

## RESIDENTIAL GARAGE DOORS:

### North America versus Europe

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Photo courtesy of Novoferm

The vast majority—if not to say practically all—of the residential garage doors used in North America are the sectional type. Panel heights vary, ranging from 18 to 24 inches (46 to 61 cm). These garage doors are also frequently equipped with an automatic garage door opener.

In Europe, it's a bit different. Besides sectional doors—which aren't the most commonly used—you'll also find single-panel up-and-over doors, rolling doors, and side-sliding sectional doors.

The metric system is used to calculate garage door sizes everywhere in Europe except in the United Kingdom. So a single garage door that measures 2.4 x 2.1 meters is equivalent to an 8' x 7' door in North America. In Great Britain, the standard for a single door is 7' x 7'.



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### Single-panel garage doors

The single-panel door was very common in Canada and the U.S. during the 1950s and 1960s. These doors are made in a single piece, secured by a sturdy steel frame. As they open, the swing arc may extend slightly outside the garage or remain completely inside. The lift mechanism, which employs extension springs, is located on each side of the door.

If you're familiar with residential construction in Europe, you know that concrete is widely used, versus wood frame construction in North America. That's why the single-panel garage door is so popular in Europe: it can be installed very quickly. It's a simple matter of attaching four bolts to the concrete doorframe, doing a little refinishing, and you're done! However, to transport the full system, it's necessary to have a truck equipped with a cherry picker.

One of the reasons this type of door system has virtually disappeared in North America is its impracticality during the winter. Since the door swings partially outward, the snow must be cleared away from in front of it before it can be opened, making the process rather unpleasant. On the other hand, if a door swings completely inside the garage, more space must be left between the vehicle and the door.



Photo courtesy of Groupe Saffir

## Rolling garage doors

While we do see rolling slat doors in North America, they are generally used in commercial rather than residential buildings. These doors are made of strips of aluminum, PVC, or, sometimes, steel, and they roll up above the garage door header. The strips can be of varying heights, but are generally around 10 cm (4").

In addition to rolling doors' requiring more clearance above the header in order to roll up, the choice of designs also limits their use. Unless a fresco worthy of Michelangelo is painted on them, the available styles are rather simple in comparison with sectional doors, which can be manufactured in a variety of designs.

Photo courtesy of Groupe Sifir



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## Side-sliding sectional doors

As the name implies, this type of garage door opens laterally from one side of the garage. The door functions by sliding along one rail installed on the sidewall and another rail attached to the floor. The door can be easily motorized.

Besides the purchase price, the practical considerations are also less attractive to those who live in places where there's snow on the ground during several months of the year. In order to prevent the floor rail from icing up, a heating cable must be installed, which nudges the price upward.

## The bottom line

Which door is more expensive: European or North American? Because of additional safety features and regulations related to garage door operation, the guarantees offered to homeowners, and slightly higher labor costs, an installed sectional garage door generally costs about twice as much in Europe as it does in North America.

The next time you're tempted to complain about garage doors in North America, remember that it could be worse. Here we have fewer types of doors to learn, and the installed cost is more affordable for the customer. ■



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