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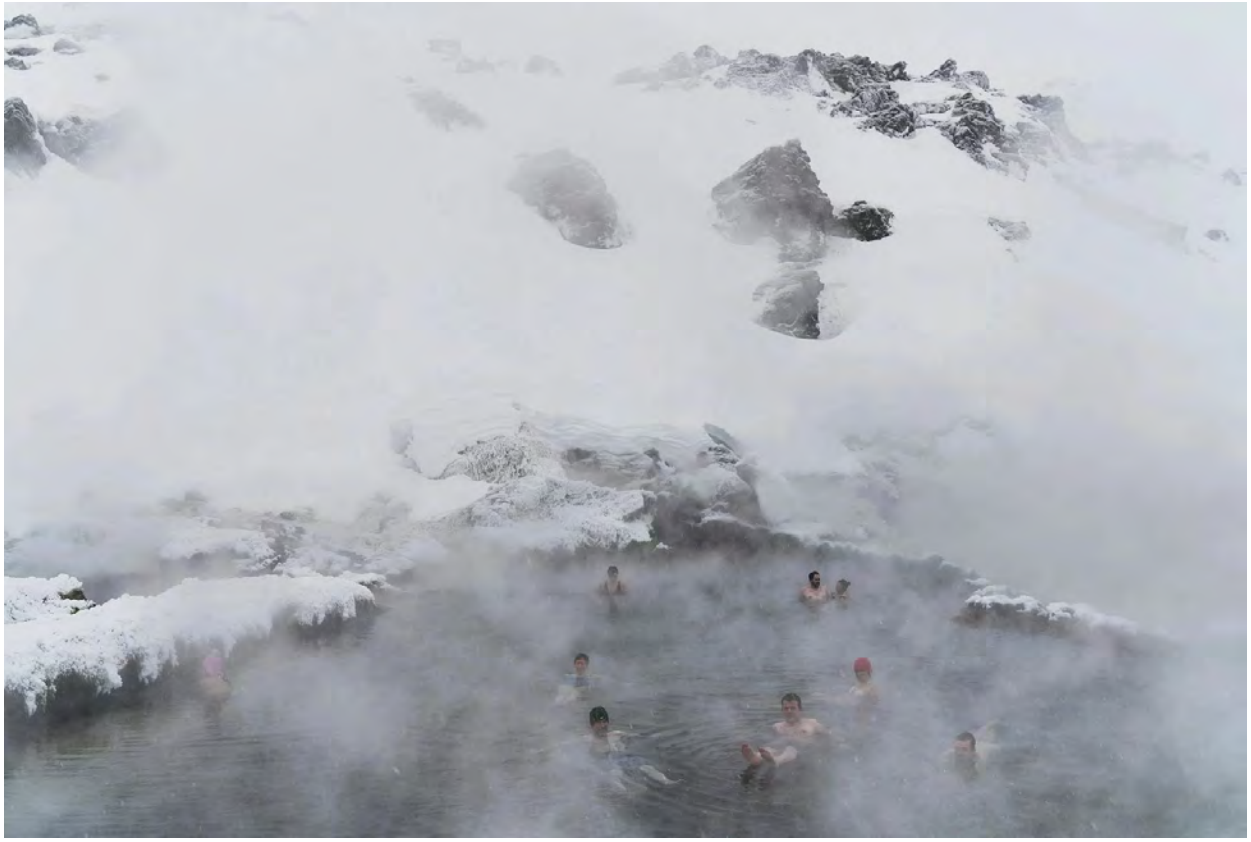


A pool at Landmannalaugar, an outpost in a nature reserve in the Highlands. Photo Credit: New York Times.

Geothermal Landscapes – The Architecture & Culture of Communal Bathing

While geothermal energy is most commonly praised as a renewable and widely accessible natural resource, it is often overlooked as an integral player in the cultural formation of the societies which harness it. For millennia, hot springs have been utilized for recreation, cooking, heating, healing, and bathing. And the geysers, springs and fumaroles scattered across geothermal landscapes embed themselves into peoples' cultural consciousness, helping to shape a collective identity tied uniquely and intimately to the ground.

