

= Gay bathhouse =

Gay bathhouses , also known as gay saunas or steambaths , are commercial spaces for men to have sex with other men . In gay slang in some regions these venues are also known colloquially as " the baths " , " the sauna " or " the tubs " , but they should not be confused with public bathing . Gay baths are primarily for sex , not bathing .

Not all men who visit gay bathhouses consider themselves gay , regardless of their sexual behavior . Bathhouses offering similar opportunities for sex for women are rare , though some men 's bathhouses occasionally have " lesbian " or " women only " nights .

Bathhouses vary considerably in size and amenities ? from small establishments with 10 or 20 rooms and a handful of lockers to multi @-@ story saunas with a variety of room styles or sizes and several steam baths , Jacuzzi tubs , and sometimes swimming pools . Most have a steam room (or wet sauna) , dry sauna , showers , lockers , and small private rooms .

Many bathhouses are , for legal reasons , " membership only " , though membership is generally open to any adult who seeks it , usually after paying a small fee . Unlike brothels , customers pay only for the use of the facilities . Sexual activity , if it occurs , is not provided by staff of the establishment but is between customers , and no money is exchanged . Many gay bathhouses , for legal reasons , explicitly prohibit or discourage prostitution and ban known prostitutes .

= = History = =

Records of men meeting for sex with other men in bathhouses date back to the 15th century . A tradition of public baths dates back to the 6th century BC , and there are many ancient records of homosexual activity in Greece . In the West , gay men have been using bathhouses for sex since at least the late 19th and early 20th centuries , a time when homosexual acts were illegal in most Western countries and men who were caught engaging in homosexual acts were often arrested and publicly humiliated . Men began frequenting cruising areas such as bathhouses , public parks , alleys , train and bus stations , movie theaters , public lavatories (cottages or tearooms) , and gym changing rooms where they could meet other men for sex . Some bathhouse owners tried to prevent sex between patrons while others , mindful of profits or prepared to risk prosecution , overlooked discreet homosexual activity .

= = = Early records = = =

1492 Florence

In Florence , Italy , in 1492 there was a purge against the " vice of sodomy " . The places used for homosexual acts were to be taverns , baths , and casini (sheds or houses used for illicit sex and gambling) . The Eight of Watch (the city 's leading criminal court) issued several decrees associated with sodomy and on April 11 , 1492 they warned the managers of bathhouses to keep out " suspect boys " on penalty of a fine . In the short period from April 1492 to February 1494 they convicted 44 men for homosexual relations not involving violence or aggravating circumstances .

1876 Paris

In France the first recorded police raid on a Parisian bathhouse was in 1876 in the Bains de Gymnase on the Rue du Faubourg @-@ Poissonnière . Six men aged 14 to 22 were prosecuted for an offense against public decency and the manager and two employees for facilitating pederasty .

1903 New York

In the United States on February 21 , 1903 , New York police conducted the first recorded raid on a gay bathhouse , the Ariston Hotel Baths . 26 men were arrested and 12 brought to trial on sodomy charges ; 7 men received sentences ranging from 4 to 20 years in prison .

= = = Early gay bathhouses = = =

In New York City , the Everard (nicknamed the Everhard) was converted from a church to a

bathhouse in 1888 and was patronized by gay men before the 1920s and by the 1930s had a reputation as the " classiest , safest , and best known of the baths " . It was damaged by fire on May 25 , 1977 , when nine men died and several others were seriously injured . The Everard closed in 1986 . Also popular in the 1910s were the Produce Exchange Baths and the Lafayette Baths (403 ? 405 Lafayette Street , which from 1916 was managed by Ira & George Gershwin) . American precisionist painter Charles Demuth used the Lafayette Baths as his favourite haunt . His 1918 homoerotic self @-@ portrait set in a Turkish bath is likely to have been inspired by it . The Penn Post Baths in a hotel basement (The Penn Post Hotel , 304 West 31st Street) was a popular gay location in the 1920s despite a seedy condition and the lack of private rooms .

The American composer Charles Griffes (1884 ? 1920) wrote in his diaries about visits to the New York bathhouses and the YMCA . His biography states : So great was his need to be with boys , that though his home contained two pianos , he chose to practice at an instrument at the Y , and his favorite time was when the players were coming and going from their games .

