getting back in the pool. Again, it's about having recreation at home instead of traveling to find it."

There are many choices for in-ground swimming pools.

PLAY OR SPORTS

A play pool typically is no deeper than 5 feet. Play pools generally are built for cooling off and relaxing. They are great for playing volleyball or other water sports. They can still be used for swimming laps as well.

FREEFORM

A freeform pool is a lagoon style pool or naturalistic pool. It usually has rock features and is built to mimic an oasis. Freeform pools are gaining popularity as they give you the feel of relaxing in nature.

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