

HOW MUCH DOES A HOT TUB COST?



bullfrog
spas

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Everybody almost instinctively knows roughly how much cars cost, or TVs, or standard home appliances.

However, hot tubs are not a consumer item that most people think about or research until they are ready to buy. Every serious spa shopper asks: How much does a hot tub cost? It's an important piece of information, but admittedly one that brands aren't always great at answering.

You decide you want a hot tub so you start to research it online. You can find all kinds of information on features, build quality, and other benefits. Then you start to look for hot tub prices and run into a bit of a brick wall, especially where all the top quality hot tub brands are concerned.

The truth of the matter is that hot tubs are most often a highly customized product. Additionally, they cost a lot to ship to different locales. And hot tub markets vary regionally. For these reasons and some others, prices for nearly all high-quality hot tubs are set at the local dealer level. This means that price, even for the same spa model, can vary somewhat by location and, in order to avoid cross-market confusion, quality hot tub prices are not generally posted online.

However, in this article I want to help you navigate the hot tub pricing process by giving you information on what you can generally expect to pay for your hot tub, based on factors like type, quality, and size, along with what you can expect to pay over the lifetime of the spa in energy and maintenance.



HOW MUCH IS A HOT TUB?

This is a common question for many of the reasons explained in the introduction above. Research in the USA and Canada hot tub markets shows that until consumers begin more detailed hot tub pricing research they are likely to assume that hot tubs cost about \$5,000 USD.

Well, this price is not far off. In fact, some hot tubs actually do cost around \$5,000. But this price must be qualified. In reality, most quality portable spas cost more than this, only a few hot tubs cost less. I'll try to break this down and offer some clarity on prices you can expect to pay for a hot tub.

IMPORTANT FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN HOT TUB PRICING

It would be easy to simply say that you get what you pay for in hot tubs. While this is obviously true of many if not most consumer goods, there are unfortunately a few companies out there that prey on the general lack of understanding of what makes a true quality hot tub.

Keep in mind that the vast majority of dedicated spa retailers out there are honest and hard working and carry great products, they wouldn't stay in business otherwise. There are only a few of these companies to watch out for and you can usually pick them out by their tactics. Watch out for things like high pressure in-home presentations, traveling "spa shows" that really only feature spas sold by one company and other fly by night tactics. What's most important when looking at an investment like a quality portable spa is understanding how to evaluate quality makes and quality retailers, then looking at pricing in terms of the total value you are getting for your dollar.



PRICES ON HOT TUBS

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1 LUXURY TIER – \$13,000 to \$18,000

These are the absolute best hot tubs in terms of build quality, features, and options. Luxury hot tubs can be priced from \$13,000 to \$18,000 or more in the United States and Canada. It is expected in this tier that your spa will be highly engineered, built in hi-tech domestic factories, using the latest in quality materials. These hot tubs should also offer a range of custom options that allow you to personalize your spa to your needs and preferences.



2 HIGH TIER – \$9,000 to \$12,000

These are the absolute best hot tubs in terms of build quality, features, and options. Luxury hot tubs can be priced from \$13,000 to \$18,000 or more in the United States and Canada. It is expected in this tier that your spa will be highly engineered, built in hi-tech domestic factories, using the latest in quality materials. These hot tubs should also offer a range of custom options that allow you to personalize your spa to your needs and preferences.





3 MID TIER – \$5,000 to \$8,000

The same quality hot tub manufacturers mentioned above usually offer a mid-price, high-quality spa line that will cost \$5,000 – \$8,000. These spas usually have fewer features and less complete hydrotherapy, but still offer good reliability and comfort.

As you shop, you will also find other companies selling lesser quality spas in this price range. Many big box retailers will pass off a poor quality spa as “premium” in this price range. Even some spa companies that have been around for a while try to sell lesser quality spas in this range.



Pay attention to these things to determine quality in this range: established brand, established dealer sales channel (not online or big box), consumer feedback, domestic manufacturing (made in USA or Canada).

4 LOW-END TIER – \$2,000 TO \$4,000

Cheap hot tubs will cost you around \$2,000 – \$4,000. There are really only a few manufacturers making a reasonable entry-level spa in this range. Try to determine the better brands, however, if this is the price range where you’re looking, it is wise to beware.

Many spas in this price range are made using methods that produce a product with a limited usable life. Many of these spas are built to be inflatable, are roto-molded like your kayak or folding pic-nic table, or are built with poor materials and workmanship from knock-off overseas companies. These hot tubs can be ok if you’re looking for a very short-term or no-frills experience. One more consideration also creeps in at this price level – cost to operate. Most of these “low cost” hot tubs are so poorly insulated you will end up paying far more in the long run to operate them. Your energy bills will let you know it. This leads us to the last thing you’ll want to factor into your decision – cost over time.



SOMETHING TO CONSIDER, HOT TUB COSTS OVER TIME

When you're making your decision on which hot tub to buy you should, of course, start with initial quality. You also need to consider how much your hot tub will cost to operate over time. This decision has 2 basic components.

- The expected life of your hot tub or durability
- The cost of operation associated with your hot tub

These factors, combined with your initial purchase price will give you the lifetime cost of ownership for your spa. Look for 2 things to minimize your lifetime cost of ownership – quality construction and energy efficiency.



ENERGY COST OF A HOT TUB

Using the example above, in reality, the quality spa actually costs less overall over time. It lasts longer and eliminates the need to reinstall a new spa every few years. And, in addition to longevity, a quality spa will also use far less energy and require less maintenance.

High quality spas are usually full foam insulated except for the area where pumps and heaters are located. This helps to isolate the hot water in the spa from the cold and keep warmth within. Full foam insulated spas require much less energy to keep them ready to use.

One way to find energy efficient hot tubs is to look at the data compiled by the California Energy Commission, which keeps hot tub energy use statistics. Pay attention to the spa brands that consistently show at the top of these lists.





YOU WILL LOVE A QUALITY HOT TUB FOR YEARS TO COME

Hot tubs are extremely nice to own for many reasons. So it makes sense that you will want to own yours for as long as possible. When you decide to go with a top quality spa, engineered and built to last, you will have always-ready hydrotherapy, relaxation, and fun right in your own backyard. No other product offers as many health and lifestyle benefits.

So, consider the quality and value first when making your decision on which hot tub is best for you. Your purchase price may be a little higher, but you will be rewarded with better features, better hydrotherapy, and a lower cost of ownership over time.

HOW TO ASSESS TOTAL VALUE

Keep in mind that these are outdoor hot tubs. They are exposed to the environment every day, all day. A well-built hot tub will last you much longer than a poor quality spa, often a decade or more. This means your initial purchase price will be spread over more years of use. Then also factor in energy costs over time. Deduct this from the purchase price. Lastly, add the somewhat intangible factor of user experience. This will be measured by your enjoyment, minus the possible frustrations of ownership.

Example: A quality spa that costs you \$10,000 initially and lasts 10 years costs you the same per year as a poor quality spa that costs you \$3,000 and only lasts for a little over 3 years. Actually, the quality spa costs you much less when energy use is factored in. As explained above, cheap hot tubs almost always use more energy. The scales tip even further in the direction of the quality spa when an absolutely incredible worry-free user experience is weighed against one wrought with frustration and down time.

In the end, quality simply pays for itself.