When a friend with " little experience but great desire " confided his homosexual longings to Charles Griffes in 1916 , Griffes took him to the Lafayette so that he could meet other gay men and explore his sexual interests in a supportive environment : the friend was " astounded and fascinated " by what he saw there . The baths also encouraged more advanced forms of sexual experimentation . Griffes himself had had his first encounter with a man interested in sadomasochism at the Lafayette two years earlier (he found the man " interesting " but the experience unappealing) , and several men interviewed in the mid @-@ 1930s referred to experimenting in the baths and learning of new pleasures .

In London , the Savoy Turkish Baths at 92 Jermyn Street became a favorite spot (opening in 1910 and remaining open until September 1975) . The journalist A.J. Langguth wrote : ... [The baths at Jermyn Street] represented a twilight arena for elderly men who came to sweat poisons from their systems and youths who came to strike beguiling poses in Turkish towels ... although they were closely overseen by attendants , they provided a discreet place to inspect a young man before offering a cup of tea at Lyons . Regulars included Rock Hudson .

In the 1950s the Bermondsey Turkish Baths were rated by Kenneth Williams as " quite fabulous " in his diaries .

Steambaths in the 1930s : The steambaths that had been well known to me were those of East Ham , Greenwich and Bermondsey . In the first two it was frequently possible to indulge in what the Spartacus Guide coyly describes as ' action ' , but behaviour at all times had to be reasonably cautious . In the Grange Road baths in Bermondsey , however , all restraint could immediately be discarded with the small towels provided to cover your nakedness .

= = = Modern gay bathhouses = = =

In the 1950s exclusively gay bathhouses began to open in the United States . Though subject to vice raids , these bathhouses were " oasis of homosexual camaraderie " and were , as they remain today , " places where it was safe to be gay " , whether or not patrons themselves identified as homosexual . The gay baths offered a much safer alternative to sex in other public places .

In the late 1960s and 1970s , gay bathhouses ? now primarily gay @-@ owned and operated ? became fully licensed gay establishments which soon became major gay institutions . These bathhouses served as informal gay meeting places , places where friends could meet and relax . Gay bathhouses frequently threw parties for Pride Day and were usually open , and busy , on public holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas , when some gay men , particularly those who had been rejected by their families due to their sexual orientation , had nowhere to go . The American writer Truman Capote was a regular at New York City baths in the 1970s , in particular the sauna at West 58th Street .

Another service offered by the baths was voter registration . In the run @-@ up to the 1980 election , the New St. Mark 's Baths in New York City , with the assistance of the League of Women Voters , conducted a voter registration drive on its premises .

In Australia , the first gay steam bath was opened in Sydney in 1967 . This was the Bondi Junction

Steam Baths at 109 Oxford Street . From 1972 through 1977 the following gay steam baths opened : Ken 's Karate Klub (nicknamed " KKK ") , now called Ken 's at Kensington ; No. 253 ; King Steam ; Silhouette American Health Centre ; Colt 107 Recreation Centre ; Barefoot Boy ; and Roman Bath (nicknamed " Roman Ruins ") . In Melbourne the first gay bathhouse was Steamworks in La Trobe Street , which opened in 1979 and closed 13 October 2008 .

Gay saunas , as they are more commonly known in Australia and New Zealand , were present in most large cities in those countries by the late 1980s . As homosexuality was decriminalised in New Zealand and most Australian states during the 1970s and 1980s , there was no criminal conduct occurring on the premises of such " sex on site venues " .

In Britain gay saunas were routinely raided by police up until the end of the 1980s (for example raids in May 1988 on Brownies in Streatham , the owner getting a six @-@ month jail sentence and a £ 5 @,@ 000 fine , and the Brooklyn House Hotel sauna in Manchester) . By the 1990s , with increasing scrutiny of the costs of such operations (charges of gross indecency in a sauna normally needing the expense of undercover officers) , a reduced likelihood of successful prosecution , concerns of being perceived as homophobic , and little public interest in victimless crime , gay saunas became free to operate without the risk of being raided by police . Also , police attitudes meant that they were more willing to turn a blind eye because they preferred such activity to take place in a contained environment rather than outdoors even though users were still committing the homosexual sexual offence of gross indecency , until gross indecency was wiped from the statute books following the Sexual Offences Act 2003 .

