HOT TUB TONY'S BUYER'S GUIDE



Find the right hot tub for your home—
and a Northern Michigan winter.

Phillips Lifestyles

Hot Tub Tony's Buyer's Guide

How to Pick the Right Hot Tub for Your Home, Your Life, and a Northern Michigan Winter

By Tony Fifarek (a.k.a. Hot Tub Tony), Lead Sales Associate, Phillips Lifestyles

Hi, I'm Tony. Folks around here call me Hot Tub Tony, and after nearly 40 years in this business, I've earned the nickname honestly. I've sat in more hot tubs than I can count (it's a tough job, but somebody has to do it), and I've helped thousands of Northern Michigan families find the right one.



Here's the first thing I tell everybody who walks through our door: the best hot tub is not the one with the most jets, the most lights, or the most cup holders. It's the one you'll actually climb into on a Tuesday night in February when it's 8 degrees out and the snow is coming sideways off the bay. This guide walks you through the brands we carry at Phillips Lifestyles: Jacuzzi®, Hot Spring®, Sundance®, Caldera®, Marquis®, and Nordic®, plus Endless Pools® swim spas for those who want to swim. I'll give you the straight scoop on each one, what to think about before you buy, and what really matters once the tub is in your backyard.

40 *years in this business*

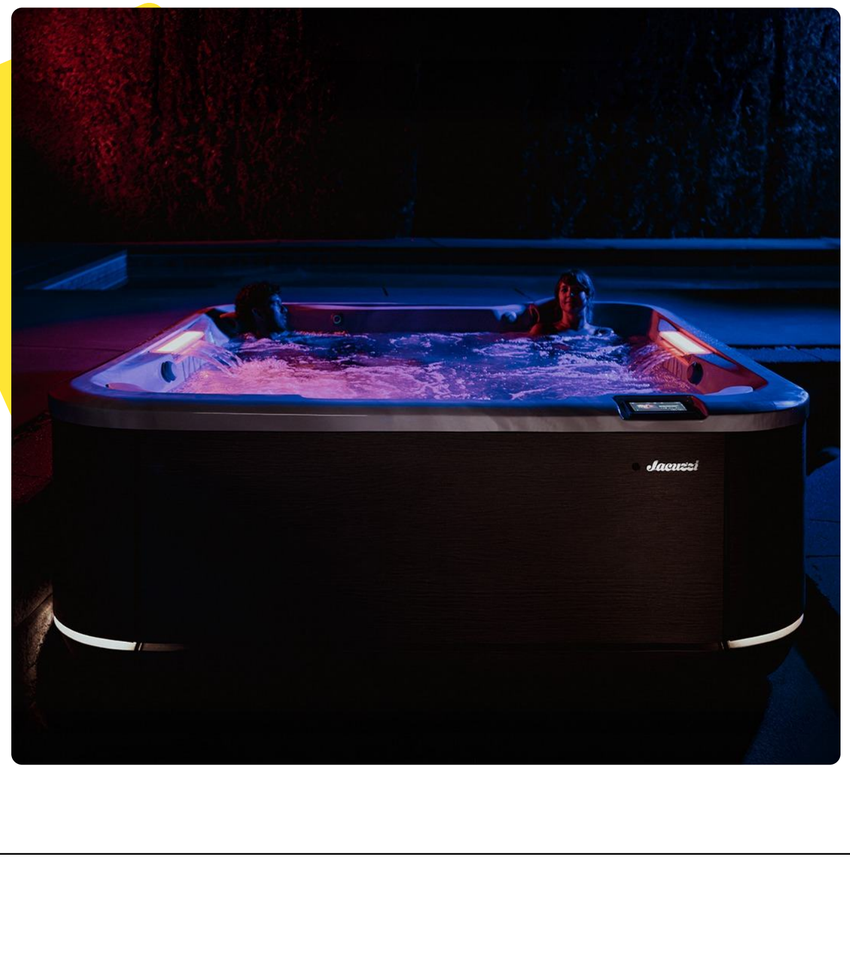
Step One | Forget the Brochure. How Will You Actually Use It?

