

Can travertine tile be stained to a darker, concrete-like color?

Q. I recently moved into a home built in 1980 that has travertine tiles in all of the common rooms of the house including the bathrooms. It is a beautiful stone, but I personally hate it. It is just too much beige, and I also feel it dates the home. I researched online and found some information saying that yes you can stain travertine darker, however I have not found any specific advice, much less before and after pics.

Here is what I have tried so far (on a test area): From a home supply store, I bought a can of stripper. The can says it can be used for masonry. I applied it (it is a foam spray) and removed it as instructed. It did not appear to make much difference other than make the already dull stone more dull.

I then tried applying a dark wood stain. This was a recommendation I came across online. It basically just sat on the stone and wiped off completely even when "dry" without barely leaving a trace.

I then tried using a concrete stain, which I used to stain a concrete floor I refinished, however I had the same result.

Finally I busted out my circular sander and sanded the test area, thinking that surely would remove any residue or seal. That did not work.

My goal is to make this very common beige travertine a medium-dark grey color, mimicking the bedroom polished concrete floors I completed. Am I perhaps not using the proper stripper? Or am I maybe not using the proper stain? If anyone has any specific product recommendations that would be amazing too. Any help would be GREATLY appreciated.

A. It's completely understandable to feel stuck here. Travertine is gorgeous to many people, but if you're not a beige-lover, living with it everywhere can feel suffocating. As I read your question, I imagine the disappointment you must feel after trying multiple products, sanding, stripping, and getting absolutely no visual change.

Travertine is a calcium-based stone (a form of limestone), and that matters. It isn't a "blank canvas" like raw concrete. Travertine may have holes or those holes may be filled. It's almost always honed or polished during the tile manufacturing process, and it is often sealed, as well. That means stains, such as those you are attempting to use, may tend to sit on top rather than penetrate.

Most off-the-shelf strippers will have little affect if there is no topical finish to remove.

So your results are exactly what pros would expect. Nothing absorbs. Nothing darkens. Nothing sticks.

You can deepen the tone of travertine a little, but you cannot reliably re-color it to a medium-dark grey. Travertine doesn't accept pigment-based stains the way concrete does. Chemical stains that work on cement simply do not react with calcium carbonate stone. The most you can achieve with color-change products is a warm deepening of the natural beige, not a complete shift into cool greys. That's why you aren't finding before/after photos.

NOTE: If you darken filled travertine, the fillers often stay lighter, creating contrast you may not have expected.

To answer your questions, strippers aren't the issue, and neither are your stains. The limitation is the mineral composition of the stone. Even sanding won't unlock more porosity because travertine is soft. Sanding just roughens the surface without changing the stone's fundamental structure. The fillers remain, the color remains, and pigment still won't migrate into the stone itself.

If you're still curious about darkening, a pro-level enhancing sealer such as a solvent-based color enhancer can show you the maximum realistic darkening travertine can take. Testing in an inconspicuous spot will tell you within seconds whether the look is anywhere close to what you want. If the look still isn't right, that's your clear signal to stop spending money on chemicals and start planning a different solution. You might consider covering your travertine with LVP, tile, or engineered wood or replacing your existing flooring with concrete, like the floor you've already refinished.

Because the risk of etching, blotching, or permanently damaging the stone is high, we highly recommend you consult with a stone restoration professional. A pro already knows exactly what travertine can and can't do, and they won't waste time trying to make the stone behave in ways it simply won't.

To find a vetted PRO in your area, visit www.surfacecarepros.com and click on **Find a PRO**.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR Fred Hueston is the Chief Technical Director at SurfaceCarePROS.com and Director at StoneForensics.com. He is also the author of [Stone and Tile Restoration: The Manual](#), a comprehensive online manual for stone and tile restoration contractors. [[Learn more about Fred.](#)]

Online URL:

<https://surfacecarepros.com/kb/article/can-travertine-tile-be-stained-to-a-darker-concrete-like-color-835.html>