

Why Are Bathtubs So Small, Anyway?

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Why Are Bathtubs So Small, Anyway?

By Stacie Hougland



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Ever sat awkwardly in a tub wondering what to do with your legs, or how to sit upright and not feel totally weird sticking out of the water? Either way, you're cold somewhere. Here's why that is.

First... before indoor plumbing



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Bathing devices were once small, easily moved and stored tubs that were made of sheet metal. Progressive homes with water heating devices had built-in boxes lined with metal, or even hideaway tubs that worked like Murphy beds.

Hot water was a no-no



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Around the Civil War, bathing was recognized as a useful thing - but not necessarily to get clean. People believed a brief plunge in cold water could relieve congestion, even cholera, but relaxing in hot water was unhealthy, even for children! Soap wasn't used, either.

Finally! Indoor plumbing



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The first bathtub was a horse trough with claw feet attached! Indoor plumbing became common in the late 1800s, gradually moving tubs inside. These tubs were about 5' long - but a hundred years ago, people were on average a bit smaller than nowadays, men about 5'7".

Blame prudish beliefs



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Some historians believe it was late-1800s Victorian attitudes that ensured tubs would never be big and luxurious. You shouldn't be lazing around in a hot bath, but taking a quick shower and getting back to work! they said.

Other strange theories



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There was also the belief that people feared big tubs would be too heavy for the floor, since most Victorian tubs were installed on the second story. People irrationally feared drowning in a tub that was longer than they were.

Association with kids



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As time passed, people thought that baths were appropriate to get your kids clean, but once you got big enough, you should be in a shower. It may be that baths are still associated with kids simply for the fact they've *always* been too small for most adults to enjoy.

Early 20th century



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Mass production made home construction easier and cheaper, with fixed sizes. The most common basic bathroom was 5' x 7' and the average tub 5' 32". This one-size-fits-all approach didn't allow for much wiggle room, so to speak.

After World War II



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The Baby Boom was in full swing, with more people starting families than ever. The most popular tub for landlords to install was now a mere 5', because they were cheaper and easier to maintain and they cut down on water. By this time, the average man was about 5'10".

Today's growing shower-taking generation



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Today, the "art" of bathing has been somewhat lost in the interest of saving time, saving water (and money), and saving space in the bathroom. Apartments and hotels are installing bathtubs less and less. One day your home may not come with this age-old traditional appliance.

A few fun facts!



[CS.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archimedes)

In ancient Greece, Archimedes discovered the physics of displacement when he was bathing. President Taft once got stuck in his. And Marilyn Monroe bathed in champagne - 350 bottles of it!

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