This studio will focus on geothermal-reliant societies and the cultures and architecture of collective bathing which arise from this natural resource. While the United States has largely cordoned off its

bathing rituals to private, solitary practices, much of the world is filled with places where communal bathing is inseparable from their cultural heritage and identity. Whether they be for religious ritual, healing properties (balneotherapy), purification, community engagement, exercise, relaxation, or entertainment, locations for public bathing have long held a place as cultural keystones in historic and contemporary societies. Whether elaborate or austere, with any place of public bathing comes an infrastructure to support it and an architecture to house it.

This studio will visit Iceland and Hungary – two countries whose identities have been shaped by the access and utilization of geothermal energy toward various ends. Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, can literally be translated to "Smoky Bay", owing its name to its geothermally active ground which produces a steady amount of steam rising from its surface. Similarly, Budapest has been coined the "City of Baths" due to its extensive array of spaces dedicated to communal bathing, sourced from geothermal reservoirs located in the Pannonian basin. While both locations rely on geothermal reservoirs for both pragmatic and cultural activities, their architecture of communal baths differ radically. The baths are frequented by locals and tourists alike, the latter's "geothermal tourism" contributing a significant portion to each country's GDP. While the focus of the studio will be on studying and visiting each country's places of bathing, we will also travel to other national points of interest (architectural landmarks, cultural institutions, etc.)

The country of Iceland is host to 250 thermal areas with over 600 hot springs, accounting for heating nearly all of the country's residences and over 50% of primary energy production overall. Geothermal energy is also responsible for the direct and indirect heating of public baths. Despite its climate, the vast majority of Iceland's baths are outdoors, celebrating the direct and intimate connection to their landscape. The baths range from large, human-made spa complexes like the Blue Lagoon, which sits atop a lava field and is powered remotely by a nearby geothermal power station to the naturally occuring

Myvatn Nature baths, directly heated from underground reservoirs with minimal architectural intervention. Beginning in Reykjavik, we will spend one week traveling across the country, visiting baths large and small, examining the culture and architecture of Icelandic bathing.

Hungary's baths, while also geothermally heated, look dramatically different – namely that they are either inside-of or enclosed-by buildings. Still-operating baths dating back to the mid-16th century during the reign of the Ottoman Empire stand alongside even earlier ruins of roman baths adjacent to early twentieth century Art Nouveau bath complexes. In this way, the architecture of these baths can be understood as an index of those in control of current-day Hungarian territory at different moments throughout history. Despite the varied architectural styles and sensibilities applied, however, the constant across millennia has been the access and use of hot springs for recreational purposes. As a now-sovereign nation, these past baths form the basis of Budapest's name as the "City of Spas", accounting for the highest rate of geothermal tourism in all of Europe.

During our travels, we will study and tour a number of geothermally sourced baths and hot springs, analyzing their architecture and documenting our experiences. The geological specificity of geothermal reservoirs and the multisensory experience of bathing demands the presence of the physical body beyond just what the internet can supply (vision). The reason for mentioning this is because in an increasingly visual culture, the changing role of the traveling architecture studio ought to be discussed and put into question. As such, students will be tasked with producing a multimedia video which translate the ephemeral qualities of the bathing experience (photographs, audio recordings, video) with more conventionally architectural drawings of the baths they visit. This content will be collected on a website.

Abbreviated Itinerary – Geothermal Tourism

Reykjavik, Iceland & Surrounding Areas – Tuesday, May 5 – Tuesday, May 12

Blue Lagoon Thermal Spa

Golden Circle Route

Secret Lagoon Hot Spring

Krauma

Akuyeri

Budapest, Hungary – Tuesday, May 12 – Tuesday, May 26

Gellert Spa

Széchenyi Thermal Baths

Rudas Baths

Király Baths

Expected Travel Costs (Subject to Change)