= = Bathhouses today = =

Gay bathhouses today continue to fill a similar function as they did historically . The community aspect has lessened in some territories , particularly those where gay men increasingly tend to come out .

Some men still use bathhouses as a convenient , safe place to meet other men for sex . In areas where homosexuality is more accepted , safety may no longer be a primary attraction .

Many bathhouses are open twenty @-@ four hours a day , seven days a week . There is typically a single customer entrance and exit . After paying at the main entrance , the customer is buzzed through the main door . This system allows establishments to screen potential troublemakers ; many bathhouses refuse entry to those who are visibly intoxicated , as well as known prostitutes . In some areas , particularly where homosexuality is illegal , considered immoral , or viewed with hostility , this is a necessary safety precaution .

Sexual encounters at bathhouses are frequently , but not always , anonymous . Some feel that the anonymity adds to the erotic excitement : that is what , for these patrons , one goes to the bathhouse for . Bathhouse encounters sometimes lead to relationships , but usually do not . Bathhouses are still used by men who have sex with men and do not identify as gay or bisexual , including those that are closeted or in heterosexual relationships .

In many bathhouses the customer has a choice between renting a room or a locker , often for fixed periods of up to 12 hours . A room typically consists of a locker and a single bed (though doubles are sometimes available) with a thin vinyl mat supported on a simple wooden box or frame , an arrangement that facilitates easy cleaning between patrons . In many bathhouses (particularly those outside the United States) , some or all of the rooms are freely available to all patrons .

Some bathhouses have areas designed to facilitate impersonal sex . These areas ? rooms or hallways ? are illuminated only by a (dim) red exit sign . It is possible to have sex , but not to see with whom . Other bathhouses , such as the Continental Baths in New York or the Club Baths in Washington , D.C. , have two or more bunkbeds in close proximity , in a public area . This provides a place to have sex for those who could afford only a locker , and facilitated exhibitionism and voyeurism for those so inclined . Baths often have a (porn) TV room or snack bar where patrons can recuperate between orgasms .

Some men use the baths as a cheaper alternative to hotels , despite the limitations of being potentially crowded public venues with only rudimentary rooms and limited or non @-@ existent

pass out privileges .

These guys will actually call me at home or send me e @-@ mails and we will make a date and we will meet at the baths purely because the sling is there and it 's easier and we go for a beer afterwards . I use the bathhouse more as an ancient Greek , Roman social centre and also a fucking centre and a fisting centre as well , and there 's a lounge where I can sit and relax with a coffee and a cigarette .

Bathhouses are not always identifiable as such from the outside . Some bathhouses are clearly marked and well lit , others have no marking other than a street address on the door . Bathhouses sometimes display the rainbow flag , which is commonly flown by businesses to identify themselves as gay @-@ run or gay @-@ friendly . Bathhouses commonly advertise widely in the gay press and sometimes advertise in mainstream newspapers and other media . In 2003 Australia began airing possibly the world 's first television advertisements for a gay bathhouse when advertisements on commercial television in Melbourne promoted Wet on Wellington , a sauna in Wellington Street , Collingwood .

In many countries , being identified in such a sauna was still viewed by the press as scandalous . In Ireland in November 1994 , the Incognito sauna made mainstream press as the gay sauna where a priest had died of a heart attack and two other priests were on hand to help out . Scott Capurro is known for his deliberately provocative comedy material and often refers to gay sexual culture including gay bathhouses .

= = Layout and typical amenities = =

On being buzzed in , the customer receives a towel (to wear , around the waist) and the key for his room or locker . The customer undresses , storing his clothing in the locker provided , and is then free to wander throughout the public areas of the bathhouse , which typically include the amenities of a traditional bathhouse or steambath (Picture from the movie Hamam) .

Many bathhouses also provide free condoms and lubricant . Some establishments require a piece of identification or an item of value to be left with the front desk on entry . Homosexualities emphasized the importance of the towel :

Visiting a downtown gay bath was in many ways like revisiting a high @-@ school gym ? everyone wearing the same towel , in the same color , on the same part of the body . There was no status consciousness in the social @-@ stratification sense ; the towel or loincloth created a sort of equal @-@ status social group .

Bathhouses are designed with imagery and music to create surroundings that are arousing to the visitors .