Before we talk brands, let's talk about you. Every great hot tub purchase starts with one question: what do you want this thing to do for you?

- A couple who wants a quiet soak after the kids are in bed doesn't need a seven-seat party barge.
- A family with young kids wants open seating, tough surfaces, and water care that doesn't require a chemistry degree.
- If your back, shoulders, or knees have been complaining, jet placement matters way more than mood lighting.
- And if you're building that dream patio, you'll want a cabinet and design that look like they belong there.

The most common reasons people buy from us:

- Daily relaxation and stress relief.
- Family time (with the phones left inside).
- Entertaining friends and neighbours.
- Hydrotherapy for sore muscles and achy joints.
- Low-maintenance ownership
- Standing up to Northern Michigan winters
- Looking great in the backyard
- Having a local dealer who'll be there for years



Tony's Take:

Pick your top two or three from that list before you come in. Once you know your priorities, choosing the right model gets a whole lot easier.

The Brands We Carry
(and Who Each One Is Perfect For)

Jacuzzi® Hot Tubs

The Name Everybody Knows, for Good Reason

Jacuzzi is the brand people use when they mean “hot tub,” and that kind of name recognition is earned. Jacuzzi is all about premium hydrotherapy: ergonomic seats and carefully placed jets designed to give you a targeted massage, instead of just piling on jets to win the spec sheet contest.



The lineup runs from the approachable J-200™ Collection up through the J-300™, J-400™, and J-500™ families. A great example is the J-285, a roomy seven-seater that’s perfect for families and entertainers who want space without jumping to the top price tier. When folks want a more elevated experience, the J-300 and J-400 collections are where the conversation gets serious: better design details, more jet variety, nicer lighting, more comfort, and upgraded water care.

Jacuzzi has also made water care a lot friendlier. Many models offer True Water® nanobubble technology and are compatible with FROG® @ease® cartridges, which take a lot of the day-to-day guesswork out of keeping your water clean.

Jacuzzi owners tend to love:

- Premium design options
- A great variety of comfortable seats
- The reputation and the name on the side of the tub
- Strong, targeted massage performance
- SmartTub® monitoring on select models
- A wide range from value-friendly to full-on luxury



Jacuzzi offers

True Water®
Nanobubble technology

FROG® @ease®
Keeping your water clean.

Tony’s Take:

Jacuzzi isn’t always the lowest price on day one, but it’s a tub people keep for a long, long time. Between the hydrotherapy, the build quality, and the resale confidence, the long-term value is real.

Hot Spring® Spas

The Easy Button for Ownership

HotSpring®
Every day made better®

If you want a premium hot tub with the least amount of fuss, Hot Spring is one I recommend all the time.

It shines in **three areas**: water care, energy efficiency, and comfort.

Hot Spring's best features

The Highlife® Collection is the place to start if you want Hot Spring's best features.

Envoy®
Hot Spring®



The Envoy is a five-seater for folks who want a more intimate luxury spa with lounge-style comfort.

Grandee®
Hot Spring®



The Grandee is a seven-seat luxury spa built for families and entertaining, with open seating and high-end hydrotherapy

Moto-Massage® feature

Now let me tell you about Moto-Massage® DX, found on select models. Instead of jets that sit still, Moto-Massage sends moving streams of water up and down your back. If back therapy is high on your list, you need to wet-test this one. It just feels different from anything else.

FreshWater® Salt System & IQ features

Hot Spring also takes water care seriously. The FreshWater® Salt System and FreshWater® IQ are designed to make your water more predictable. Salt isn't "maintenance free" (nothing is, and anyone who tells you otherwise is selling something), but a lot of people love that it cuts down the harsh feel and chlorine smell. You'll still test, balance, and clean filters, but the water feels softer and is easier to keep right.

Hot Spring owners usually point to:

- Clean, modern design
- Moto-Massage® hydrotherapy
- Energy-efficient engineering and strong insulation
- FreshWater® Salt System options
- Comfortable seating
- Low-hassle ownership when it's cared for properly



Tony's Take:

Up here, energy performance isn't a nice-to-have, it's a must. A tub that's easy to care for and cheap to run gets used more. That's the whole point.