Per Diem 25 / Day @ 21 Days

Reykjavik, Budapest	525

Airfare / Ground Transport

✈ Detroit	→	Reykjavik	350
✈ Reykjavik	→	Budapest	150
✈ Budapest	→	Detroit	900
Ground Travel (Car Rental & Public Transport)			350

Accommodations

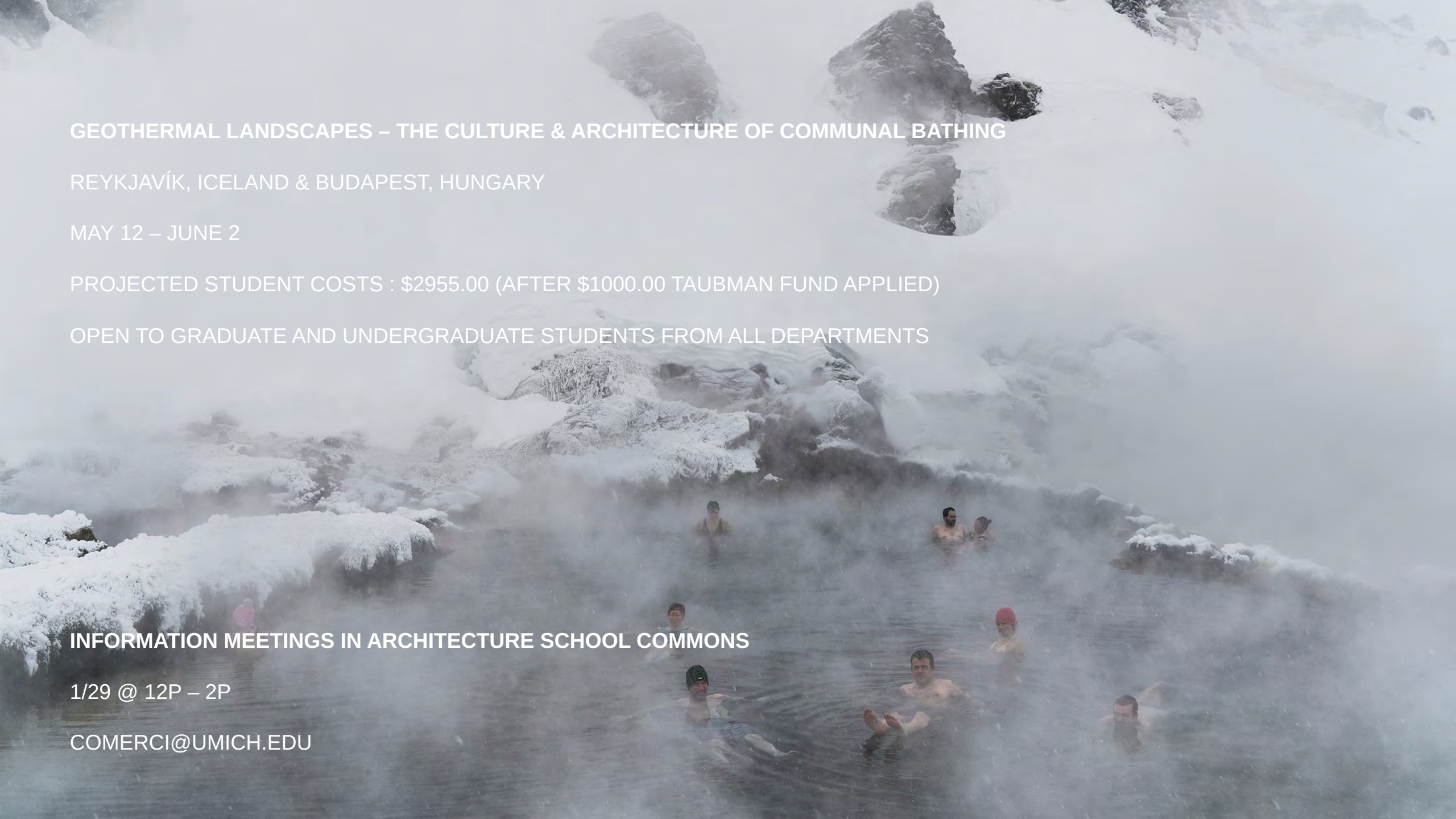
21 Nights	750

Miscellaneous

Health Insurance	50
Data Plan	30
Activity Costs (Baths, Museums, etc.)	850

Costs

Total	3955
After 1000 Taubman Fund	2955



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REYKJAVÍK, ICELAND & BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

