

mistress while tied to the desk or kitchen sink can find relief and relaxation in a spa at the end of the day, too.

It's ready and waiting...

Of course, a spa is more than just good hydrotherapy. It's a home adult entertainment system that's always warm, wet and ready to go. It's something you can't get any other way – almost like your first mobile. You remember how you just bought it for emergency use – but now you almost feel naked without it. Well, OK, getting a bit carried away now, but you'll end up using it every day. And once you own a spa, you'll probably find yourself echoing what so many of our customers tell us, 'I don't know how I got along without it'.

Hello boys!

Even among mainstream spa-owners, sixty-four per cent regularly use their tubs naked, so if you need an excuse to get naked this is the best one I know. Say you are a single male, sitting at a bar, and you think you are in with a chance with that good looking girl at the end of the counter... what do you think will work best, telling her you have a Porsche in the car park or that you have a hot tub in your back garden? Trust me, it's very unlikely that four Bacardi Breezers later

she will be sitting naked in your car – but play your cards right and I bet she could be in your back garden, naked with her mates. And don't forget, everything looks thirty per cent larger under water. So, if you want to impress your friends and strangers alike, drive on past the car-dealer and head for your local spa retailer.

Chocolate, sex – or a nice cup of tea

OK, what could the ladies get from a tub? As unbelievable as it may sound, recent studies have proven that the regular use of hot tubs can aid in the reduction of weight. This stems from the fact that soaking in a hot tub simulates exercise. The hydrotherapy dilates the blood vessels, promoting better circulation as it relaxes the skin and muscles. It also raises the heart rate, while lowering blood pressure.

This seems to indicate that soaking in a hot tub may be healthier for your heart than the traditional methods of exercise, and with regular use, the action of a hot tub can also help to diminish the appearance of cellulite. The best – and instant – improvements are with parts of your body that might point south normally, but become very perky when supported by water. Hey, aren't hot tubs cool? Not only do they make you feel sexier – they make you look sexier too.

Neighbourhood Watch

You have just moved to the new house and that sexy couple over the road were so helpful – and were very interested when the hot tub turned up. In fact, so was most of the street. Why not invite them over for

dinner and a soak in the tub? They won't turn that invite down. Some of the best and most honest conversations we have ever had have been held while sitting in a hot tub with new and old friends – and you just never know where it will lead.

One thing is for sure, people lose their inhibitions very quickly in a tub.

So why doesn't everyone get one?

As with swinging it's not for everyone and that's fine – but very often it is something very small that stops them.

People often think that they haven't got the room for a hot tub. However, after years in the industry, there has never been a garden where we couldn't find space for a hot tub. They come in lots of sizes – however seven- and eight-foot models are the most common. As a quick check, can you lie down in your garden? If so you have space.

Similarly, delivering a tub is something people think may not be possible, but any reputable hot-tub-dealer has all the handling equipment to overcome most situations and have a Crain company to give them a lift in.

Perhaps when I win the lottery...

Plug-in portable air-tubs can start from £300. Small, good-quality tubs cost from £3,500 to £4,000, but between £5,000 and £8,000 is the most common price-range – and this would get you a really good-quality hot tub for six people, that will last a very long time.

Compare that to what the average family spend on a holiday, or the cost of a new kitchen – well over £10,000 – and that's just to make somewhere you work look good. In a hot tub, the only thing you can do is relax and have fun, and day-to-day running costs can be as low as 30p a day. By any standard, that's a lottery winner's lifestyle on the cheap!

Looking after a hot tub

Most hot tubs are not complicated to look after. Yes, there is some work involved – you must clean filters regularly and check your water is correctly balanced and is sanitised correctly. Water does need to be changed every two to three months, but with the help and advice of a good hot-tub-dealer it all becomes like second nature.



What sort should I buy?

This is always the hardest question. What is right for one person is not right for the other, and it's hard to find out. Every dealer will tell you they sell the best hot tubs, but 175 makes are now imported in the UK – and most are only average to poor. The trouble is, if you were looking for a new car, they have been around since you were born and we all know something about cars – we want a seven-seater, we would like a diesel, we don't want a manual gearbox – because you know what's available.

The sad thing is that most people selling hot tubs don't even own one themselves, and are simply told by the manufacturer that their tubs are the best. The largest hot tub with the biggest motors and the most amount of jets, and the kicking sound system are very often not the best buy. The old adage still stands – if it sounds too good to be true, maybe it is too good to be true. Anything half-price is suspect. When was the last time you saw a sofa full price at certain retailers? You never see half-price BMWs or Range Rovers.

The internet is where most people start looking these days, and it is a great research tool. Most information is useful. But it's written by people who are selling one or two brands of hot tub. Some independent websites make almost all their money on advertising and pay-per-click links.

So how do you work out the best deal on the best tub? For starters, any company that is serious about their product should have a reasonable selection of tubs on display, so you can see exactly what they look like. Check to see how they are finished. Sit in the tub – is it comfortable? Try one with water in it. Any dealer should have a

minimum of one tub for customers to try. Try two or three in one day – that way you can get a good feel for them all.

How loud are they in use and during filtering? It's the fastest way to upset the neighbours if a loud pump starts up at four in the morning. Do you fit into the tub, or are you thrown out of your seat? Can you actually lie comfortably on the lounge or do you just float away? Can you practically and comfortably seat all the people in the spa you want to? If you are reading this I guess you would at the least want to fit in four people. In most four-seaters the spacing is very cosy. If that is OK, remember you will not always want to be sitting on someone else's lap... or maybe you will!

Ask questions. Why are their hot tubs the best ones? If it's because they have sparkly lights around the top or an iPod connection, that is not a good reason. You wouldn't buy a poor quality car because it has sat-nav fitted and the finance is interest-free. Remember you are paying for that – it's all in the cost of the tub.

Check out the salesman

Do you trust the company and the person selling the tub? Do they have a good knowledge of chemical treatment and the

different way tubs can be treated? What sort of back-up and support can they offer? Do they deliver the hot tub, set it up and then run though how it works with you? Do they show you how to use it, or do they just drop it at the door? If things go wrong, how do they deal with it? If they tell you that they never go wrong, well they've not sold many of them. Are hot tubs their main business or just a sideline?

Research, ask questions, sit in and try out different hot tubs. Don't buy cheap – buy a good tub and ask for a deal. Buy what suits you, not the sales staff. Do this and you will have great fun in your back garden, all year round. Remember hot tubs aren't just for the weekend!