Sundance® Spas

Jet Variety and Built for Families

Sundance Spas

Sundance is known for hydrotherapy, especially its Fluidix® jets, which deliver different massage sensations without moving parts inside the jet.

Claremont®
980™ Series



Altamar®
880™ Series



Chelsee®
780™ Series



Alicia®
680™ Series



The lineup includes the 980™, 880™, 780™, and 680™ Series, so you can go from premium feature sets all the way to value-focused family spas.

The 880 Series is one of Sundance's best-known collections and a great place to start if you want a strong mix of massage, comfort, and premium features.

I also like that Sundance organizes its models around how people actually live: entertaining, low maintenance, small spaces, powerful massage, family use, and cold climates. (Hello, Northern Michigan.)

Sundance fans usually appreciate:

- Lots of jet variety
- Family-friendly layouts
- SmartTub® technology on select models
- Comfortable, open seating
- Low-maintenance water care options
- A good balance of premium and practical





Tony's Take:

If one person in your house wants a shoulder massage, another needs lower-back relief, and somebody else just wants their feet worked on, Sundance is worth a close look.

Caldera® Spas

Comfort First, Luxury All Around

If comfort is your number-one priority, you need to sit in a Caldera. The brand is all about ergonomic seating, elegant design, and making your soak feel like a daily ritual.

Caldera® families

Caldera offers several families, including Utopia®, Paradise®, Vacanza®, and Fantasy™, so there's a wide range of prices and features.

Utopia®,
Caldera® Spas



Paradise®
Caldera® Spas



Fantasy™
Caldera® Spas



Vacanza®
Caldera® Spas



Caldera's real strength is how it feels when you sit in it: the seat depth, the footwell, the jet positioning, and that overall "ahhh" feeling. You can't judge that from a brochure. Caldera also offers FreshWater® IQ on compatible models, with alerts and dosing guidance that make water care easier to understand, especially for first-time owners.

At the top end, the Cantabria is an eight-seat Utopia Series spa built for big families and people who love to entertain. It's a serious luxury spa with a big footprint, premium comfort, and a wellness-focused design. In the **Paradise Series**, models like the Makena®, Salina®, Seychelles®, and Martinique® hit a sweet spot of features and value without going all the way to the top of the line.

Caldera is a great fit if you want:

- Excellent seating comfort
- Multiple price tiers
- Balanced hydrotherapy
- A refined, elegant design
- Large family models
- Simplified water care options





Tony's Take:

Dry-testing is good. Wet-testing is better. Caldera is the brand where I really want you to sit down, lean back, and see how it feels.

Marquis® Hot Tubs

High-Flow Therapy and Practical Value

Marquis is for folks who want strong performance, comfortable therapy seats, and a practical approach to ownership.

Marquis® Collection

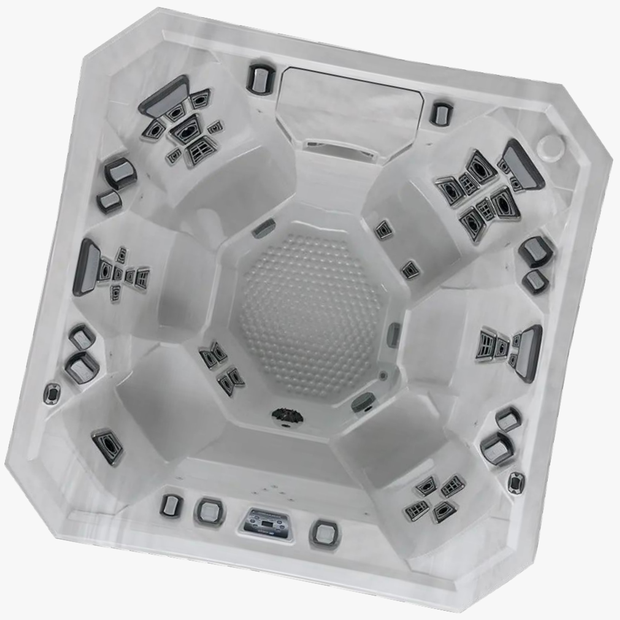
Their collections, including Crown, Vector21, Elite, and Celebrity, make it easy to choose between high-end luxury, performance styling, and value-oriented models.