MAY 12 – JUNE 2

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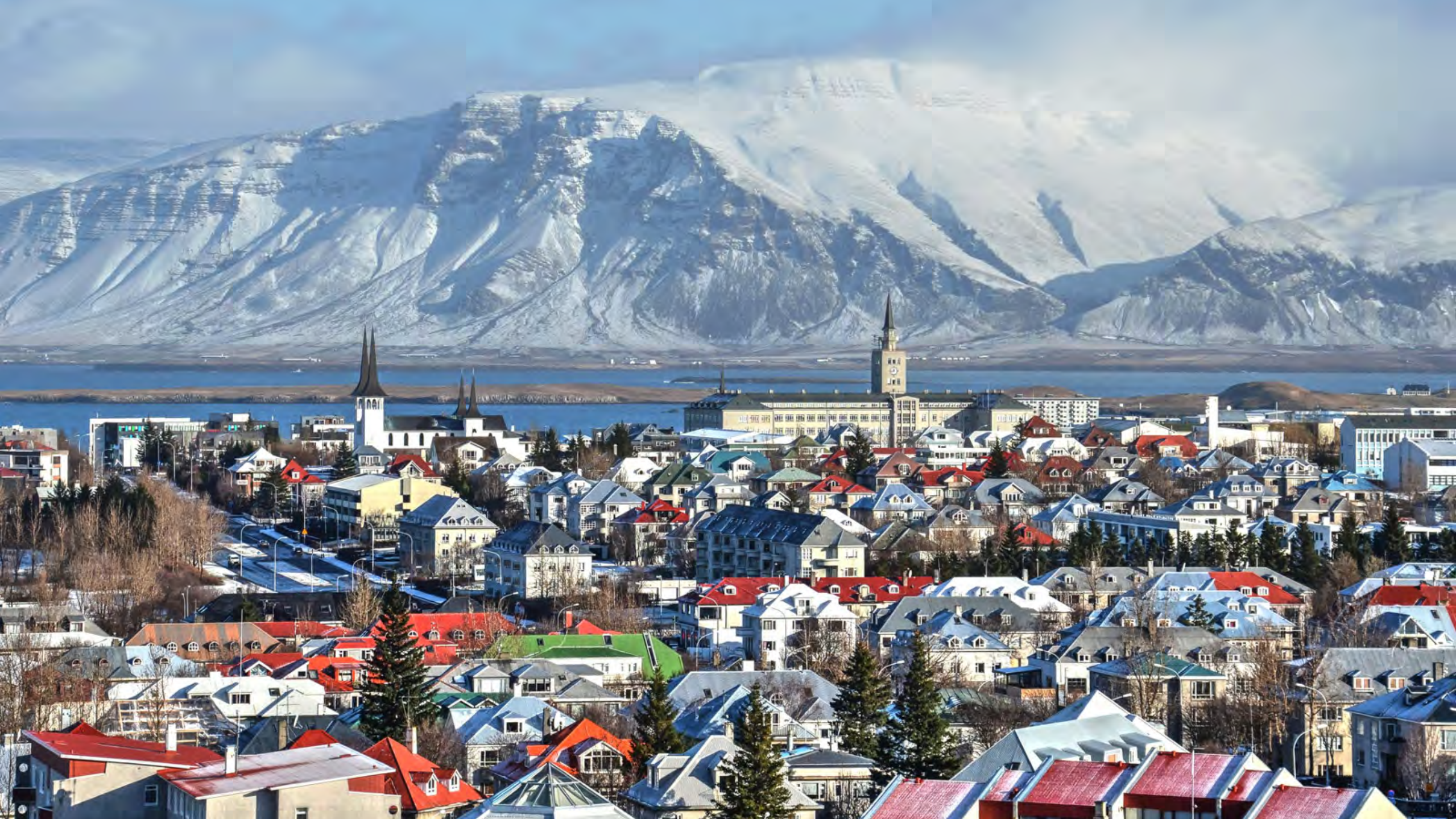

