



[History of Sanitas per Aqua](#)

The oldest known spa (mineral bath) still in existence is in Merano Italy where there is evidence of organized use of the spring dating back 5000 years ago. It's quite possible wandering humanoids soaked their tired feet in the steaming pools of ancient geysers even earlier than 5000 years ago.

It is thought that the Egyptians used baths for therapeutic purposes as early as 2000 B.C. (not to be confused with "Before Chlorine") . Evidence of actual spa construction also exists from Phraortes, King of Media, in 600 B.C. The earliest forms of hot tubs were simply a caldera in which sizzling stones had been placed to heat the water.

From a very early time our ancestors enjoyed the benefits of natural hot water springs and hydrotherapy was born.

The Greeks:

Mineral and thermal baths showed up later in history around 500 B.C. in Greece. The early Greek baths were built near natural hot springs or volcanoes. Greek celebrities and the elite would meet at these natural hot springs to exchange philosophical views and treat physical ailments. Plato considered anyone who did not know how to swim as uneducated. Hippocrates (460-375 BC), believed to be the founder of medicine, recommended hydrotherapy for the treatment of disorders such as jaundice and rheumatism.

The Romans:

The Romans also enjoyed the mineral waters, but the ancient Roman baths were more recreational areas used by hundreds of citizens at a time as opposed personal hygiene and aquatic therapy. Stone bath tubs were serviced by elaborate aqueduct systems carrying mineral waters throughout complex private rooms, steam rooms and public baths. The largest of all Roman baths was the Diocletian. It was completed in A.D. 305 and covered an area of 130,000 sq. yards.

Romans would first go to the unctuarium where they had oil rubbed onto their skin. Next they would move to the tepidarium or warm room where they would lie around chatting. From there, it was on to the hot and steamy caldarium, similar to a Turkish bath. Here they sat and perspired, scraping their skin with a curved metal tool know as a strigil. After a dip in the caldarium (hot bath) they would take a quick dip in the frigidarium (cold bath).

During the fall of the Roman Empire, many of the bath resorts were destroyed. Many of the baths were revived during the Middle Ages, but declined in use due to poor hygienic conditions and the spread of infectious diseases.

The Spa:

Once part of the Roman Empire (now east of Belgium), the town of Spa is where the word "spa" was derived. To this day, the town is still a well known resort for baths and mineral springs. The word "spa" (originally Hungarian) became a generic expression referring to natural mineral springs and surrounding areas where people came to relax and take "The Cure".



The British:

The waters of Bath, England were used for healing purposes from about 800 B.C. and the British royalty continued to use the waters well into the 20th century. Around 1589 according to historians, Queen Elizabeth I insisted on bathing at least once a month, "whether she needed it or not". Five baths were established within the town including the King's Bath and Cross Bath which became a popular spa with lepers and rheumatics.

The waters of Bath are 120 degrees Fahrenheit, generate over one million gallons of mineral water per day and contain over thirty elements including calcium, sulfur, potassium and magnesium. One interesting fact is that the water has a slight radioactive background reading.

The Japanese:

A family custom for centuries in Japan is the "ofuro" or hot water bathing in freestanding wooden tubs. Occupational forces brought the knowledge of this custom back home with them after World War II.

The United States:

Native Americans enjoyed the health benefits of natural springs even before European settlers arrived in the New World. In many instances, these natural springs were used for magical and religious purposes as well as hygienic. One of the oldest spas in North American colonies is believed to have been in Berkeley Springs (later known as Warm Springs) of West Virginia.

One of the most popular of the early colonial springs for hydrotherapy was Saratoga Springs in New York. It was carefully guarded by settlers until 1767, when according to legend, Iroquois people helped Sir William Johnson recover from illness by recommending the "medicine spring of the Great Spirit". Johnson attracted more visitors seeking remedies from illness with his tales of recovery including George Washington, Alexander Hamilton and General Philip Schuyler.

The post-revolutionary "floating swimming bath" or "swimming cribs" was introduced in 1791 in Philadelphia PA. These water therapy inventions of canvas and wood were staked into a river or lake bottom and sometimes tethered to a shore.

In 1915, the general public became aware of pools and spas as a way of life when Francis X. Bushman installed the first in Hollywood. By 1925, swimming pool construction began to emerge as an industry with Pascal Paddock known as the father of the industry.

As a footnote to the history of the hot tub and water therapy, Franklin D. Roosevelt received therapeutic baths and muscle treatments for his debilitating pain of polio during his administration from 1933-1945. He made Warm Spring, Co., his "little White House" and dedicated the treatment facility to others with disabilities.

The Emergence of the Hot Tub:

The first wooden hot tubs began to appear in the 1960's in California. Inspired by the Japanese ofuro, these early prototypes were still made from used oak barrels, wine tanks and olive vats from nearby wineries. Redwood hot tubs then began to appear, but often



leaked and were difficult to keep clean. These tubs lacked effervescence and bubbles.

Since pool contractors had been making in-ground concrete spas for years, the demand for an alternative led to the invention of the lightweight formed shell which is the basis for acrylic spas we know today.

The Jacuzzi:

In 1954, an Italian family of seven brothers lead by Joseph Jacuzzi developed and patented a portable whirlpool pump out of necessity for an ailing relative suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. The pump was later refined and coupled with jets using an air injection system that produced a froth of bubbles. This air-water mixture proved to be highly therapeutic and this invention spawned an industry that made Jacuzzi a household name.

The rest is history.