Marquis focuses on high-flow therapy. Instead of bragging about jet count, they talk about how the pumps move water through engineered seating. That matters, because the quality of a massage comes from flow, plumbing design, seat shape, and jet placement, not just a number on a spec sheet. You'll also find features like ConstantClean®, MicroSilk® options, MQTouch controls, and plenty of accessories.

Crown | Euphoria



Vector21 | V84



Celebrity | Monaco

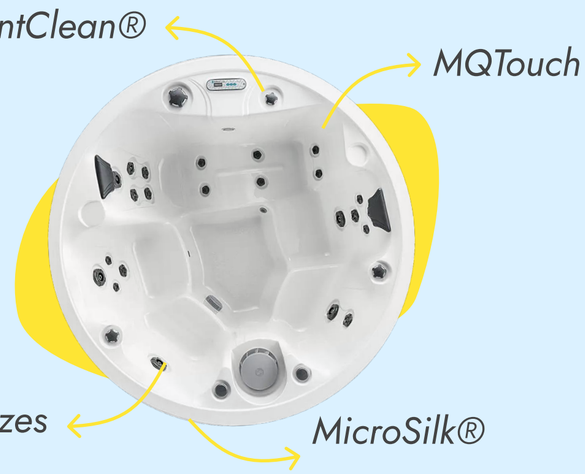


Elite | Hollywood Elite



Marquis may be a great fit if you want:

- A wide range of sizes
- Practical ownership features
- Entertainment and accessory options
- Strong hydrotherapy performance
- Solid value across several collections





Tony's Take:

Marquis tubs feel performance-driven but still practical. They work for families, entertainers, couples, and anyone who's serious about therapy.

Nordic® Hot Tubs

Michigan-Made and Built for Our Winters

Nordic is our hometown hero. These tubs are built right here in Michigan by people who know exactly what a January up north feels like. Nordic is all about solid, dependable hot tubs at a great value, without a lot of complicated bells and whistles you'll never use.

Nordic® Collection

If you want a quality tub that heats up, holds up, and doesn't break the bank, Nordic belongs on your list.

They're a great choice for first-time owners, cabins and cottages, and anyone who wants to get in the water without overthinking it.

Nordic® | Warrior XL



Nordic is a great fit if you want:

- A Michigan-made product
- Straightforward, easy-to-use features
- Great value for the money
- A tub built with cold winters in mind



Tony's Take:

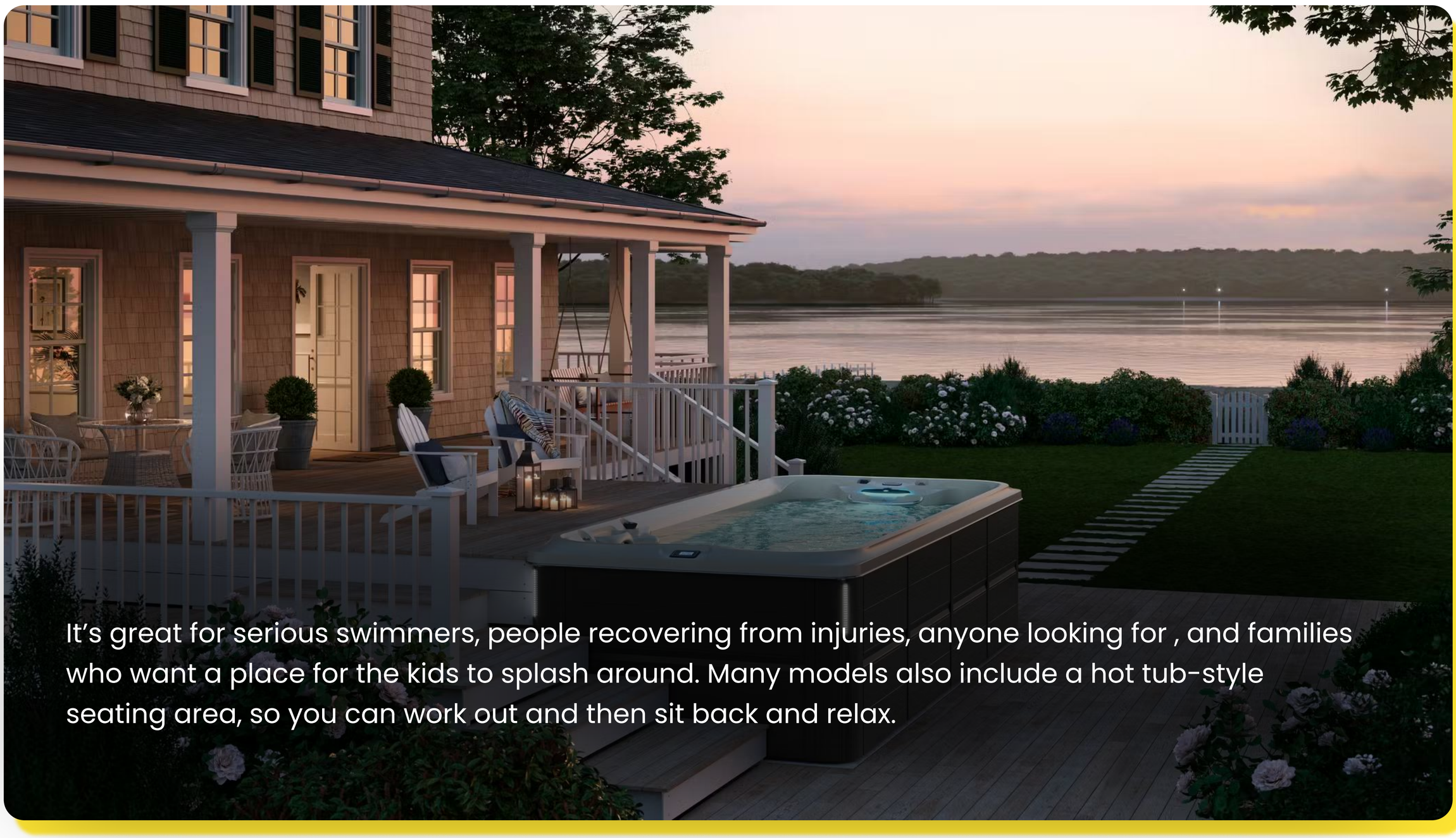
Not everybody needs the top-of-the-line model. For a lot of families, a Nordic is exactly the right tub at exactly the right price.



Want to Swim?

Meet Endless Pools®

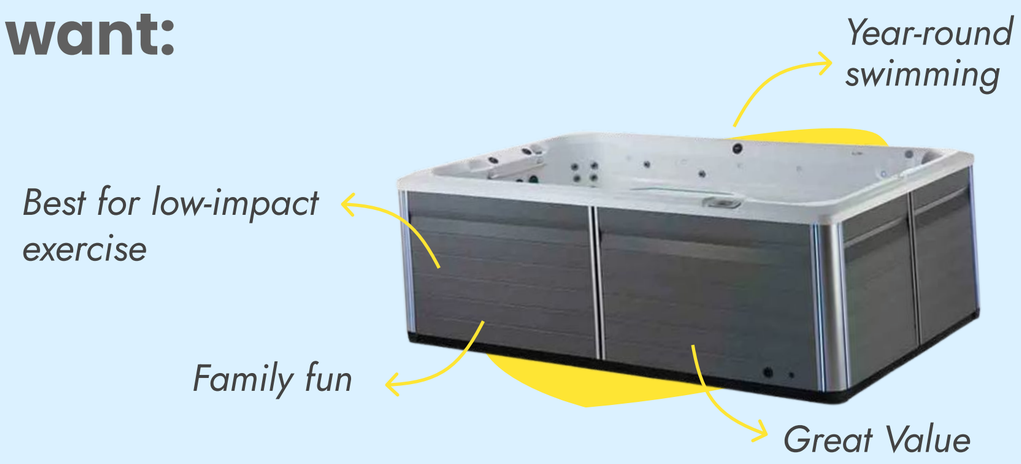
Some folks come in wanting more than a soak. If you want to swim, exercise, or do aquatic therapy at home, all year long, we also carry Endless Pools® swim spas. An Endless Pools swim spa lets you swim in place against a smooth, adjustable current, so you get a real swim workout without needing a full-size pool.