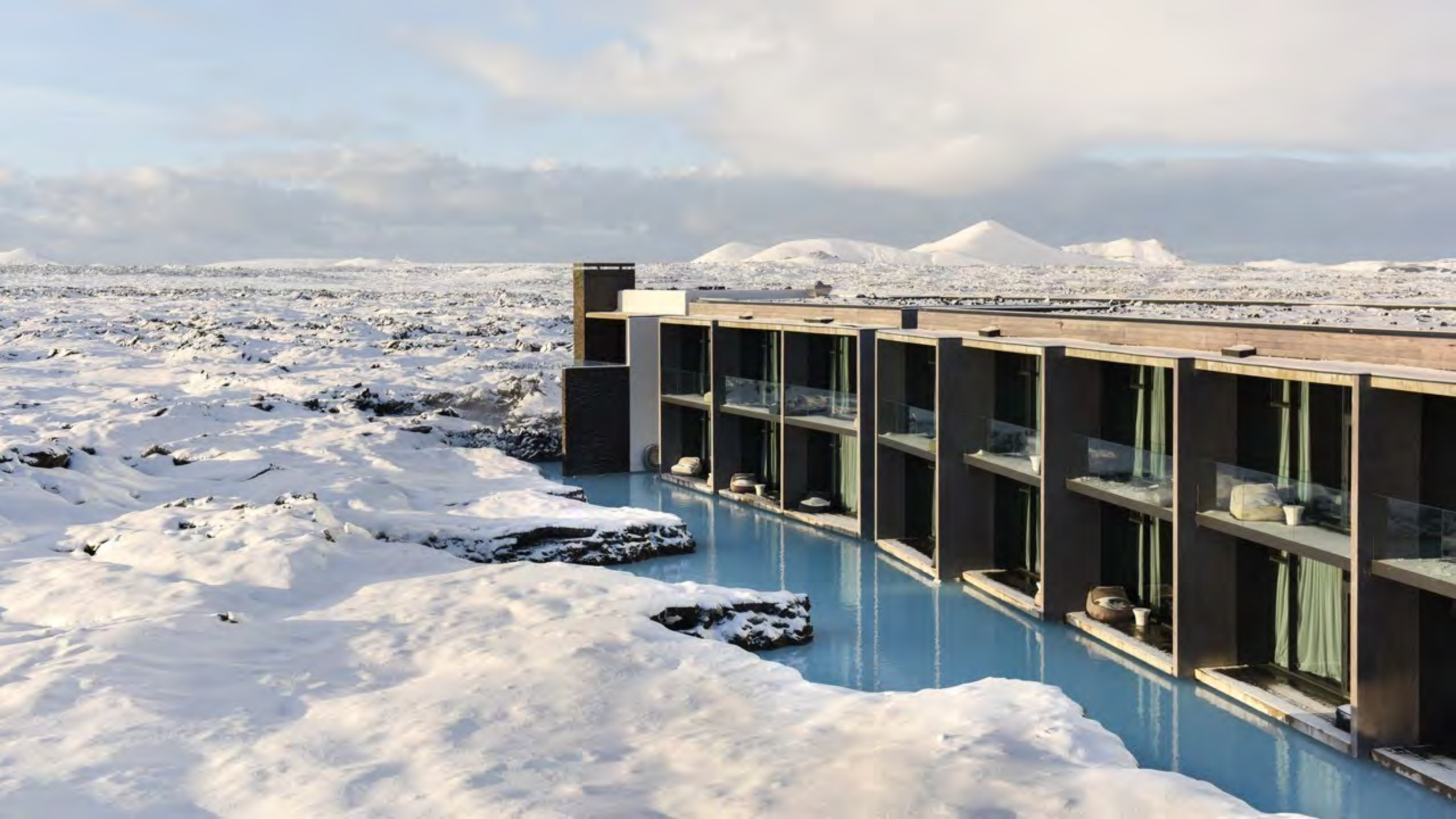

