

# SPAIN REVELS IN SPA CULTURE



Ever since the Romans colonised Spain in the first century BC, spas have been used for relaxation and medicinal purposes on the Spanish territory of today. The Romans brought their culture of bathing with them and it has remained there ever since. Thus, spas have existed in Spain for over 2000 years, yet only today spas are returning to their original medical outlet status.

As the world's largest inbound tourism power, being a close second to France in terms of number of visitors and second to the USA in terms of revenue, Spain has mostly been seen as a beach holiday centre with 8000 miles of Atlantic and Mediterranean coastline. Nowadays, the seawater is being used by many tourists for other purposes rather than just swimming.

Nearly all of Spain's multiple coastal resorts are equipped with a spa of some description. Away from the man-made facilities, Spain boasts the second largest thermal lake in Europe. This is known as the Termas Pallorés, situated in the Aragón region. The lake is visited by flocks of tourists every year and is visitable during any season as its temperature is constant, at 36°C.

Furthermore, this year shall see the opening of a luxurious spa resort in the picturesque town of Arties in the Val d'Aran in the Spanish Pyrenees. Arata Isozaki - known for the Olympic Stadium in Barcelona and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles - is responsible for the design of the Banys d'Arties using the natural stone and slate situated in these mountains. The complex will include a 25-suite super luxury hotel, a 32,000 square-foot-spa and three restaurants including one in the spa. Plans call for reclaiming the baths dating from 1817 which have been unused for 40 years. Built around a central interior pool, the thermal complex will include a vaulted roof with 24-foot ceilings. On this evidence, it appears that experts' predictions of Spanish spa tourism hitting off could come true.

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