It’s great for serious swimmers, people recovering from injuries, anyone looking for , and families who want a place for the kids to splash around. Many models also include a hot tub-style seating area, so you can work out and then sit back and relax.

A swim spa may be right for you if you want:

- Year-round swimming and exercise at home
- Low-impact workouts that are easy on the joints
- Pool-style family fun in a smaller footprint
- A combination of fitness and relaxation





Tony’s Take:

If you’ve been going back and forth between a pool and a hot tub, a swim spa might be the answer. In Northern Michigan, a pool gets a few months a year. A swim spa gets all twelve.



Tony's CHEAT SHEET

Short on time?
Here's where I'd start.

If you want...	Start with...
The most recognized name in hot tubs and premium, targeted massage	Jacuzzi®
Easy water care, energy efficiency, and year-round use	Hot Spring®
Lots of jet variety and a great family spa	Sundance®
High-flow therapy and practical value	Marquis®
A Michigan-made tub at a great value	Nordic®
To swim and exercise at home all year	Endless Pools® swim spas
Help figuring out which one is you	Tony (that's what I'm here for)

What Owners Care About After the Sale

Here's a little secret from four decades in the business: **what people care about in the showroom isn't always what they care about a year later.**



In the showroom, people focus on:

- Price
- Jet Count
- Seating Capacity
- Brand
- Name
- Size
- Lighting

A year later, they care about:

Whether they use it often, whether the seats are comfortable, whether the water is easy to keep clean, whether it heats efficiently, whether the cover is easy to handle, whether service is there when they need it, and whether it feels great after a long day.



Tony's Take:

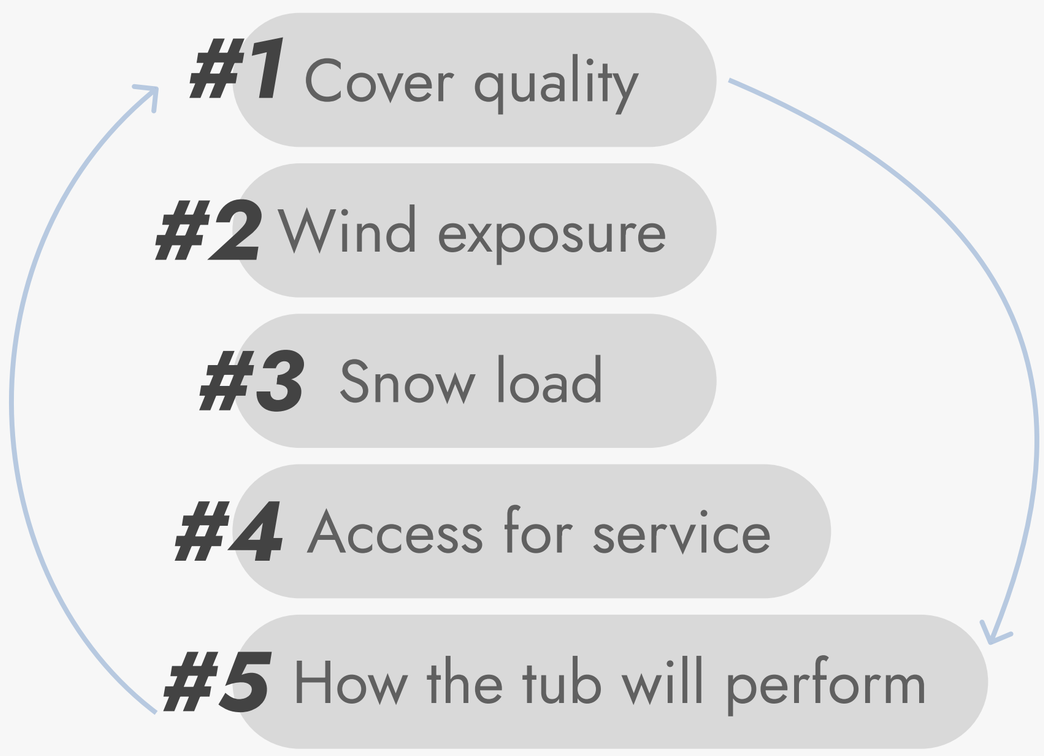
Shop for the second list. Your future self will thank you.



