

Understanding Moroccan Zellige

The Zellige tile collection from Villa Lagoon Tile brings an imperfect charm to any project. Unlike machined tile, these exquisite Zellige and Bejmat tiles are crafted entirely by hand in a time-honored method of tile-making designed to celebrate the natural beauty of the clay.



The art and craft of tile making in Morocco dates back to the 12th century and has been passed down through generations by master craftsmen called maâlems. The handmade nature of zellige tiles means that each tile is unique, with slight variations in color, texture, and shape. The process is time-consuming and requires skilled artisans with a deep understanding of the craft. As a result, zellige tiles have a distinct and timeless aesthetic that reflects the rich cultural heritage of Morocco.



How they're made.

- Made from the local clays in and near Fes, Morocco.
- Molded by hand and dried in the sun.
- Fired in kilns fueled by olive pits and wood shavings to harden the clay.
- Colored glaze applied by hand.
- Kiln fired again to set the enamel.
- Chiseled to desired shape if needed.





What to Expect

The Timeless Appeal of Handmade Moroccan Zellige.

Read below for an overview of what can be expected from one of the worlds oldest design crafts.

 Hand-crafted characteristic to love.

 Tips and suggestions to address common zellige characteristic.

- **Premium Pricing**  Each piece of zellige has come a long distance and is crafted by the hands of a Moroccan artisan. The process is seasonal, relying on the long sunny summer days to dry the clay so production can be limited. In an effort to provide fair trade and support an ancient craft, our tile is priced higher than those that come from a machine in a factory.
- **Pits, chips, and hairline cracks (known as crazing) are all to be expected from this rustic hand chiseled tile.**

- Pits happen. Tiny pebbles in the clay can expand and contract near the surface causing pits within the first few months of being made. Most are sorted out before being packed but some may not be found until they have traveled and popped through the glaze. There should only be a small amount of pitted tiles in your order and culling these out is the best solution.



- To reduce the visibility of chipped edges and corners, it is recommended to set and grout the tiles as closely together as possible.
- For a more uniform appearance, consider ordering a 15%-20% overage.
- Matching the grout as closely as possible to the tile color can help minimize the appearance of chips and crazing.



- **Sharp and uneven edges.**



Use caution while handling zellige. Lightly sanding edges and corners will help with installation and future cleaning.

- **Broken Tile** This hand-crafted tile has traveled a long distance to get to you and until set, can be quit fragile.




- Order overage. With any tile project, you should order extra tile for cutting or accidents, zellige is no exception.
- Single tiles on a mesh may be easily swapped from a donor mat.
- Consider using broken tiles as cut pieces if possible.

- **Tile maker's marking, usually in yellow or red, to indicate where to chisel.** 



Easily wipes away with a damp cloth.

- **Wavy, dimpled, or uneven face.** 

- **Variations in sheen and glaze thickness.** 

- **Color variation and saturation.** 



Pull tile and mix from all boxes to create a harmonious blend.



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