

# A SPLASH OF LUXURY

Dare to be decadent? Create a relaxing Zen space at home with your very own spa, sauna and a few clever style touches. Why not? You deserve it

Words Carrol Baker

James Deans & Associates.  
oftb.com.au

More and more Aussies are embracing health and wellness, and making lifestyle choices that reflect healthy living. Choices like getting a little moderate exercise, taking positive and proactive measures to reduce everyday stresses, and following a nutrient-rich and varied diet.

Installing a home spa and/or sauna is a great way to destress and spend quality time with family and friends. And with a home spa and sauna, not only will you reap the health benefits, you'll add style and value to your home.

## GETTING IN THE SWIM

Lindsay McGrath, CEO of the Swimming Pool and Spa Association of Australia (SPASA), reveals there has been definite growth in the industry across the board with both spas and swimming pools. "Most high-end concrete pools also have a spa, and some fibreglass ones do, too," he says. "However, the real growth sector we're seeing is in swim spas and plunge pools with jets, and lap pools with swim jets, a direct reflection of smaller residential backyards."

Consumers can choose their size, shape and budget when selecting a spa pool. "The blurring of lines between pools and spas occurred a few years ago — now we have really small pools and really big spas — it's not a one or the other, now you can have whatever suits your needs," Lindsay says.

Get the best bang for your buck by making sure you're dealing with a reputable company. "Check that they're an industry member; we weed out the poor-quality products so consumers can feel confident they're getting a good buy," he says.

It's also important to look for a product that offers local support in the event something does go wrong. "Make sure you have a good product warranty, and you're getting the features and benefits you want," Lindsay recommends, "as well as energy efficiency and good service." If you're in NSW, don't forget you need a lockable cover over your freestanding spa, and in all other regions you need a pool fence.

## IN THE BEGINNING...

The terms spa, hot tub and Jacuzzi are often used interchangeably. They basically mean the same thing, but in Australia, a heated water pool with bubbling water jets is usually called a spa or spa pool.

Since Roman times people have enjoyed the soothing benefits of warm water, often coming together to share bathing rituals. In some countries, such as Japan and Turkey, public baths where friends gather and bathe together are still popular today.

The first adaptation of a spa pump was developed in 1956 in the US. The Jacuzzi brothers developed a portable hydrotherapy pump, and the Jacuzzi or spa





“There’s something really nice about being outdoors on a cold drizzly winter night... connecting to the elements and surrounding greenery”  
— James Lascelles

Spas integrated into a pool ensure unbroken lines.  
Photography by Tim Turner: bayongardens.com.au



A standalone spa sat next to a pool can be visually pleasing.  
Photography by Tim Turner: bayongardens.com.au

was born. In the late 1960s the concept was further developed with jets fitted in the side of a large tub. More than half a century on, the spa has evolved with sound, lighting and a vast array of technological features.

#### THE SPA SOLUTION

The soothing sensation of a home spa is the ultimate in relaxation but many people also use a home spa for pain relief, hydrotherapy and massage, or even simply socialising.

Out From the Blue’s James Lascelles says the feel-good factor of a home spa is a huge drawcard for people. “There’s something really nice about being outdoors on a cold drizzly winter night with the steam drifting up in 38° water, and connecting to the elements and surrounding greenery,” he says.

So, what are your options? A spa can be portable and freestanding, or part of your swimming pool, lap pool or plunge pool. A portable spa will fit in the most compact of spaces, even a patio or balcony, and you can also take it with you if you move house, or plan on renovating your outdoor spaces.

Popular shapes in standalone spas (which are usually constructed from acrylic) are square, triangular, rectangular or circular. A compact spa can be as petite as 2.1m x 1.1m and fit two adults, while some spas can seat as many

as 10 people and be a generous 3m x 2.3m or larger, to cater for a crowd.

A spa usually has a mix of spinning jets, directional jets and air jets, some of which are adjustable for maximum therapeutic benefit.

According to SPASA Victoria, to keep your spa free from harmful microorganisms, chlorine or bromine should be used. Ozone may also be used, but there’s no residual, so chlorine or bromine must be used in conjunction with it. If you’re opting for a salt chlorinator, make sure it’s designed and sized to produce the right level of chlorine, as some salt chlorinators may produce too much in a spa.

You can buy a blow-up spa from as little as \$990 — but spas usually cost from \$5000 up to \$25,000 for a supersize version with all the latest bells and whistles.

#### POOL SPAS

Some homeowners prefer the luxury of a stylish spa integrated into their pool. An inbuilt spa is somewhere to relax and, when not in use, it can be a stunning visual feature.