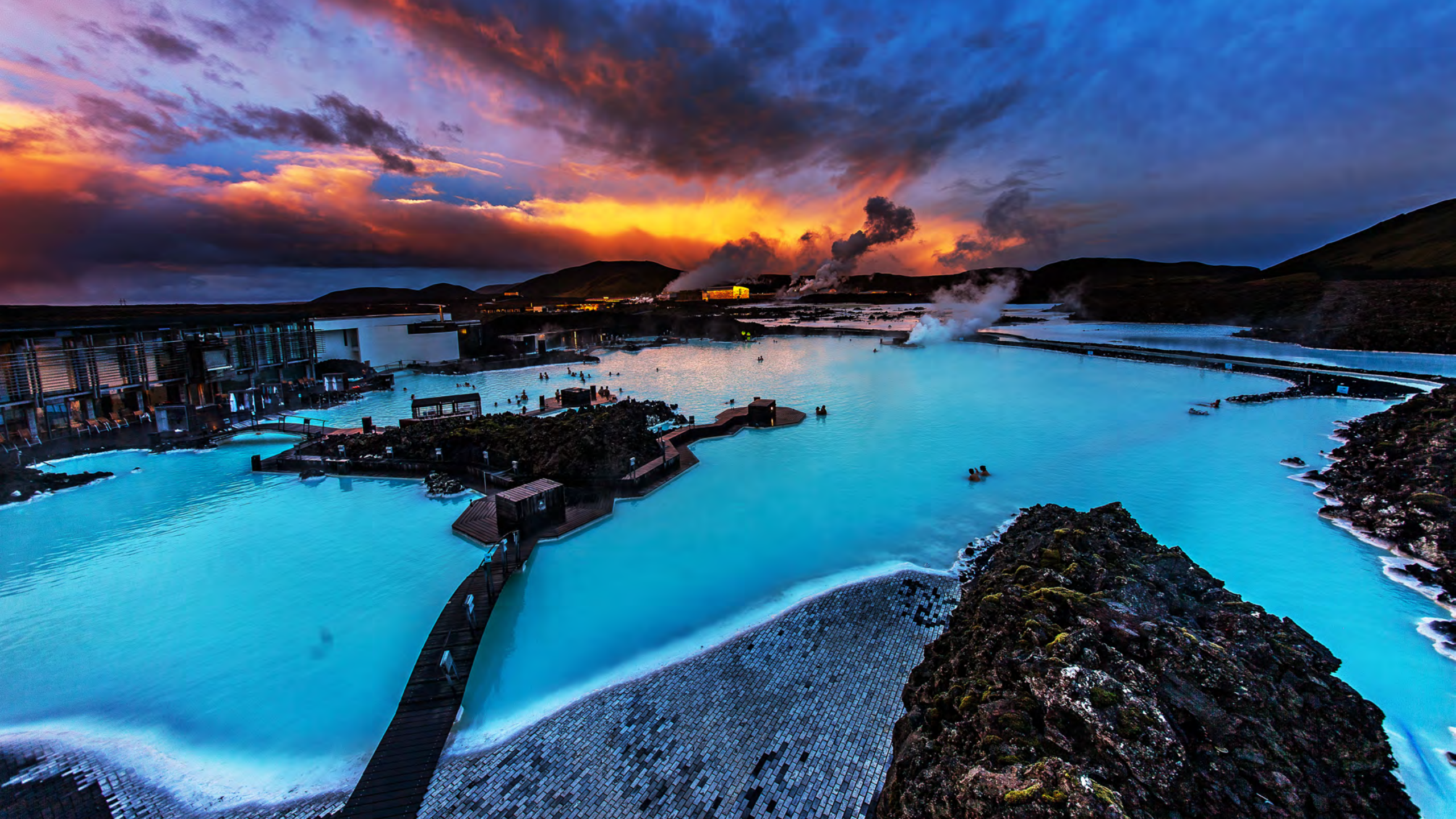