Bathhouses are usually dimly lit and play music , although an outdoors , enclosed rooftop or pool area is not uncommon . They are often laid out in a manner that allows or encourages customers to wander throughout the establishment ; a space laid out in this way is often referred to as a " maze " . Some bathhouses have a space where random , anonymous sex is all that can occur . These spaces ? rooms , hallways , or mazes , sometimes with glory holes ? have as their only illumination a (dim) red " Exit " sign , so one can have sex but one cannot see with whom . Other clubs , such as the Continental Baths or the Club Baths of Washington , D.C. , would have two or more bunk beds placed near each other , in a public area , thus providing a place to have sex for those who can afford only to rent a locker , and also maximizing the chances of being watched , for the exhibitionists so inclined . Rooms are usually grouped together , as are lockers . Bathhouses are frequently decorated with posters of nude or semi @-@ nude men , and sometimes explicit depictions of sex . It is not uncommon to see pornographic movies playing on wall @-@ mounted televisions throughout the bathhouse .

Most men typically just wear the towel provided . According to bathhouse etiquette , it is perfectly acceptable , even friendly , to put one 's hand under someone else 's towel to feel his penis , which , if well received , is the first step in sexual intimacy . Some bathhouses permit and others not only permit but encourage total nudity . In some bathhouses nudity is forbidden in the common areas of the establishments . Some men may wear underwear or fetish @-@ wear , but it is unusual for

customers to remain fully or even partially dressed in street clothes . Bare feet are customary , though some men prefer to wear flip flops or sandals , sometimes provided by the establishment , for foot protection . The room or locker key is usually suspended from an elastic band which can be worn around the wrist or ankle .

Some bathhouses require customers to purchase yearly memberships and many offer special entry rates to members , students , military , or other groups . In some countries , bathhouses can restrict entrance to men of certain age ranges (apart from the general requirement of being an adult) or physical types , although in other places this would be considered illegal discrimination . Some bathhouses hold occasional " leather " , " underwear " , or other theme nights .

In the 1970s bathhouses began to install " fantasy environments " which recreated erotic situations that were illegal or dangerous :

Orgy rooms . . . encouraged group sex , while glory holes recreated (public) toilets , and mazes took the place of bushes and undergrowth (in public parks) . Steam rooms and gyms were reminiscent of the cruisy YMCAs , while video rooms recreated the balconies and back rows of movie theaters . A popular Chicago bathhouse called Man ' s Country provided a full @-@ size model of an Everlast truck where visitors could have sex in the cab or in the rear , which served as an orgy room . . . Man ' s Country also offered a . . . fake prison cell made of rubber bars .

Many bathhouses sell food and drinks , cigarettes , pornography , sex toys , lubricants , and toiletries . Some bathhouses also provide non @-@ sexual services such as massage and reflexology . Some bathhouses serve as venues where testing for sexually transmitted infections takes place , at regular pre @-@ announced times .

= = Etiquette = =

Customers typically divide their time between the showers / saunas / jacuzzis and the main areas of the establishment . Customers who have rented rooms have free access to their room .

Customers who have rooms may leave their room doors open to signal that they are available for sex . An open door can also be an invitation for others to watch or join in sexual activity that is already occurring .

When a room is occupied only by a single person , some men will position themselves to suggest what they might like from someone joining them in the room : those who would like to be penetrated anally (" bottoms ") will sometimes lie face down on the bed with the door open , while those who prefer to penetrate others (" tops ") or to receive fellatio might lie face up .

In the past , the baths served as community spaces for gay men . Even now , some men choose to go to the baths with their friends (even though they may not necessarily have sex with each other) . While many men talk to each other at the baths , even forming long @-@ lasting friendships or relationships , many others do not , preferring , for various reasons , anonymity .

But I ? ve been to a sauna recently in New Zealand , where everyone just chatted away , which I found very strange . Um , but you know , that ' s because I guess it was a smaller city and people generally knew each other .

In this highly sexualized environment a look or nod is frequently enough to express interest . In darkened areas of the establishment including the mazes , video rooms , group sex areas , and the saunas or hot tubs (but not generally in the showers , toilets , hallways , gyms , café areas , and lounges) , men are usually free to touch other patrons ; it is expected , and often welcomed . A shake of the head , or pushing away the other ' s hand , means that the attention is not welcomed .

