

THINGS TO LOOK FOR WHEN BUYING A SPA

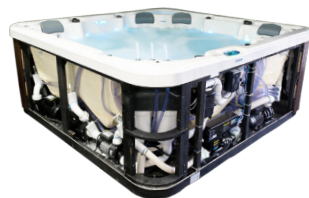


Buying a spa can be difficult with conflicting stories from spa retailers making it even harder to make the right decision. This brochure aims at providing some useful information to help in the buying process.

Overall Build Quality

For less problems and longer life

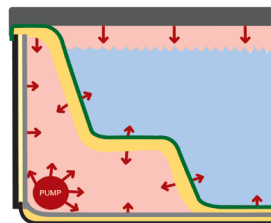
Your long term satisfaction with your spa will usually be directly linked with the build quality. Pay a little more and insist on the best components and energy saving technology and your spa will last longer and your total investment in your spa will be much less in the long term. Make sure there are no imperfections in the shell and demand to check inside the spa cabinet as this will give you an idea of the overall quality and the care taken when building your spa.



As Much Insulation as Possible

For lower running costs and quiet operation

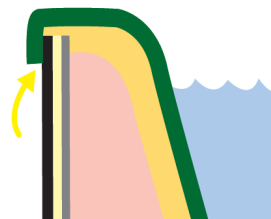
The more layers of insulation on the base and sides of a spa and the thicker the insulation on the spa shell the better. A good insulation system will save you thousands of dollars over the life of your spa. It also makes the spa quieter - ask to hear the spa running. Insist on seeing the insulation system yourself.



Small Gap Between Shell & Cabinet

Keeps the hot air in and the cold air out

Gaps between the shell and cabinet let cold air in, significantly increasing running costs. Feel under the lip of the shell to make sure the gap is small.



Heat Pump and Gas Heater Ready

To reduce running costs by up to 75%

Heat pumps are without doubt the most efficient way to permanently heat a spa. While they don't work quite as well in colder weather, even at 3°C they produce over \$3.50 of heat compared to every \$1 spent on an electric heater. So you can swap to a cheaper form of heating at any time, choose a control system that is fully heat pump compatible (and gas heater ready) - making sure that the pump, connections and plumbing are also in place.



“Smart” Controller & Large Heater

To reduce running costs & maintain heat

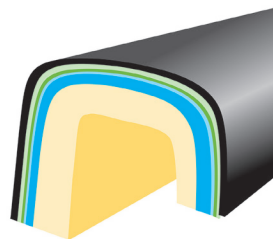
Look for any spa with a Spa Net control system as they can heat and filter using off peak power (save up to 50%) and feature “intuitive technology” that continuously analyses your spa use and “learns” how to minimise running costs. They also use larger variable output heaters so your spa heats up quickly and won't go cold when you are using it.



The Thickest Possible Shell

For strength and long life

While shopping around, use your fingers to gauge the thickness of the shell by feeling underneath the spa lip (where the shell meets the cabinet). The thicker it is, the stronger your spa will be. A thick shell also says something about the manufacturer, who is obviously not building the spa based on price alone.



Solid Fibreglass Base

Stronger, stops rain, pests & heat loss

The best way to add strength and insulation to any spa while protecting the frame and equipment from water and pests is a solid wrap-around fiberglass base. If a thin ABS base is used it must have extra insulation and it needs to wrap around the frame to stop water damage.



Large, Two Pump Filter System

Cleaner water and less chemicals

The best filter systems have two large cartridges to provide more filtration surface area. They also have two pumps drawing water through the filters, using a massage pump to filter massive amounts of water whenever your spa is in use (when it needs it the most).



Ozone System with Mixing Chamber

For less chemical use

Ozone is an oxidiser that breaks up body oils. It is not a sanitizer. So by LAW it cannot replace the need for an authorized sanitiser. Most importantly, good ozone systems have a “mixing” or “de-gas” chamber to make them efficient while ensuring any excess gases cannot harm your health or your spa so be sure to check for this.



Quality Jets

For less maintenance & longer life

Hard white or soft black plastic on the back of most jet bodies disintegrates with chemical use. Clips that are used to hold many jets in place are also a problem as they break easily (every jet costs \$30-\$60) and they make the jets hard to remove. Bearings are also a problem as they clog and need regular cleaning. Jets with no bearings, a screw out mechanism and HARD black PVC on the rear of the jet insert are the most reliable and long lasting.



OTHER INTERESTING FACTS

Pump Sizes

Be aware that some manufacturers mislead their customers into thinking that they are getting a larger pump on their spa. The truth is that a 4.8 BHP (brake horse power) pump is exactly the same as a 3 HP pump.

Energy efficiency “Star Ratings”

No government body has ever allocated efficiency ratings to individual spa brands so where star ratings are being used, they’re simply being “made up” by manufacturers who probably have very basic insulation systems.

Running Costs

Some manufacturers promote misleading running costs that do not include heating costs. Other manufacturers base their claims on incorrect power rates and unrealistic assumptions. And a few brands promote “low amp” filter pumps but as they run 24 hours a day they actually cost you more. If claims are made, ask how they are calculated. The only thing that effects running costs is the amount of insulation, the size of the heater (the quicker the spa heats the sooner the pump turns off) or if a heat pump is used (which offers savings of up to 75%).

“Salt Water” spas

Salt can only be used to sanitise water when it is transformed (by a salt chlorinator) into chlorine. But as this form of chlorine does not suit hot water you’ll have to add liquid bromine - which is another form of chlorine! On top of this, chlorine is very corrosive and will damage your heater element so be wary of “chlorine-free” saltwater spas.

Backlit Jets

While they look good in the showroom, in most cases you won’t see these lights when you are in the spa as people will be sitting against them. Also, these clear plastic jets break more easily and if water quality is not maintained they can become opaque (slightly white). As the LED lights can also be hard to replace when they fail we would suggest other forms of in-spa lighting.

UV “Sterilisers”

This form of water treatment is not generally successful for spas as the systems being used are WAY too small. To work they need to run 24 hours a day (which is very expensive). The bulbs need replacing every year or sooner (not cheap) and when they break there is a risk that electricity passes into the water. If the small, cheap units being used actually worked then every spa company would use them - not just a handful who are using them as a gimmick to sell spas. Unless you are willing to fit a very large, expensive U.V. system, don’t expect any real benefits.

Built in TV’s

If you talk to any spa repair technician they’ll tell you that the average in-spa TV is lucky to last a year as moisture, metal and electronics don’t mix and the mechanisms that raise and lower the TV are prone to problems. The cost to repair them is very high and they also take up valuable room inside your spa. If you want to watch TV in your spa, a better option is a wall mounted, big screen TV near the spa that will cost you a fraction of the price and can be easily serviced.