

No. 6 / June 2021, Cologne
#aquanale

aquanale 2021: spotlight on the swimming pool and wellness industry

Live and in person - Koelnmesse is making what seemed unimaginable for a long time possible. aquanale, International Trade Fair for Sauna.Pool.Ambience, will be hosted in Cologne as an in-person event from 26 to 29 October. New products, trends and opportunities to exchange ideas face-to-face - all this will be available at aquanale, which is co-located with FSB, the International Trade Fair for Public Space, Sports and Leisure Facilities.

What impact has the coronavirus pandemic had on the market for private pools and wellness facilities? Which developments are shaping the industry? And what do customers today want? Here we take a look at the latest trends in a branch of the economy that revolves around water:

Creating a haven of comfort and enjoying the holiday feeling at home

The upturn in the market for private swimming pools continued in the second year of the pandemic; it even boomed in some areas. In the absence of a clear end to the season, many swimming pool companies have not taken a break to meet the growing demand from customers who want a pool and wellness in their own gardens. The desire to make the home a cosy sanctuary of comfort has long been expressed with words such as “homing”, “hygge” and “cocooning”, but this urge has emerged with even greater prominence since 2020. Above all, it is about creating a place where you can feel at home in the true sense of the term. In the light of the boom in home working and home schooling, with sports facilities closed and stay-at-home orders imposed, the home also has to provide an escape from everyday life. A pool in the garden is not just a place for swimming laps, relaxing or splashing about boisterously in the case of younger users. When evening comes, it transforms into a balm for the soul as an illuminated garden feature - you could not ask for more. Germans were once regarded as world champions in foreign travel, but holidays in far-off places are no longer a given. Vacationing at home has been in since 2020. Given the increasingly hot weather, investing in a “seaside in the backyard” pays off, and its diverse benefits are now plain to see - and they are not restricted to the pandemic: a holiday with no stressful preparations, no suitcases to pack and no journey. Avoiding travel is considered responsible in the increasingly widespread environmentally conscious outlook.

Yes to a good time, no to waste

In this context, protecting natural resources is also becoming more and more important in pool operation, and the swimming pool industry has adapted to this demand. For instance, a pool cover is now a must for any swimming pool. It retains



aquanale
26.10. - 29.10.2021
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the heat generated in the pool for longer and can reduce power consumption by up to 80 per cent. To put it another way, those who save on a cover waste around 12 tonnes of carbon dioxide each pool season. That is equivalent to the emissions generated by a mid-size car on a round-the-world trip. Energy-efficient products are also available for heat generation. Heat pumps and solar collectors are two products to emerge from the “green wave”. Using stainless steel and other long-lasting, recyclable materials is as important here as developing products that can do more with less power, such as energy-efficient pumps. After all, we want nature to stay healthy.

Health & hygiene

Awareness of human health was already on the rise, but it has taken on even greater significance since 2020. Closely linked to it is the issue of hygiene. Keeping a safe distance from other people and avoiding gatherings - these are rules for staying healthy that a home wellness paradise can fulfil. Combined with professional water treatment, chlorine and other pool cleaning products ensure complete protection against viruses and bacteria. Once more of a lifestyle feature, the garden pool is evolving into a 24/7 fitness studio where the owners can control disinfection and the water values themselves and decide how many people may use the facility.

Personalisation

Being able to decide who enters your garden. Being able to decide when you would like to swim and what your own well-being oasis looks like - these are expressions of the mega-trend for personalisation, which is boosting demand for private wellness facilities generally and fuelling demand for pools that are one of a kind. Consumers want a completely customised, original design, not an off-the-peg solution, especially when there is no space for a standard-size pool. And this is increasingly the case due to the dwindling size of plots of land and gardens in cities as a result of urbanisation.

Little space, lots of possibilities

Predominantly formed of small and medium-sized companies, the swimming pool and wellness industry is well placed to respond very flexibly to this demand. Alongside traditional swimming pools in various price segments, mini pools and swim spas are also extremely popular. These tiny solutions are well received because, equipped with accessories such as swim jets, light features and massage jets, they can offer diverse possibilities for use that make them easily a match for larger alternatives. No one has to do without simply because of a lack of space. “Both one and the other” is the maxim in the swimming pool industry, not “either or”. An example of this is timber decking pool coverings, which slide over the surface of the water and can also be used as a terrace. A clever solution that saves both space and energy. Operated remotely at the press of a button, that goes without saying.

