

# IT'S GETTING HOT OUT HERE

Around the world, hot springs are having something of a moment, with renewed interest and investment ushering in a new era of social bathing. In the first of a two-part series, Jane Kitchen takes a closer look at the myriad of new developments in Australia and New Zealand

AUS\$100m has been spent on the new Alba Thermal Springs



**T**he mineral-rich waters of natural hot springs are heated from deep within the earth's core and have been used for medicinal purposes and socialising for centuries in almost every culture. Over recent years, consumers are showing a renewed interest in the benefits of thermal bathing and this is breathing new life into long-forgotten facilities.

This wave of investment has been driving renovations, new builds and expansions across several countries. Many hot springs locations have extended their offerings to include saunas, cold plunge pools, reflexology walks, clay and mud baths, salt pools, cave pools and hammams – all of which have helped turn hot springs into wellness destinations.



**HOT  
SPRINGS  
FOCUS  
PART 1**

Peninsula Hot Springs is adding accommodation so it can attract overnight guests

At the same time, there's a movement to include broader wellness activities, so that consumers can now take part in a wide range of activities from the comfort of a hot springs pool, including listening to concerts, watching films, taking yoga classes, or experiencing singing bowl meditation. All while bringing people together to connect socially.

Both of these movements (Water + Wellness and Wellness + Gathering) have been tipped as two of the biggest trends in this year's Global Wellness Summit report.

Another factor in the increasing popularity of hot springs is that they can cater to a large market that can include everyone from children to grandparents, providing a fun, social space at a relatively low cost. "Hot springs are rapidly emerging to be a driving

Hot springs investment in  
Australia and New Zealand  
in recent years totals  
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## THERMAL SPA

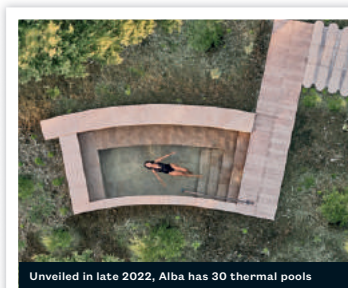


Metung Hot Springs  
is a new 25-acre  
wellness destination

► force for wellness practices which are accessible to the masses,” says Charles Davidson, chair and founder of Peninsula Hot Springs in Victoria, Australia. “One of the advantages is that they allow a wellness experience with a large footfall, making them more accessible to a broader range of guests. If the experience includes self-guided activities then overheads can be kept down, which can reduce the price point, further widening the accessibility.”

### AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

In this two-part series, we'll take a look at some of the most exciting new and upcoming hot springs developments around the world, starting with Australia and New Zealand, where numerous new facilities have opened or expanded in recent years and a multitude of projects are in development.



Unveiled in late 2022, Alba has 30 thermal pools

PHOTO: PENINSULA

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PHOTO: PENINSULA

**Charles Davidson, chair and founder, Peninsula Hot Springs**

In fact, investment in the area totals more than AU\$550m (US\$380m, €354.1m, £314.3m).

“Australia – and Melbourne in particular – has been a perfect testing ground for the development of a globally inspired thermal bathing wellness centre,” says Davidson.

New arrivals in the country include the **Alba Thermal Springs** in Victoria, an AU\$100m (US\$69m, €64.4m, £57.1m) development that opened in late 2022 with more than 30 thermal pools; **Deep Blue Hotel and Hot Springs** in Warrnambool, Victoria, which revealed an AU\$3.5m (US\$2.4m, €2.3m, £2.2m) cave-based hot springs bathing park in the grounds of its oceanside hotel in 2020; and in outback Queensland **Talaroo Hot Springs**, a million-year-old mound spring, debuted in 2021 and is operated by the Ewamian people.

**Peninsula Hot Springs** is adding overnight accommodations, new thermal bathing facilities, and a function centre in 2025 at a cost of more





Deep Blue Hotel has  
created a cave-based  
hot springs bathing park

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## THERMAL SPA



AU\$25m is being spent on bringing the historic Tawarri Hot Springs back to life



Australia's Federal Government is funding the development of Cunnamulla Hot Springs

PHOTO: PENINSULA HOT SPRINGS

fruition in outback Queensland in mid-2023, with Peninsula Hot Springs as the operator. Peninsula has also purchased the local theatre next to the hot springs, which will become a cultural hub with art exhibitions, films and performances.

"Indigenous culture, nature, the stars at night, opal mines, bird watching, natural mud baths, the great outdoors and the down-to-earth people are the draw cards, plus of course the new hot springs that will help this town become an outback wellness destination," says Davidson.

And just outside of Perth, the AU\$25m (US\$17.3m, €16m, £14.3m) **Tawarri Hot Springs** is set to debut later this year on the site of the historic Dalkeith Hot Pool, which was open from the early 1900s until its decommissioning in 1957. It will include a bathing and

► than AU\$150m (US\$103.m, €96.6m, £85.7m).

Peninsula also operates the newly launched **Metung Hot Springs**, a 25-acre wellness destination that overlooks the Gippsland Lakes. First opened in the 1960s but closed in the 90s, an initial AU\$6m (US\$4.1m, €3.9m, £3.4m) investment brought the springs back to life in November 2022 with geothermal bathing pools, saunas, barrel pools and a glamping village, but a further AU\$2m (US\$1.4m, €1.3m, £1.2m) expansion will add a floating sauna, mud steam cave, five thermal pools, two grass music amphitheatre spaces and walking trails. Peninsula will also operate the upcoming **Phillip Island Hot Springs**, an AU\$46m (US\$31.7m, €29.6m, £26.3m) development slated to open in late 2023 with views over the Bass Strait Ocean at Cape Woolamai.

And **Cunnamulla Hot Springs**, an AU\$10m (US\$6.9m, €6.4m, £5.7m) project funded by the Australian Federal Government, will come to



Phillip Island Hot Springs is due to open later this year

## THERMAL SPA



New Zealand's Maruia Hot Springs is having an AU\$3m upgrade

PHOTO: GUY LAWRENCE/GETTY IMAGES



The exciting new Wai Ariki Hot Springs draws on Maori culture

► wellness complex that will offer more than 20 different thermal bathing experiences as well as saunas, hammams, a Vichy shower and cold plunge pools.

Plans have also been announced for an AU\$200m (US\$138.1m, €128.8m, £114.2m) hot springs at the **12 Apostles**, along the scenic Great Ocean Road in Victoria, to include public baths, a wellness resort, amphitheatre and 150 eco-accommodation pods.

In New Zealand, **Maruia Hot Springs** will spend AU\$3m (US\$2m, €1.9m, £1.7m) on upgrades and the much-anticipated **Wai Ariki Hot Springs** is set to open in mid-2023, drawing on the 650-year legacy of the local Māori tribe, Ngāti Whakaue and Rotorua's famed spa heritage (see more on page 30).

"Hot springs provide a means of connecting with nature," says Davidson, in explaining their popularity. "No matter what the temperature is outside, provided you choose the right temperature pool, they help you feel relaxed and in harmony with yourself and your surroundings. It is the simplicity of bathing that brings us back to our pure nature, to a state of homeostasis where we find balance." ●

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Hot springs help us to connect with nature