



**GLOBAL WELLNESS**  
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# **Guide to Hydrothermal Spa & Wellness Development Standards**

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GLOBAL WELLNESS  
INSTITUTE™  
EMPOWERING WELLNESS WORLDWIDE

# GUIDE TO HYDROTHERMAL SPA & WELLNESS DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

What You Need to Know Before Building Wet Areas

SECOND EDITION



## Chapter Two

# Hydrothermal Wellness Benefits

The benefits of heat and water can be enhanced with the addition of restorative-promoting minerals infused or naturally occurring in the waters or externally applied muds and creams; while aromatherapy, which incorporates all our senses, delivers further restorative and calming benefits.

For centuries, hydrothermal treatments have been recommended in the treatment of certain medical issues and ailments. Today, there is mounting medical evidence that supports the use of hydrothermal therapies for treating a wide range of medical conditions—including common ailments like arthritis, sports injuries, chronic pain, and cardiac disease. This chapter offers a primer on the wellness benefits behind many of today's hydrothermal treatments—whether hot, cold, wet or muddy—and directs readers to additional resources for further research.

As noted throughout this guide, the healing powers of water and heat have been harnessed throughout the ages to provide physical solace, comfort, healing and, of course, simply bathing. Even as far back as 339 BC, history notes that some Roman baths were specifically used for healing purposes and people visited them to help with rheumatic diseases, paralysis and injury recovery. And, of course, the people of the





## Chapter Six

# Hot Springs & Geothermal Mineral Waters

This chapter covers the unique world of natural hot springs and geothermal mineral waters. This chapter was written by Ed Moffett with Amy McDonald in collaboration with the Global Wellness Institute's Hot Springs Initiative, an international wellness think tank dedicated to exploring the diverse values of geothermal waters for health, recreation, tourism and community.

Hot springs and geothermal waters are enjoyed throughout the world and have been experiencing a renaissance. Pictured: Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs Resort & Spa, New Mexico.

Wellness travelers have sought the healing powers of hot springs since the beginning of time. The naturally warm, mineral-rich water flowing right out of the ground has soothed aches and pains for millennia, while the hypnotic and magical powers of hot springs have inspired healing lore and bathing rituals on every continent.

What makes hot springs so magical is that no two are alike—each has a unique spectrum of minerals and other qualities. While all hot springs provide the familiar benefits of bathing, such as blood circulation enhancement and relaxation, the greater power of hot springs is attributed to their minerals and other qualities including texture, alkalinity, odor and flavor. These qualities set hot springs apart from all other waters.

The water from hot springs—called “geothermal mineral water”—is typically formed as rain and snowmelt sinks through cracks and porosities in the ground to collect



### Chapter Three

## Project Planning: Architecture & Design

This chapter gives readers a broad overview of what to consider during the planning and building stages of a residential or commercial spa. It is designed to help the reader understand how what goes into the build and how to prepare for it, including assembling the project team. It outlines some of the major oversights and how to avoid them.

Perhaps surprisingly, one of the most significant stumbling blocks in the planning of a hydrothermal spa area—whether it's commercial or residential—is a misunderstanding of basic terminology and functionality. There can be a lot of confusion around what each of the thermal cabins does (i.e., are they dry or wet? hot, humid or cold?) or how a pool functions. Because terminology can differ from country to country, the confusion is often escalated. For example, what's the difference between a hamam and a steam bath? a sauna or a banya? or a steam shower and an experience shower? If the whole team does not "speak" the same language, it becomes impossible to deliver to a client's expectations.

This guide will help minimize these issues by providing clear definitions of the hydrothermal features that are typically included in a modern build. The reader will find detailed descriptions of thermal rooms and other specialist treatment rooms (chapter four) and

## Measuring Return on Investment

To help understand the potential return on investment (ROI) for a hydrothermal property, an estimate has been created based on a theoretical “resort spa” project. Estimates are based on 2016 values and prices in US dollars and is applicable to prices common in North America, the Caribbean and much of Europe and the Middle East. Project prices are largely affected by the selected finishes so this should be used as a guide for project estimations. This model is suited to projects of 4-star luxury standards and above.

### Spa Features

- Male and female gender segregated areas
- Sauna, steam room, laconium, snow room, foot spa, cool down showers, hydrotherapy pool and wet lounge area for resting between periods in thermal areas
- 230 m<sup>2</sup>/2,500 ft<sup>2</sup> per gender = 460 m<sup>2</sup>/5,000 ft<sup>2</sup> total area including circulation space

*Note: For simplicity, square footage has been used in the financial example (1 m<sup>2</sup> = 10.76 ft<sup>2</sup>). Locker rooms are excluded as they rarely required in destination resorts as guests arrive in robes. This also excludes general building services to the common areas—all of which would be necessary regardless of what the space was used for.*

Estimated Building Costs	
Complete Installation	5,000 ft <sup>2</sup> x \$400/ft <sup>2</sup> = \$2,000,000
Wall, Floor & Ceiling Finishes	18,500 ft <sup>2</sup> x \$50/ft <sup>2</sup> = \$1,000,000
Grand Total	\$3,000,000

  

Estimated Spa Revenue	
Attendance Per Day	40 guests, 3 times a day = 120 guests (This size spa can easily support 60 guests at any one time, but let's assume we have just 40 guests every 4 hours during a 12-hour day.)
Revenue Per Person	\$40 (The average charge is \$55, but we're using a reduced rate.)
Total Daily Revenue	120 guests x \$40 cost/person = \$4,800
Total Yearly Revenue (360 operating days)	\$1,728,000

  

Estimated Operational Costs	
Staffing Costs	35% to 50% of Spa's Total Income (Staffing levels of hydrothermal areas are very low—no expensive therapists or down time. Just spa attendants keeping space clean.)

  

Estimated ROI	
ROI with Construction	21 months (less than 2 years)
Total ROI	32-42 months (Given the average life of a hydrothermal spa is at least 12 years, there is a significant return on the original investment by charging a modest \$40 entry fee.)





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## Guide to Hydrothermal Spa & Wellness Development Standards Contributors

The Global Wellness Institute would like to thank the following companies for their contributions and support in making this guide come to life.

