

HOT TUB SPA BUYER'S GUIDE

Buying a Hot Tub Spa can be a daunting and sometimes confusing experience, with different manufacturers naturally claiming their spa is the best, the following information is provided to help give you a clearer understanding of what to look for from your chosen supplier and things to consider before deciding on a particular model and specification.

What is the difference between a Spa, Hot Tub and Jacuzzi?

"SPAS" The majority of spas are currently made by vacuum forming an acrylic inner shell and then reinforcing this with a specially bonded fibreglass backing, this is the most common form of construction and the better manufacturers will guarantee the interior shell for up to 7 years. [To see how an Artesian Spa is made please click here.](#)

There are also rotational moulded spas made from Polypropylene based polymers, this produces a lower cost spa but does not have the high gloss finish or colour range of acrylic shells.

The origin of the word "Spa" is actually an acronym originating from battle weary, Roman legionnaires who built baths at the site of natural hot springs to heal their aching bodies. They named these bathing treatments "Sanus Per Aquam" (SPA) which translates as; "health through water."

"HOT TUBS" are a Californian invention from the "swinging sixties" and were based on a variation of the Japanese "Ofuro" bathing tubs, being made from big old wine barrels and attached to a wood burning water boiler, they were a cheap way of creating a large steamy recreational bath for people to share.

Hot Tubs made from wood are still manufactured by specialist companies today, albeit a little more sophisticated than their predecessors, they usually have an internal liner and may have some hydro-therapy jets, or simple air injectors, but do not have the contoured seating that modern spas offer.

"JACUZZI" has almost become a generic name for Spas, as with "HOOVER" for vacuum cleaners. However, **Jacuzzi®** is a company that manufactures "whirlpool baths" and spas and is a protected trade mark.

Please Note: whilst many people refer to hot tubs, or spas, as jacuzzis this is not legally correct, **Jacuzzi®** is a registered trademark of Jacuzzi Inc. a U.S. based company who manufacture Hot Tub Spas and whirlpool baths (amongst other things).

We do not sell **JACUZZI** products in the Algarve, Portugal, or have any association with Jacuzzi Inc.

These days "Spa" and "Hot Tub" are used interchangeably to describe a hydrotherapy bath that has heated and pumped water flow, directed through jets, with contoured seating.

Where are you going to position your spa?

You will need a firm, flat base (ideally a concrete pad about 15cm thick) on which to site the hot tub and a surrounding surface that will minimise the likelihood of dirt & grit getting in your spa, such as decking or a tiled terrace.

Measure the maximum size that you could fit in the location you have chosen, bearing in mind issues like, privacy, view from the tub and accessibility of a power supply. The water supply location is not usually a problem as a hose pipe can be used to fill your spa and this will only usually need to be done 3 or 4 times a year.

Lay out a garden hose or string to define the perimeter of your tub and think how you would like to develop the area.

[We can do all this for you with a FREE site survey and can even construct your perfect spa area.](#)

Is the spa for bubbles and fun, for serious therapy or both?

Different spa models have varying jet configurations and equipment performance.

If you are just looking for a "fun tub" then a spa with just one pump and 20 jets may be perfect.

However, if serious therapy is what you are looking for then a model with a minimum of 2 pumps and at least 40 hydrotherapy jets is more likely to suit you.

[We have six different ranges of Spas in many different shapes and sizes to suit all requirements.](#)

What should I look for in the company selling me my Spa?

Does the company have a dedicated Spa showroom with a range of products to choose from?

Do they have a private wet test area where you can try out the spa?

Are they well established and reputable?

Do they have factory trained service engineers and water care professionals?

A good number of companies sell spas as a side line and are not really knowledgeable about the workings or servicing of their product, they offer no real in house warranty or backup service and while competition is healthy for business, it can be disastrous for the uninformed consumer.

Watch out for companies that offer you incredible prices and then forget you ever existed once you have made your purchase!

[We have a dedicated showroom with a private wet test area and have been supplying and servicing spas on the Algarve for over 5 years, with the only BISHTA trained Spa Water Care Technicians in Portugal.](#)

Delivery and installation!