A Hot Tub Is a System, Not Just a Tub

How we help you at Phillips Lifestyles:

In Northern Michigan we also help you think through cover quality, wind exposure, snow load, access for service, and how the tub will perform when the temperature drops. These are the details that make the difference between a tub you love and a tub you tolerate.



A hot tub isn’t just a product

This is why working with a good local dealer matters. A hot tub isn’t just a product you drop in the yard. It’s a whole system: site planning, electrical prep, delivery access, the foundation, a cover lifter, steps, water care, winter guidance, and service for years to come.

Maintenance:
The Honest Truth

No quality hot tub is maintenance free. The good news? Modern hot tubs are a lot easier to care for than most first-time buyers expect.

A normal routine looks like this:

1

Testing water one to three times a week, depending on use

2

Keeping sanitizer in range and balancing pH and alkalinity

3

Rinsing filters regularly, deep-cleaning them periodically, and replacing them as needed

4

Draining and refilling every few months, depending on use and your water-care system

5

Wiping down the shell when you drain and refill

6

Cleaning and protecting the cover

7

Keeping snow and debris off the cover in winter (yes, really)

Giving the water a bit more love:

Salt systems, smart monitoring, mineral cartridges, ozone, UV, and advanced filtration can all help a lot, but none of them replace a little owner attention. If you use your tub heavily, especially with kids or guests, plan on giving the water a bit more love.

Why Phillips Lifestyles?

We've been serving Northern Michigan since 1980, with showrooms in Grawn and Traverse City. Our job isn't to push you into a tub. It's to help you compare brands honestly, understand the tradeoffs, plan your site the right way, and take care of you long after delivery day.

If you're choosing between Jacuzzi, Hot Spring, Sundance, Caldera, Marquis, and Nordic, you're already looking at serious, quality brands. From here, the decision comes down to comfort, how you'll use it, your water-care preference, budget, size, and confidence in the folks who'll be supporting you.



Come Sit In a Few (Bring Your Swimsuit)

Brochures are nice. Sitting in the tub is better. Wet-testing is best. Stop by Phillips Lifestyles, try a few seats, feel the difference between brands, and talk through installation with someone who's been doing this a long time.

A hot tub should become part of your routine. When you pick the right one and have the right team behind it, it can become one of the most-used and most-loved spots at your house.

Come see me. I'll have the water warm.
— Hot Tub Tony

Phillips Lifestyles



Northern Michigan's Premiere Spa & Fireplace Dealer Since 1980

How to Pick the Right Hot Tub for Your Home, Your Life, and a Northern Michigan Winter

Since 1980, Phillips Lifestyles has been Northern Michigan's premier destination for all things hearth, hot tub, and outdoor living. With two conveniently located showrooms in Chums Corner and Cherryland, we offer a wide selection of top-quality products from renowned brands.

Our knowledgeable and friendly staff is dedicated to helping you create the perfect outdoor oasis. Whether you're dreaming of a cozy fireplace, a luxurious hot tub, or a custom built outdoor sauna, we've got you covered. We're committed to providing exceptional customer service and expert advice to ensure your complete satisfaction.

Chums Corner Location
5161 US-31
Grawn, MI 49637
Phone: (231) 888-0721

Cherryland Location
1151 W. South Airport Rd.
Traverse City, MI 49637
Phone: (231) 412-1884