James explains that as well as technology to regulate jets, heating and water features, you can also control your spa’s lighting.

“LED light fittings can include an array of colour-changing filters to create different atmospheres: moody blue, blood red, hot pink,



This impressive spa is a style feature on its own.  
Photography by Dean Bradley: oftb.com.au

special feature spas and saunas



Saunas can be a design  
drawcard, inside or out.  
[ihealthsaunas.com.au](http://ihealthsaunas.com.au)

THE TRADITIONAL SAUNA HEATS  
THE SKIN'S SURFACE, WHICH IN  
TURN WARMS THE MUSCLES  
AND UNDERLYING TISSUES

special feature spas and saunas

etc. Kids love this in particular. It can also be done via the app — just don't drop your phone in!"

Some spas can also include a window to the side, so those in the spa are on show. "That's a playful element that kids also love," James adds.

Wet edge sides, or a wet-deck feature are also great luxury options. "The wet edge (or infinity edge) means the spa overflows on one or more sides into the pool (or balance tank)," he explains. "The water gently trickling down the outer edge of the spa catches the eye and creates a feature."

### ULTIMATE WORKOUT

A relatively new concept in spa design is the swim spa. Incorporating an innovative

engineering concept, it enables you to work out by swimming or walking against powerful jets. The swim resistance zone enables you to take a dip and have a workout at the same time. Lindsay says swim spas differ to the typical backyard spa in both size and functionality.

"A swim spa is generally above the 10,000-litre mark — it's like a small pool (it's usually 1.2m–1.5m deep). Think of it a bit like a spa with a deep end that allows you to exercise," he says.

### SAY IT WITH SAUNA

While Australians have yet to establish their own sauna rituals, it may just be a matter of time as the popularity of these rooms of heat rises.

The compact two-person  
Full Spectrum Infrared Sauna.  
[ihealthsaunas.com.au](http://ihealthsaunas.com.au)



[spaworld.com.au](http://spaworld.com.au)



In Finland they've been doing it for hundreds of years — sauna is simply a part of the Scandinavian way of life. The Finns incorporate sauna rituals, such as brushing or hitting themselves with birch branches to increase circulation while in a sauna. There's also the bridal sauna or "morsiussauna", whereby the sauna is decorated with pretty flowers and the bride is washed in egg, salt and flour.

Traditional steam saunas work by pouring water over hot rocks, which





creates steam. The room is enclosed and is heated to around 110°C. The traditional sauna heats the skin's surface, which in turn warms the muscles and underlying tissues.

For your own project, you can custom build or buy a DIY kit. Saunas cost upwards of \$5000 as you usually need to have an extra room built in which to install it.

You may need a building permit if you're considering an outdoor built sauna, so check with your local council.

#### INFRARED BETWEEN THE LINES

Infrared saunas are an alternative model used in Australia. These emit infrared light waves to directly warm the body, in the same way that sitting in the sunshine does. Essentially

they use wavelengths of the light spectrum to create heat in the body. The subsequent radiated heat penetrates the body from the inside out — it's a dry heat, unlike the steamy experience of a traditional sauna.

Alex Tyson from iHealth Saunas says there are multiple reasons more Aussies should be getting in on the fun. "Sauna can help with aches and pains and to lose weight," he says. "It aids in detox and you get a better night's sleep."

"An infrared sauna heats the body and the body works naturally to cool itself by sweating," he adds. "You're boosting circulation and getting oxygen-rich blood into the joints and muscles. You sweat from deep within the skin, which is where the detox aspect comes in."

Different levels can differentiate spas and pools.  
Photography by Dean Bradley. [oftb.com.au](http://oftb.com.au)

special feature spas and saunas

#### CREATING YOUR LUXE SAUNA AND SPA SPACE

We asked designer Sarah Conly from Bower Architecture and Interiors how to go about embarking on your own spa project.

**Q Indoors vs. outdoors for a spa — what are some of the benefits of each?**

**A** It really depends on the kind of environment you want to create and how you want to use it.

An indoor spa is a great idea if you're serious about regularly using it, as you can use it all year round. It also can create more of a "day spa" feel. There is, however,

more upkeep in terms of the surrounding internal environment and ensuring appropriate ventilation.

Outdoor spas are a great addition to a pool area, as you can heat just that section, and ensure use throughout the year. They're also good for kids, as they create a nice shallow section.

**Q What are the design considerations in creating a spa/sauna space to match your home's architecture?**

**A** Homeowners need to consider the aesthetic of their home and how they want

their spa/sauna space to feel. Ensure the volumes are scaled to suit your home, and consider the overall feeling you want your space to evoke.