I normally find people with groping don ? t go away . You really have to as they grope your crotch area grab their hand and push it away and there have been times when I ? ve had to do that three , two or three or four times before they actually get the message . There ' s also been times when I actually just had to say to them to fuck off .

Some establishments allow or encourage sex in specific group sex areas . In some jurisdictions such activity is prohibited , and sex must be confined to private rooms . Some forbid sex in pools for hygiene reasons . In the United Kingdom , the requirement is often set by the local authority ' s Environmental Health department .

= = High @-@ risk behavior = =

= = = Sexually transmitted diseases = = =

From the mid @-@ 1980s onward there was lobbying against gay bathhouses blaming them for being a focus of infection encouraging the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) , in particular HIV , and this forced their closure in some jurisdictions (see Legal issues , below) .

In some countries , fears about the spread of STDs have prompted the closing of bathhouses ? with their private rooms ? in favour of sex clubs , in which all sexual activity takes place in the open , and can be observed by monitors whose job it is to enforce safe @-@ sex practices . However , proponents of bathhouses point out that closing these facilities does not prevent people from engaging in unsafe sex .

Neither the claim that bathhouses are responsible for the spread of sexually transmitted diseases , nor the claim that they are not , has been conclusively proved , but it is known that STDs are spread via unprotected sex , and as part of their membership agreement , or as a condition of entry , some bathhouses now require customers to affirm in writing that they will only practice safe sex on the premises , and venues frequently provide free condoms , latex gloves , and lubrication (and / or have them available for purchase) . In New Zealand and Australia , the New Zealand AIDS Foundation and constituent members of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations provide safe sex information for sex on site venue users .

Some anti @-@ bathhouse activists argue that these measures are not enough , especially given that it is virtually impossible to monitor sexual activity in a bathhouse ; however , while they acknowledge that closing gay bathhouses may force some men into unsafe or illegal situations in public parks and lavatories , they point out that they may be less likely to engage in anal or multipartner sex ? both of which put participants at risk for contracting STDs ? in such situations .

Others counter these claims by pointing out that bathhouses are a major source of safer sex information ? they provide pamphlets and post safer sex posters prominently (often on the walls of each room as well as in the common areas) , provide free condoms and lubricants , and often require patrons to affirm that they will only have safer sex on the premises . In cities with larger gay populations , STD and HIV testing and counseling may be offered on @-@ site for no charge .

= = = Drugs and alcohol = = =

In some countries bathhouses are prohibited from selling alcohol . (In Canada , where some bathhouses serve alcohol , a bathhouse holding a liquor license may be required to submit to liquor inspections , which activists claim are often a pretext for regulating gay sexual activity .) Many bathhouses deny entry to those who are visibly intoxicated but do not ? or cannot ? regulate the consumption of drugs (typically alcohol , marijuana , poppers , ecstasy , cocaine , and crystal meth) by their patrons . The use of drugs and alcohol may make people more likely to engage in unsafe sex . Sex clubs with no private areas potentially find it easier to regulate consumption of drugs on their premises .

The use of crystal meth is also known to lead to riskier sexual behaviour , but since gay crystal meth users tend to seek out other users to engage in sexual activity , they often prefer to make such arrangements via the internet .

= = = Prostitution = = =

In some countries straight and gay bathhouses are used by rent boys to find customers by offering massage services , the " complete service " is often used as a euphemism for sex .

All interviewees were asked whether or not they used condoms , and all with the exception of Fabian , said they used them when having penetrative sex with clients . For fellatio , sometimes they

used condoms and sometimes not ... For him (Fabian) , it was all the same whether he used a condom or not . He also talked about the drugs he had taken , pure alcohol , crack cocaine , and ? sometimes I inject , maybe 15 times I ? ve injected , crystal , cocaine and sometimes heroin ? .

= = Legal issues = =

= = = Canada = = =

Toronto bathhouse raids of 1981

On February 5 , 1981 , 150 police raided four gay bathhouses in Toronto , Ontario : the Club Baths , the Romans II Health and Recreation Spa , the Richmond Street Health Emporium , and The Barracks . The Richmond Health Emporium was so badly damaged in the raid that it never reopened . Nicknamed Operation Soap , the raid resulted in the arrests of 268 men . There was an immediate and angry response from both the gay and lesbian community and over 3 @, @ 000 people gathered in protest . A second demonstration which took place on February 20 , included over 4 @, @ 000 people who gathered at Queen 's Park and marched to Metro Toronto Police 's 52 Division .