Convenience & service

Convenience is a major theme overall. It is now standard for hardly anyone to scrub their pool themselves. Instead, this chore is delegated to robotic pool cleaners. Modern pool owners can control their fully connected facility using an app on their smartphones. For even greater convenience, monitoring water values can be outsourced to a specialist swimming pool construction company under a service

agreement. This clearly shows that the advance of digitalisation is no substitute for the human factor. Far from it - demand for expert service is booming like never before. As the shortage of skilled workers worsens, swimming pool construction specialists are becoming sought-after professionals. There will be plenty of work for them in the future, too. Even if the massive pool trend triggered by the pandemic dies down, a wellness oasis in the back garden is a welcome financial investment with healthy returns: Investing in bricks and mortar is a safe choice given negative interest rates and the turbulence on the stock market.

Staycationing

Holidaying at home was an alternative to long-distance travel for some even before the pandemic, and not just for the environmentally conscious. It also appeals to those who want to treat themselves to the luxury of not having to plan anything as well as professionals with a global outlook who work with colleagues and partners across the globe, but who want to just chill out, not organise anything and stay local when they are on vacation. In a business world that demands round-the-clock flexibility and focus, the home can serve as a constant beacon of calm, where the mind can be allowed to roam freely. Staycation has more than 35 million hits on Google, and more than 6 million images on Instagram are tagged with it.

What does holidaying at home look like? The more technology pervades our lives, the more we appreciate nature and being offline. People are thinking holistically, not just about body and soul, but also about their homes and gardens. True to the motto “A pool doesn’t make a summer”, the goal is to turn the garden into a space for living. The swimming pool forms part of an overall concept that includes planting, terrace design, outdoor furniture and accessories, as well as a barbecue station. Stylish sun protection, a fashionable garden shower and a romantic fireplace? They are all part of it, too. Our desire to be in harmony with nature is constantly growing.

A market with growth potential

The market for private swimming pools has also received a boost in growth. According to estimates by the German Association for Swimming Pools & Wellness (bsw), around 30,000 new swimming pools were built in Germany last year. The country now has more than 800,000 pools built by professionals. Looking at the market as a whole, Germany can now boast more than 2.2 million “watering places”. With approximately 16 million single-family homes in the country, there is further scope for growth with plenty of development opportunities for the nation’s roughly 750 specialist swimming pool construction companies.

Spiralling demand for water havens and wellness oases is not just a German trend; growth in private swimming pools is also soaring in other European countries, as aquanale will clearly demonstrate. The international trade fair hosts the EUSA Award for European swimming pools, which showcases the most beautiful facilities on the continent. Spas and whirlpool baths are also an important area of focus at the trade fair. After all, they represent a significant market segment, alongside saunas, steam baths and multifunctional wellness centres for sweating and revitalising.

Design & flexibility of use

Despite all the differences between customers and their design preferences, a trend for minimalist pool and wellness facilities is clearly emerging. Transparency, clean lines, light colours and natural shades predominate while the technology is hidden away where possible. Light is incorporated into the design, creating connections between underwater lighting and islands of light “on firm ground”, whether this is in the garden or an indoor swimming pool.

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How consumers want to use their pool varies. For some, fun for the kids is the top priority; for others, it is about having a place for swim training, aqua jogging or relaxing in comfort. The swimming pool industry has responded to these different target groups with a wide spectrum of built-in pool accessories, which includes swim jets, massage jets, cascade pool waterfalls and aerators, among a host of other options. Workout apps that control swim jets, pool exercise bikes for cycling in the water and online pool fitness courses - plus a special screen for good picture quality even in the sunlight - ensure pools large and small can be used in diverse ways.

With this diversity in mind, aquanale will present an A to Z of the market for swimming, sweating and making the self more beautiful in a showcase that covers both the private and the public segments. Alongside home swimming pools and wellness oases, the trade fair also represents the approximately 6,000 public pool facilities and 2,000 sauna facilities in Germany, as well as the roughly 3,500 pools in hotels and more than 2,000 pools in communal living facilities. The industry gathering is accompanied by the International Swimming Pool and Wellness Forum, a congress programme that addresses issues for private pools, hotel swimming pools and public facilities as well as presenting content for all market sectors.

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