**Q To create a splash of luxury — what are some key requirements in materials, fixtures and style?**

**A** Consider the surrounds of the spa space — lighting, tapware, greenery and surrounding materials. An indoor spa/sauna space should be beautifully lit to create a sense of luxury at night, and there should also be plentiful natural light as well for day use.



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With an infrared sauna you also don't need a fit-for-purpose room or space, and it can be either outdoors or in. “They're simple to install, you don't have to have a pre-wired line or designated space, you can just treat them like an appliance in the home, and put it in the garage or spare room,” Alex says. All you need, in fact, is a flat space and room to accommodate it. Infrared saunas tend to cost from \$4000 upwards.

To create a wellness space indoors, Alex suggests a few simple touches: “A salt lamp, rack of towels, water filter and yoga mat.”

“I do that in my own home,” he says. “Go for a run, do some stretches, jump in the sauna, into the shower to wash off, do a cold body scrub, and then my day begins.”

#### IN OR OUT

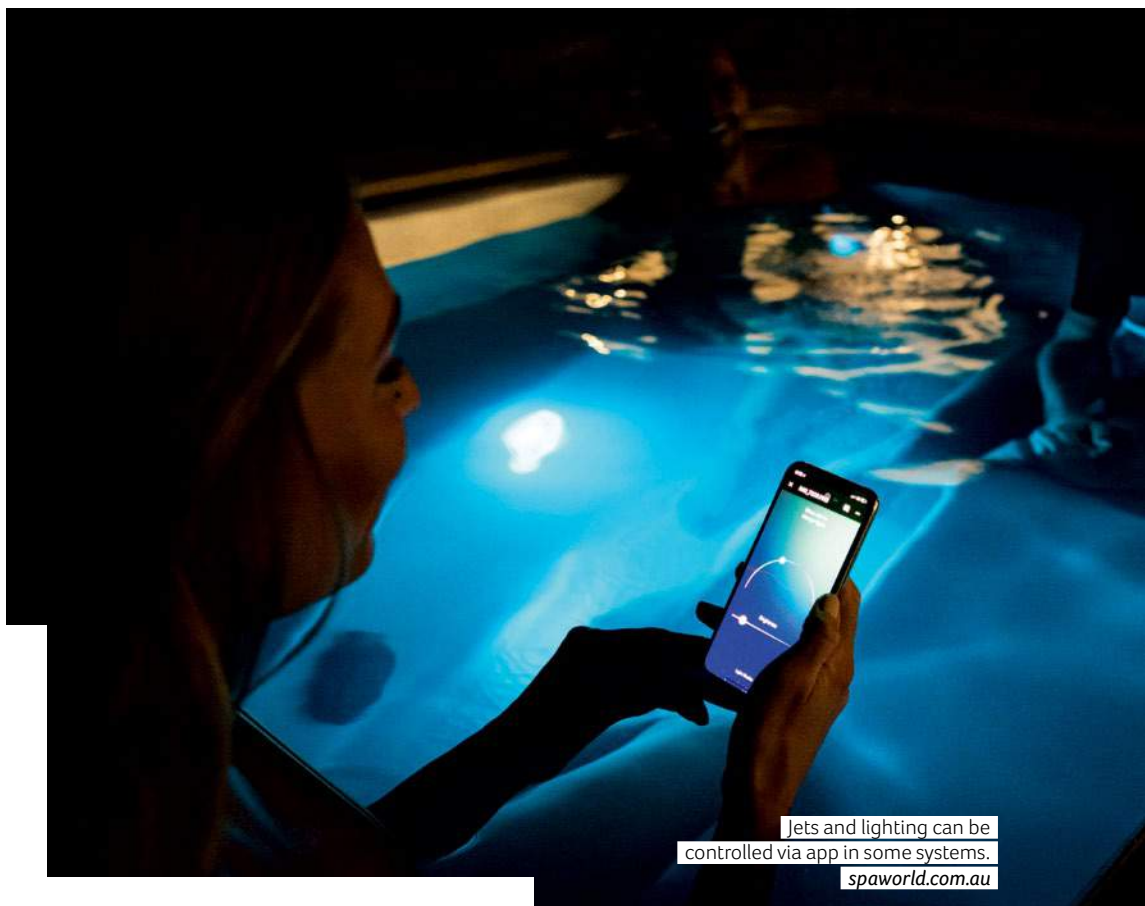
Alex says most people prefer using infrared saunas indoors for privacy reasons, but outdoors can be great too, particularly if

you have gorgeous scenery to gaze upon.

