History of Spa's

Nowadays, the word "spa" covers any bath or spring that provides relaxation, rejuvenation and positive, therapeutic health benefits. The name originated in Belgium around the early 14th century where a town called Spa has a famous mineral spring that has long been known to offer medicinal healing. The word "SPA" is an acronym for the Latin phrase "Solus Per Aqua", meaning "Health Via Water". It refers to the concept of immersing the body in water to maintain and restore health. After the soldiers were bruised and sore from battle, they would return in search of these healing waters and soaked in hot springs or man made tubs. Spa was founded as a town because it had the best mineral springs for the job and soon became famous all over the globe. A Roman known as Emperor Agrippa designed the "thermae", which was the first known spa built on a larger scale. Each emperor thereafter sought to have a bigger and better spa built than the one before them and the designs became more excessively elaborate over time. While those close to the emperor would be invited to meet in the thermae, others would travel to Spa for the mineral springs or use their own make shift versions. From Belgium, the word of healing waters traveled to Europe and the concept was mimicked with the use of mineral water, ocean minerals and ocean water. These "Health Spas" started to offer other healing remedies such as massage, body treatments and beauty therapies. Spas began to be known as not only a healing experience, but one of relaxation and rejuvenation. The focus broadened even further to include sporting grounds, fine dining, natural health treatment centers and, sometimes, an escort service or brothel. Those of Asian decent have practiced using hot water for healing for centuries and herbal baths are an integral part of traditional Chinese medicine. Soaking in freestanding tubs filled with very warm water is known to relax, rejuvenate and refresh and is prescribed for a wide range of health issues and stresses. Herbs could be added to enhance the experience, such as Ginseng for revitalization and circulation or chamomile for relaxation. Bath in England is world famous for a similar health ritual. However, they dipped in warm water, followed by very cold "frigidarium" depths. Those who visited Bath for this purpose would commonly begin with a vigorous exercise routine, then visit the baths and afterwards retire to the extensive library for relaxation and reading. It wasn't until the 18th century that these hot water soaking services became popular in America. Native American Indians most probably used High Rock Spring, NY originally for bathing and many historical figures have been known to travel there in search of health and healing. Health spa resorts such as Gregson, Montana and Mt Princeton, Colorado were modeled after the most renowned European examples and originally aimed to draw in only very wealthy clientele. Along with the well known healing benefits of spas, it began to be seen as an anti-aging avenue. Some time in the late 1950's, wooden hot tubs became available for private home instillations. This is the first known endeavor to create the spa resort atmosphere in individual homes and the majority were crafted for California residents. These original home hot tubs were by no means popular and it wasn't until the sixties that "chilling out" became a more regular practice. Hot tubs began to pop up in homes all over the country and the majority were homemade. Although they were seriously lacking in any knowledge of how to sanitize and circulate the water, some designers were creative and innovated features that have been perfected for use today. The most common material used was red wood, often sourced from old wine barrels. This material is prohibited in spas now due to its toxic and bacteria breeding properties! A major issue with the wooden hot tubs was leakage. No matter how perfect the fittings and fixtures, they would eventually start to leak over time. By 1970, new health spa materials began to be marketed and fiberglass shells were the first to be retailed. After a few years an acrylic version was produced and began to overtake the market. These acrylic home spas were attractive, simple to keep clean and available to anyone on a moderately high income. The majority of the portable health spa design was copied off backyard pools with a few air jets and a nice wooden edging added on the outside. In today's home spa market, you will find complete personal hydrotherapy units that have come a long way since the Romans. These home spas feature electronic control pads, automatic filtration pumps, molded comfort seating, underwater lights and even built-in music systems. Home spas are now designed by skilled engineers who remain focused on achieving higher comfort and quality, more attractive designs and better performance at a lower cost and energy usage. Blessed are those who can experience the luxury of a home spa experience at their leisure! Many people are of the misconception that buying a health spa would cost an arm or a leg, but this is no longer the case. You can even buy home spa machines that turn your every day bathtub into a health spa experience!

About the Author

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