

Is This the New Must-Have Bathtub?

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The bathtub has been liberated from its place next to the wall. It's also taken a new shape: claw feet—the former model of luxury—have been replaced by a flat bottom, the enamel rectangle is now an oversized bowl. It's tempting to experience (more hot tub than boring bath), and visually intriguing; a gigantic replica of the minimalist earthen pottery that's been all the rage of late.



Boffi tub in the Newberry Suite at Caldera House

Photo: Courtesy of Caldera House

Once something of a novelty, these types of tubs have been popping up in properties around the world. In the new beachfront residences at St. Lucia's Sugar Beach, its clean lines are complemented by a golden faucet. At Caldera House, a just-opened "alpine club" in Jackson Hole, the shape gets into half-egg territory, ideal for a full-body soak after a day on the slopes. At The Apartment by The Line in Los Angeles—a serene space where almost everything is for sale—a sunlit freestanding tub overlooks Melrose Place.

Alex Michaelis, the architect behind Sugar Beach’s new homes, says his firm chose this bath shape in order to let two people sit together easily. The style also allows for sitting at any angle, meaning bathers can make the most of their views (in this case of the island’s legendary pitons).

Avant garde hoteliers and designers have long appreciated the spaciousness and possibilities within the freestanding, bowl-shaped tub. Carrie Vik, one of the innovators behind Vik Retreats, first noticed the style in a Milan showroom window in the early aughts. “After seeing the bathtub in Milan, [my husband] Alex and I designed one for our home in the U.S.,” Vik says. She enjoyed the baths so much, she installed variations on it in Vik Retreats. “Using freeform tubs, we are not limited by the length of a wall,” she explains. And as for the bathing experience, “reclining in a large freestanding bathtub, without border walls, creates a freedom of space within a beautiful form.”



A bath at Bahia Vik
Photo: Courtesy of Vik Retreats

Commune Design's Roman Alonso, who worked on Caldera House, says he's placed this style in his projects going back at least a decade, specifically the Boffi model that's installed in the Newberry suite. "They are sexy and can really transform a bathroom," he says, "making it look much larger and luxurious."



In the Liberty Suite at The Standard High Line, the style—rendered in red—is referred to as a “teacup bathtub for two.” A colleague who has experienced it says the bath “feels like a mini personal swimming pool.” Paddling around in a teacup high above Manhattan? Sounds like an adult *Alice in Wonderland* dream.