Planning a Faux Rock Waterfall Beside a Pool in Hot Springs

A faux rock waterfall beside a swimming pool can turn an ordinary deck into a more complete outdoor space. It adds movement, sound, and a natural-looking edge without the weight and irregularity of hauling in large boulders. The best results come from planning the feature as part of the pool area, not as an ornament dropped beside it. In Hot Springs, where outdoor living spaces are used in warm weather, the layout, drainage, and finish all matter.

Gonzalez Rams Concrete is a Hot Springs, AR concrete contractor that builds and repairs pool decks, retaining walls, outdoor living features such as outdoor kitchens and fire pits, and faux rock waterfalls and grottos. That range matters because a waterfall next to a pool touches several surfaces at once: the deck, the basin, nearby walls, and the route water takes back into circulation.

Start with the space around the pool

Begin by looking at where the waterfall can sit without crowding the pool or creating a trip zone. Leave enough room for people to walk around the water, open gates, pull up chairs, and use any pool slide that may already be part of the layout. A waterfall is most convincing when it reads as a built part of the landscape, but it still needs clear access for cleaning and repairs.

Pay attention to the slope of the deck and yard. Water from a waterfall will splash, and some Overflow is normal. The surrounding surface should shed water away from the pool edge and away from places where it can pool against a wall. If the feature sits beside a raised deck or retaining wall, drainage becomes even more important. A poorly planned basin can send water toward the house, the pool equipment, or a neighboring boundary.

View the location on Google Maps

Think about the view from several places: from the pool, from the house, and from the entry to the yard. A rock feature that looks good head-on may look thin from the side. Give it enough depth that it feels grounded, and place the tallest point where it adds shape without blocking sightlines. If a grotto is part of the idea, plan how people will move around it and whether it needs open space for seating or storage.

Decide how the water will move

A waterfall needs a dependable path from the upper point to the basin and then back into circulation. The upper area holds water, the spill edge sends it down the rock face, and the waterfall basin catches it. From there, a pump and hidden lines move water back up. The

feature should be designed so the pump can be reached without dismantling the whole rock structure.

Water circulation should be steady enough to keep the falling sheet smooth and the basin from overflowing. Too much flow can splash onto the deck and waste water. Too little flow can leave sections of the rock dry or allow debris to collect. The shape of the spill edge has a large effect on the look: a broad, even lip gives a sheet-like fall, while an uneven lip creates separate streams. Both can work, but each changes how much splash to expect.



Ask how the basin connects to the pool system and whether the feature will use its own loop. That detail affects maintenance, water loss, and how the waterfall behaves when the pool is running. For custom backyard water features, this is the stage where practical plumbing decisions should be made before the rock shape is fixed. It is much easier to hide a service point during construction than to add one after the surface coating has cured.

Shape the faux rock so it belongs

Faux rock works well because it can be formed around the exact space beside the pool. The shape should follow the setting rather than compete with it. A low, wide waterfall suits a long

pool wall. A taller stack of rock can work where there is room behind it and the feature will be seen from a distance. Avoid a shape with too many repeated bumps, which can look manufactured once it is in place.

Color is part of the plan, not a last-minute choice. Rock that matches the deck tone can create a calm look, while a contrasting tone can make the waterfall a focal point. The surface coating should suit the surrounding materials and hold up to constant wetting, sun, and pool chemicals. A finish that looks good on a dry sample can behave differently when water runs over it every day.

Texture also affects safety and cleaning. Very rough rock can feel natural but may be uncomfortable if people brush against it. Deep crevices can trap leaves and algae. A good design keeps the visual detail where it can be seen and avoids unnecessary pockets where debris settles. If children will be near the feature, consider edges and corners carefully, especially around the basin.

Plan for waterproofing and structure

Water features fail most often at the places people cannot see. The basin needs reliable waterproofing, and penetrations for pipes need to be sealed correctly. The upper water reservoir also needs to hold water without leaking into the rock shell or behind nearby walls. Once faux rock is applied, a small leak can be difficult to trace.