Raid on Pussy Palace

In 2000 , Toronto police raided a women 's night at a bathhouse called Club Toronto . Police , almost all of them male , entered the establishment and walked around , taking the names and addresses of some 10 women and " aggressively questioned " volunteers . A Pussy Palace organizer stated ? [m] any women at the event were deeply angered and traumatized ? . A judge of the Ontario Court of Justice held that the police had violated the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms by using male police officers in the raid , describing the police actions as analogous to a strip search .

Raid on Goliath 's

In December 2002 , Calgary police raided Goliath 's resulting in charges against 19 men . Fifteen men were arrested in the raid . Thirteen customers were charged as " found @-@ ins " (found in a common bawdy house without a legal excuse) and two staff members were charged with the more serious offense of keeping a common bawdy house . The customers faced up to two years in prison . In addition , the owners of the bathhouse and a third staff member were later charged with keeping a common bawdy house .

On May 27 , 2004 , a judge ruled that the police had reasonable justification to raid Goliath 's . Defense lawyers countered that none of the anonymous information the police acted upon ? for example that live sex shows were being staged and drugs sold on the premises ? featured in the charges made against the seventeen men . They also pointed out that the police failed to call in the force 's gay community liaison officer . Goliath 's reopened a little more than a month after the raid .

In November 2004 , the Crown stayed the found @-@ in charge against the last remaining patron , saying it was no longer in the public interest to pursue the case . The case against the owners and managers of Goliath 's , however , was expected to come to trial in February 2005 . Terry Haldane , the only " found @-@ in " patron who was actively fighting the charge against him , accused the Crown of dropping the charge because Haldane and his lawyers had given notice of their plan to challenge the bawdy house law all the way to the Supreme Court .

In February 2005 , all remaining charges in the case were dropped . The court cited a lack of community support and evidence (from a poll) that the community supported the existence of gay bathhouses by a small margin .

Raid on Hamilton 's Warehouse Spa

On August 3 , 2004 , Hamilton 's Warehouse Spa and Bath was " inspected " by a task force of officers from the police , public health , the city 's building and licensing department , the fire department , and the alcohol and gaming commission . Two men were arrested and charged with committing indecent acts .

== = United States = = =

In California the " Consenting Adult Sex Bill " , passed in January 1976 , made gay bathhouses and the sex that took place within them legal for the first time . During the 1970s , the two most popular gay bathhouses in San Francisco , both located in the SOMA neighborhood , were the Ritch Street Health Club at 330 Ritch St. , the interior of which was designed like a Minoan palace , and The Barracks , a BDSM bathhouse at 72 Hallam near Folsom in which each room was designed to accommodate a different BDSM sexual fantasy . In 1978 a group of police officers raided the Liberty Baths in the Polk Gulch neighborhood of San Francisco and arrested three patrons for " lewd conduct in a public place " , but the District Attorney 's office soon dropped the charges against them . In 1984 , however , fear of AIDS caused the San Francisco Health department , with the support of some gay activists such as Randy Shilts , and against the opposition of other gay activists , to ask the courts to close gay bathhouses in the city . The court , under Judge Roy Wonder , instead issued a court order that limited sexual practices and disallowed renting of private rooms in bathhouses , so that sexual activity could be monitored , as a public health measure . Some of the bathhouses tried to live within the strict rules of this court order , but many of them felt they could not easily do business under the new rules and closed . Eventually , the few remaining actual bathhouses succumbed to either economic pressures or the continuing legal pressures of the city and finally closed . Several sex clubs , which were not officially bathhouses , continued to operate indefinitely and operate to this day , though following strict rules under the court order and city regulations . Bathhouses themselves , however , operate just outside the city , thus outside of their laws , such as in Berkeley and San Jose .

In 1985 , the New York City Health Department ordered that the city 's gay bathhouses be closed . As a result , heterosexual sex clubs such as Plato 's Retreat had to shut down as well because the city had just passed a gay rights ordinance , and allowing the heterosexual clubs to remain open while closing the gay establishments would have been a violation of that ordinance .

