The word spa comes from the Latin phrase, "salus per aqua," or "health through water." The term spa is traditionally used to mean a place where water that is believed to have special health-giving properties occurs. This is usually a mineral or hot spring, and can include cold water treatments. The term is derived from the Belgian town of Spa. Contrary to popular belief, 'sanus per aquam' is not the source for spa, but a false etymology or backronym. There are various stories about the origin of the name. A Belgian spring of iron bearing water was called Espa from the Walloon language term for "fountain", and was used in 1326 as a cure by an iron master with such success that he founded a health resort which developed into the town. It is also suggested that the term Espa may be derived from the name of the resort, and that its source could be the Latin word "spagere" meaning to scatter, sprinkle or moisten. It is often suggested that the word is an acronym of various Latin phrases such as "sanitas per aquas or sanus per aquam" meaning "health through water", or "Solus Per Aqua" meaning "water in itself", all of which seem to have modern sources.

Somewhere that makes you go aah! If that is a pool of mineral water, then so be it. But nowadays a spa can mean much, much more. In fact the term spa is now applied to any establishment whose aim is to increase the well-being of your mind, body and soul as long as it includes at least one hydrotherapy treatment. If that sounds a bit vague - it's meant to be! Paths to wellbeing are as varied as you are and if you can be sure of one thing, it is that you are bound to find a spa that will suit your needs perfectly, whether that is yoga, meditation, weight-loss, spiritual retreat, pampering, holistic treatments, alternative and complimentary therapies, golf, ski-ing, riding …

According to the International Spa Association: Spa - an entity devoted to enhancing overall well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body and spirit. TYPES OF SPAS: Club Spa - A facility whose primary purpose is fitness and which offers a variety of professionally administered spa services on a day-use basis. Cruise Ship Spa - A spa aboard a cruise ship providing professionally administered spa services, fitness and wellness components and spa cuisine menu choices. Day Spa - A spa offering a variety of professionally administered spa services to clients on a day-use basis. Destination Spa - A facility is a facility with the primary purpose of guiding individual spa-goers to develop healthy habits. Historically a seven-day stay, this lifestyle transformation can be accomplished by providing a comprehensive program that includes spa services, physical fitness activities, wellness education, healthful cuisine and special interest programming. Medical Spa - A facility that operates under the full-time, on-site supervision of a licensed health care professional whose primary purpose is to provide comprehensive medical and wellness care in an environment that integrates spa services, as well as traditional, complimentary and/or alternative therapies and treatments. The facility operates within the scope of practice of its staff, which can include both Aesthetic/Cosmetic and Prevention/Wellness procedures and services. Mineral Springs Spa - A spa offering an on-site source of natural mineral, thermal or seawater used in hydrotherapy treatments. Resort/Hotel Spa - A spa owned by and located within a resort or hotel providing professionally administered spa services, fitness and wellness components and spa cuisine menu choices. In addition to the leisure guest, this is a great place for business travelers who wish to take advantage of the spa experience while away from home.