Structural cracking is another point to watch. Movement in a pool deck, retaining wall, or adjoining slab can carry into the waterfall base. If the rock shell is tied too rigidly to a surface that moves, cracks may appear around the basin or spill area. The plan should account for joints and transitions so the feature can tolerate normal movement without breaking the finish.

Any work involving electrical supply, pump wiring, or changes to pool equipment should be left to a qualified professional. Signs of trouble include breaker trips, unusual buzzing, damp equipment areas, water where it should not be, or a pump that runs but produces weak flow. Do not open sealed equipment, bypass safety devices, or work on wiring while it is energized. A professional can test the system safely and confirm that the waterfall is connected correctly.

Set the edge, height, and sound

The height of the waterfall changes both the look and the sound. A short drop gives a gentle trickle that suits a quiet pool setting. A taller drop creates more splash and a more noticeable sound, which can be pleasant near a seating area but tiring if it is close to a bedroom window. Since sound carries differently across water and hard decking, stand in the main sitting areas when deciding the drop and flow.



The basin should be large enough to catch the falling water without throwing it onto the deck. Its rim can be partly hidden by rock, but it still needs an accessible cleanout point. Leaves, insects, and fine dust will collect there. A basin that is difficult to reach will be cleaned less often, and that can affect both appearance and water quality.

Splash control can be built into the shape. A slightly recessed spill point keeps water closer to the rock face. A shelf or ledge can break the fall before it reaches the basin. The goal is not to remove all movement, since a still waterfall looks artificial, but to keep the water where it belongs.

Coordinate the sequence of work

A waterfall beside a pool should be planned with the surrounding construction sequence in mind. If a new pool deck is being installed, decide where the feature will tie in before the deck is finished. If a retaining wall is involved, check how the waterfall base meets it. These connections affect both appearance and long-term performance.

Keep the main decisions in order so one trade does not block another. The general sequence usually looks like this:

1. Confirm the location, clearances, and drainage path.
2. Set the basin, plumbing routes, pump access, and overflow plan.
3. Build the structural base and address joints or transitions.
4. Shape the faux rock, spill edge, and surface coating.
5. Check flow, splash, and access before final finishing around the deck.

At each stage, check that the next stage is still possible. If rock is shaped before plumbing access is confirmed, a cleanout may end up buried. If the deck is poured before the basin edge is set, the transition may look awkward. Good planning keeps those problems small and easy to correct.

Ask the right questions before work begins

Before committing to a design, ask how the feature will be serviced, what areas will be disturbed, and how the finished rock will connect to the pool deck. Ask about the point where water returns to the pool system and what should be checked if flow changes. For custom backyard water features, clear answers about access and drainage are more useful than a rough sketch alone.

It is also wise to ask which parts of the surrounding area are included in the work. A waterfall may affect a pool deck, retaining wall, or nearby outdoor living features. Knowing the scope early helps avoid gaps at the edges of the project. If a grotto or pool slide is part of the same space, discuss clearances before rock shape and height are locked in.

Do not rely on visuals alone. A feature can look natural and still create maintenance problems if the basin is too small, the pump is hard to reach, or water runs toward the deck. Walk through the practical details first, then refine the rock color, texture, and placement. That order leads to a waterfall that looks relaxed because the parts behind it were planned carefully.



Make the final plan understandable

A written plan should cover location, flow path, basin, waterproofing, access, finish, and nearby surfaces. It does not need to be overly technical, but it should be clear enough that everyone knows what is being built. Mark the high point, the fall line, the basin, and the service access. Note where water should go during heavy rain or overflow.

Check the plan against daily use. Can people walk past with wet feet? Will chairs fit? Will the sound be welcome? Can leaves be removed without stepping into the pool? These ordinary questions often decide whether the feature feels like a useful part of the yard or an obstacle beside it.

Gonzalez Rams Concrete is a Hot Springs, AR concrete contractor that builds and repairs driveways, patios, pool decks, retaining walls, outdoor living features such as outdoor kitchens and fire pits, and faux rock waterfalls and grottos. For details on scheduling, scope, or what a project includes, ask Gonzalez Rams Concrete directly at 207 Albert Pike Rd Suite A, Hot Springs, AR 71913, USA or +1 501-359-6868.