Check that the purchase price includes delivery, installation and water care training, some companies quote only for “kerbside” delivery and leave you to sort out final positioning and how to operate your new spa.

PLEASE NOTE: You will have to employ a qualified electrician to make the final electrical connections and also install a weatherproof, exterior isolator switch about 2 metres from your spa - the supply should be protected with a 30mA RCD (Interruptor Diferencial in Portugal)

Sometimes access problems mean that you may require a mobile crane to get your spa into position, change its location in the future, or, take it with you if you move house, don't worry we can arrange this for you and it's not as expensive as you may think.

Some of our spas are designed to fit through standard doorways, so delivery is quick, easy and FREE, as the spa can be lifted manually into position. We also have specialist spa moving equipment so that we usually do not need a crane, however, if you do need one we can arrange this on your behalf.

When we deliver your new Hot Tub we will show you the simple to follow water care routines and operational features of your new spa, we will not leave until you are 100% happy and we will re-visit when you need to change the water or if you need reassurance in the early days.

Is your Power Supply adequate?

Unfortunately, in The Algarve, the power supply for some older homes is quite low and some larger spas require anything up to 32 amps to operate correctly.

We will be able to tell you exactly what power rating you can dedicate to your Hot Tub Spa with a quick (Free and No Obligation) survey.

Our range of Hot Tubs and Spas include some that can simply be "Plug & Play" (13 amps).

How much does a spa cost to run?

This is a bit like asking “How long is a piece of string?” however, BISHTA (The British and Irish Hot Tub Association) state that the average 4 person spa in the U.K. costs approximately € 25.00 per month, this includes chemicals and energy costs (based on € 0.15 per KwH). Obviously factors such as the amount you use your hot tub, how well the spa is insulated and the average ambient temperature affect energy use - and with the Algarve being somewhat warmer than the U.K. you will probably find that running costs are significantly less than this.

Artesian Spas are extremely well insulated, both inside the cabinet and with a good quality rigid thermal top cover.

Do I leave it on all the time?

Yes! As long as you're not going away for a few months, good quality spas have extremely reliable electronic management systems, the best of these being manufactured by Balboa or Gecko, (look out for these names). They are capable of keeping the water temperature within 1 degree C of your chosen setting and use very little energy to maintain it, the majority of power is used in getting the water up to temperature when it is first filled.

If you go away or do not intend using the spa for a few days you can always lower the heat setting to save energy.

Only Balboa or Gecko control systems are used on Artesian Spas.

How do I keep the water clean?

Most spas have a cartridge filter that is made from pleated polyester fibre, (like a very large car oil filter) and this removes most visible particles. The water is also treated with small amounts of sanitising chemicals like Bromine or Chlorine, similar (but different) to swimming pool water, this kills any bacteria and viruses that could form in the spa.

The routines for spa water care are quite straightforward and with a little practice are easily done in a few minutes a day.

We not only give you thorough training on spa water care, we will also call and help you with water change and set up routines whenever you need us during your first 6 months of spa ownership – and of course we're only a phone call away for any advice you may need.

Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a measure of the reliability, professionalism and after-care the spa retailer provides, ask if they provide dedicated spa service, water care assistance and accessories.

We have many satisfied customers and are happy to provide testimonials if required. We also supply a range of eco-friendly water treatments, offer a spa care service plan and have a range of accessories to enhance your spa ownership experience.

Try before you buy...

Ideally you should be able to try a spa in a private “wet test” room, or at the very least get in a dry one to see how comfortable the seating and loungers are, you wouldn't buy a car without testing it for comfort and performance would you?

Contact us today for more details and to see for yourself what Good Life Spas can do!

We will arrange the most convenient way of trialling one of our spas either at our Showroom or your home!

Spa and Hot Tub Terminology Explained

Shell

This is the interior surface of your Spa, usually manufactured from reinforced acrylic and is available in many different colours and finishes, some are even treated with Microban® an anti-bacterial protection.