Los Angeles , Chicago , Atlanta , Louisville , Seattle , Berkeley , San Jose , Cleveland , Portland , Reno , Las Vegas , Detroit , Indianapolis , Dallas , Houston , Denver , Tampa , Miami and Fort Lauderdale are some American cities that have bathhouses in operation .

== = China = = =

In March 2008 a series of police raids in gay bathhouses and at gay meeting spots in Beijing have resulted in arrests and bathhouse closures . This included raids on two branches of the Oasis bathhouses , known to be the most popular in Beijing . In 2000 , police arrested 37 men in a Guangzhou gay spa on charges of prostitution . Homosexuality was decriminalized in China in 1997 .

== = Germany , Austria and Switzerland = = =

The German @-@ speaking countries have a lot of gay bathhouses (" Schwule Sauna ") since homosexuality had been legalized in 1969 (and later) . The oldest ones are Vulcan @-@ Sauna in Hanover , another bathhouse in Cologne , Berlin and Kaiserbründl in Vienna .

== = Japan = = =

See also Gay Bathhouse in Japan .

In Japan , there were " Sunagawaya (???) " " Takenoya (???) " " Seibuen (???) " in the 1950s . " Oban (??) " " 24 Kaikan (24??) " " Jin @-@ ya (??) " were built in the 1970s .

== = Notable patrons = =

Truman Capote

Gay author Truman Capote (1924 @-@ 1984) wrote about his visits to the Everard Baths .
Justin Fashanu

The first openly gay British footballer Justin Fashanu (1961 ? 1998) spent his last night in Chariots Roman Spa . His suicide was due to press reports that the US authorities were planning to extradite him and charge him with sexual assault (there was in fact no warrant) . His suicide note claimed that the sexual encounter had been consensual and that the youth contacted police only after Fashanu refused to pay him blackmail .

Michel Foucault

The influential 20th @-@ century French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926 ? 1984) visited bathhouses in California in the 1970s and early 1980s , and the Mineshaft in New York . He died of AIDS @-@ related causes in 1984 .

Jack Fritscher

Gay erotic author and editor Jack Fritscher (1939 ?) made hundreds of visits to the Mineshaft (a bathhouse without the bath) .

Charles Griffes

Gay composer Charles Griffes (1884 ? 1920) wrote of his bathhouse visits ; two quotations are given above .

Mikhail Kuzmin

Russian poet , novelist and composer Mikhail Kuzmin (1872 ? 1936) is known to have patronized bathhouses . Some of the bathhouses in St. Petersburg at the time became known as friendly to gay men and provided " attendants " , who might provide sexual services for a fee . In his diary , Kuzmin writes of one bathhouse visit : the evening I had the urge to go to a bathhouse simply to be stylish , for the fun of it , for cleanliness .

Harvey Milk

The openly gay American politician Harvey Milk (1930 ? 1978) vowed to stop visiting gay bathhouses when he ran for supervisor in 1975 .

Rudolf Nureyev

The Russian dancer Rudolf Nureyev (1938 ? 1993) was known to frequent the baths in New York . He did not get past the door of the Mineshaft .

Ned Rorem

The composer Ned Rorem (1923 ?) wrote of his visits to the Everard Baths .

Gore Vidal

Bisexual author Gore Vidal (1925 @-@ 2012) is a documented patron of the Everard Baths .

= = Celebrities and the Continental Baths = =

Singer Bette Midler is well known for getting her start at the famous Continental Baths in New York City in the early 1970s , where she earned the nickname Bathhouse Betty . It was there , accompanied by pianist Barry Manilow (who , like the bathhouse patrons , sometimes wore only a white towel ,) that she created her stage persona " the Divine Miss M. "

On getting her start in bathhouses , Midler has remarked :

Despite the way things turned out [with the AIDS crisis] , I 'm still proud of those days [when I got my start singing at the gay bathhouses] . I feel like I was at the forefront of the gay liberation movement , and I hope I did my part to help it move forward . So , I kind of wear the label of ' Bathhouse Betty ' with pride .

Other famous performers who appeared at the Continental include Eleanor Steber , Melba Moore , Labelle , Peter Allen , Cab Calloway , The Manhattan Transfer , John Davidson , and Wayland Flowers .