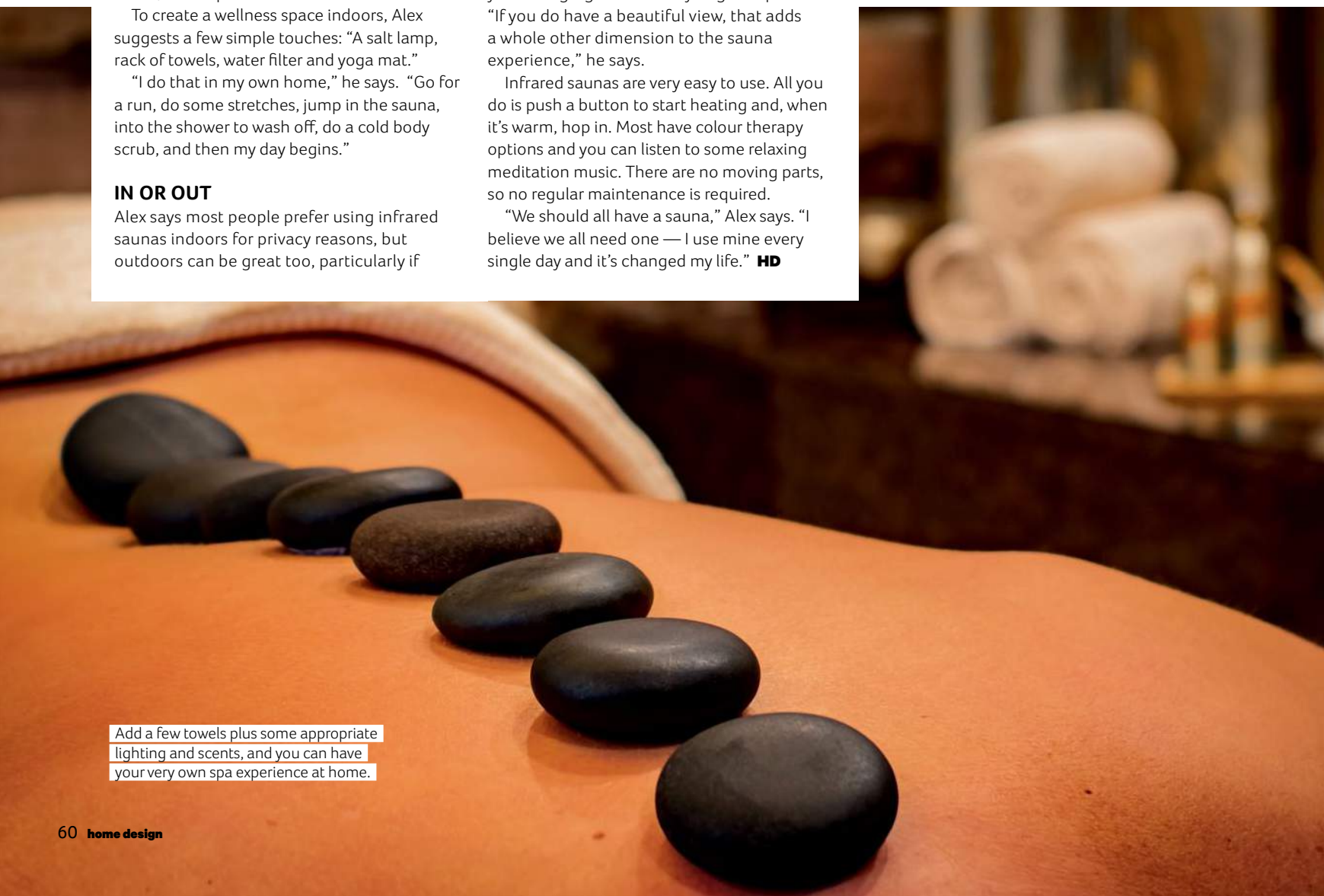
“If you do have a beautiful view, that adds a whole other dimension to the sauna experience,” he says.

Infrared saunas are very easy to use. All you do is push a button to start heating and, when it's warm, hop in. Most have colour therapy options and you can listen to some relaxing meditation music. There are no moving parts, so no regular maintenance is required.

“We should all have a sauna,” Alex says. “I believe we all need one — I use mine every single day and it's changed my life.” **HD**



Jets and lighting can be controlled via app in some systems. [spaworld.com.au](http://spaworld.com.au)



Add a few towels plus some appropriate lighting and scents, and you can have your very own spa experience at home.