Cabinet

This is the exterior surround of your Spa and is available in several different colours and materials, Natural Wood, PermaWood® which is a synthetic wood finish and does not rot, warp, or splinter and Stone Effect panels which look spectacular.

Jets

Are positioned around the interior of the Spa and should vary in size and type, some will be directional, others fixed and some are designed to rotate. Different seats in the Spa should have varying jet configurations to provide a range of massage options, some better spas even include acupressure neck and foot jets.

Artesian Spas have patented Helix Jets that give a true rotary massage effect, you will not find them on any other spa.

Although a good number and type of jets are necessary for proper hydrotherapy do not be seduced by tubs with hundreds of jets, this does not guarantee a good spa, many of these jets will be air only and will offer very little massage effect and in most cases reduces the effectiveness of the overall experience, If you see a Spa like this it will probably have been made in China.

Therapy Pumps

Move water around your Hot Tub and through the jets to provide the hydrotherapy experience, entry point or fun spas will usually just have one Therapy Pump, with serious hydrotherapy spas having as many as five pumps.

Circulation Pumps

These are very low energy pumps that circulate the spa water through the filters and consequently give improved clarity and improved sanitation. Artesian's Platinum Elite and Island Spas ranges can be equipped with Circulation Pumps that only use 0.4amps and yet they move 113 litres of water every minute.

When this pump is programmed to operate 24/7, the water in a mid size spa is filtered over 100 times a day!

Air Blowers

Introduce air into the spa through small jets, they create bubbles and water movement but contribute very little hydrotherapy benefit. They are sometimes described as pumps on cheaper spas.

Ozone System

This generates Ozone which is a very powerful oxidiser and "burns off" organic waste products, this assists the sanitiser function but should not replace it. Ideally the Ozone should be pre mixed in a chamber prior to being introduced into the spa to ensure it is thoroughly absorbed by the water, such as the ProPure System available on Artesian's Platinum Elite and Island Spas.

Rigid Thermal Top Cover

The cover for your spa is very important as it prevents a significant proportion of the heat from escaping. They are made from large slabs of high density polystyrene foam wrapped in polythene and covered with a vinyl skin. Look at the quality of the cover carefully, is it well stitched? Do the handles look secure? Is it reinforced with steel (not aluminium) channels?

Insulation

Good quality spas incorporate either Part or Full Foam Insulation, this is high density polyurethane foam that is sprayed onto the back of the spa shell and cabinet void, to give excellent thermal retention and reduce running costs. Some spas also use a reflective insulating panel on the inside of the cabinet this is frequently referred to as "Arctic Pac" and is a low cost insulator.

Heater

In modern spas they are normally an inline tube housing an electric element (similar to an immersion heater) that the spa water is pumped through, they are adjusted by the topside control pad and automatically regulated by the spa's electronic management system.

Diverters

Are valves that change the flow of the water from one seat to another and can be manually operated from inside the spa, they are a low cost way of reducing the number of pumps in a spa.

Chromotherapy

Do not underestimate the effect that good "mood lighting" has on your bathing experience, this is usually provided by underwater LED lights and can vary from single white lamps through to multi-point, colour changing lighting systems.

And finally we have to dispel a few myths about what we regard as misleading statements made by some manufacturers.....

Self Cleaning Spas:

There is no such thing! This normally refers to a method of drawing water borne particles through the base of the spa and into the filtration system, or a jet that sweeps the floor of the spa and pushes these particles toward the pump suction grilles.

Chlorine/Bromine Free Water Sanitation:

There is only one proven Chlorine/Bromine free water treatment system and this is a chemical called Biguanide (Bi-Gwan_Eyed) the leading brands of this type of chemical are Baquacil® and BaquaSpa® - ALL other products including; Aqua Finesse® - Nature 2® - Aquagarde® - AquaSafe90® - and many more, still need Chlorine or Bromine additions to guarantee 100% safe water.

And don't let a salesman tell you "with an Ozone system you won't need anything else" you still need Chlorine or Bromine.