

LUXURY TOILETS

GIVE NEW MEANING

TO THE TERM

“THRONE”

By Natalie Eddy
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Today's luxury toilets offer amenities that our great-grandparents, who sat in outhouses with the Montgomery Wards catalogue, would never have fathomed. In fact, these toilets give new meaning to the term “throne.”

The dazzling array of features available include such amenities as wireless control panels, heated seats with massage options, water jets and blow dryers with a whole host of nozzle directions and temperature settings, germ resistant surfaces, ozone deodorizers, and much more. One toilet design, affectionately known as the marriage saver, has a built-in sensor that will automatically open or close the lid as the user approaches and exits.

Smart Toilets

The Japanese, the leading producer of high-tech gadgets, also seem to be the leader in toilet innovations. Several companies manu-

facture luxury toilets today including Inax and Matsushita Electric Industrial. Taking the cake, though, is Toto's Neorest, which offers oscillating and pulsating spray massage, a heated seat, and a warm air dryer.

The Neorest 650, billed as “the first toilet of the 21st century,” also offers a nightlight in the lid, a computer technology wall panel featuring a deodorizer that automatically starts, and music or white noise when the need arises. It uses activated oxygen (ozone) to break the molecular bonds of odor, according to Lenora Campos, public relations manager for Toto USA, Inc.

“Often times when individuals are experiencing gastrointestinal upset, the body emits noises that are embarrassing. This enables the individual to mask those noises by using the sound of waves crashing on the beach or a babbling brook,” Campos says. “Previously, people would flush the toilet or turn on the

lavatory faucet in an effort to create a space of privacy and enable the individual to conserve their dignity.”

And if you're worrying about these smart toilets' effects on the environment, sit back and relax because Campos says they are highly sustainable products. The tankless Neorest toilet conserves water, offering 1.2-gallons per flush for regular flush mode or 1.6-gallons per flush for full-flush mode.

Campos points out that with the built-in cleansing and drying system, there is no need for a paper product. She adds that the toilets could have a “great impact on sustainability because America uses approximately 3.2 million tons of [toilet] paper annually.”

That's equal to 54 million trees or one to one-and-a-half pounds of wood for each roll. “If you remove paper, you free up the forest to do its job of reducing greenhouse gas,

and less paper also has an impact on wastewater reclamation systems,” Campos says, adding that it is also more hygienic. “You wouldn't consider anything clean that you just rub dry paper over.”

Plus, she says the Neorest has the capability of recognizing users' patterns and will power down during a period of less or no use.

You might be saying to yourself, this toilet can do everything but clean itself. Well, it can even do that. The Neorest has a self-cleaning mode that produces a one-minute cleaning cycle called the “cyclone rim scouring motion.”

All of this luxury comes at a price. The cost of the Neorest, and other similar smart toilets, runs between \$5,000 to \$6,000. Currently, 2.7 million of Toto's advanced toilets are sold annually in Japan. Although the American market is not up to that level, Campos says, “Demand is growing rapidly.”

Paging Dr. Toilet

After all of this, you might think there is no room for advancement, but toilet technology is ever expanding. “We have more than 1,500 design engineers on staff, constantly innovating,” Campos says.

Toto and other competing manufacturers currently are developing medical sensors for toilets although Campos could not discuss the details on Toto's behalf. An entry on Wikipedia states that these new medical toilets have the capability to measure blood sugar based on urine and can measure the pulse, blood pressure, and body fat of the user. The data from the user may then be sent automatically to the doctor with a built-in cell phone.

And talking toilets are also in the offing. These toilets, equipped

with microchips, will actually greet each user with a personalized message and respond to verbal commands, such as hotter water or less spray pressure.

Although these smart toilets may already seem like George Jetson bathrooms of the future to many here in America, technology will likely keep marching on. Our great-grandparents would be amazed.

More Information

Please note that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has issued warnings about the use of ozone generators as air purifiers or odor-control devices, especially in confined spaces. See www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/ozonegen.html for more information.

To learn more about smart toilets, check out these resources:

Bednarz, Ann. “High-tech Toilets are lighted, Play Music and Test Your Vital Signs,” *Network World*, November 19, 2007. Accessed January 5, 2010, at www.networkworld.com/news/2007/11/1907-toilet-wider-net.html.

Brooke, James. “Nara Journal; Japanese Masters Get Closer to the Toilet Nirvana,” *The New York Times*, October 8, 2002. Accessed December 14, 2009, at www.nytimes.com/2002/10/08/world/nara-journal-japanese-masters-get-closer-to-the-toilet-nirvana.html?scp=1&sq=Japanese%20Masters%20Get%20Closer%20to%20the%20Toilet%20Nirvana&st=cse.

Hall, Kenji, and Tashiro, Hiroko. “Japan's Royal Thrones,” *Business Week*. Accessed December 15, 2009, at images.businessweek.com/ss/06/12/1230_smarttoilet/ind_ex_01.htm

“Toilets in Japan.” Accessed November 2, 2009 at www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toilets_in_Japan.

Cashmere Toilet Paper

If you've shelled out several thousand dollars for a top-of-the-line toilet, you'll undoubtedly want to have the best toilet paper in the holder nearby. If so, check out the cashmere toilet paper available at Waitrose, a British supermarket.

“Cashmere provides that stamp of quality to any fashion garment, from a designer suit to the finest luxury knitwear,” says Carla Smith, a Waitrose buyer. “It's indulgent, it's stylish and it's helping provide that extra softness to our new premium bathroom tissue collection.”

A four-pack of the product retails for about \$3.60, while a nine-roll pack will set you back \$7.50.