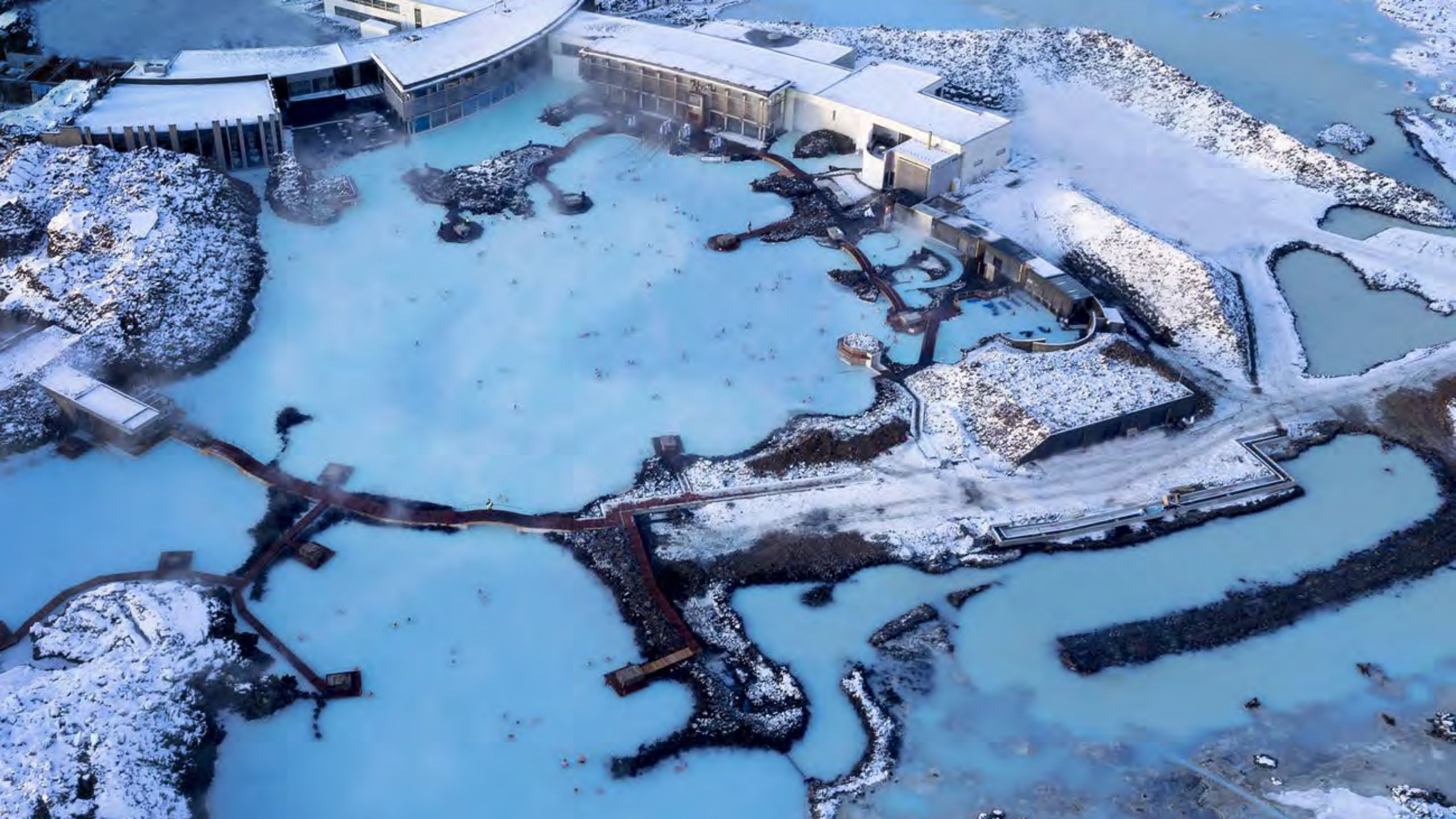

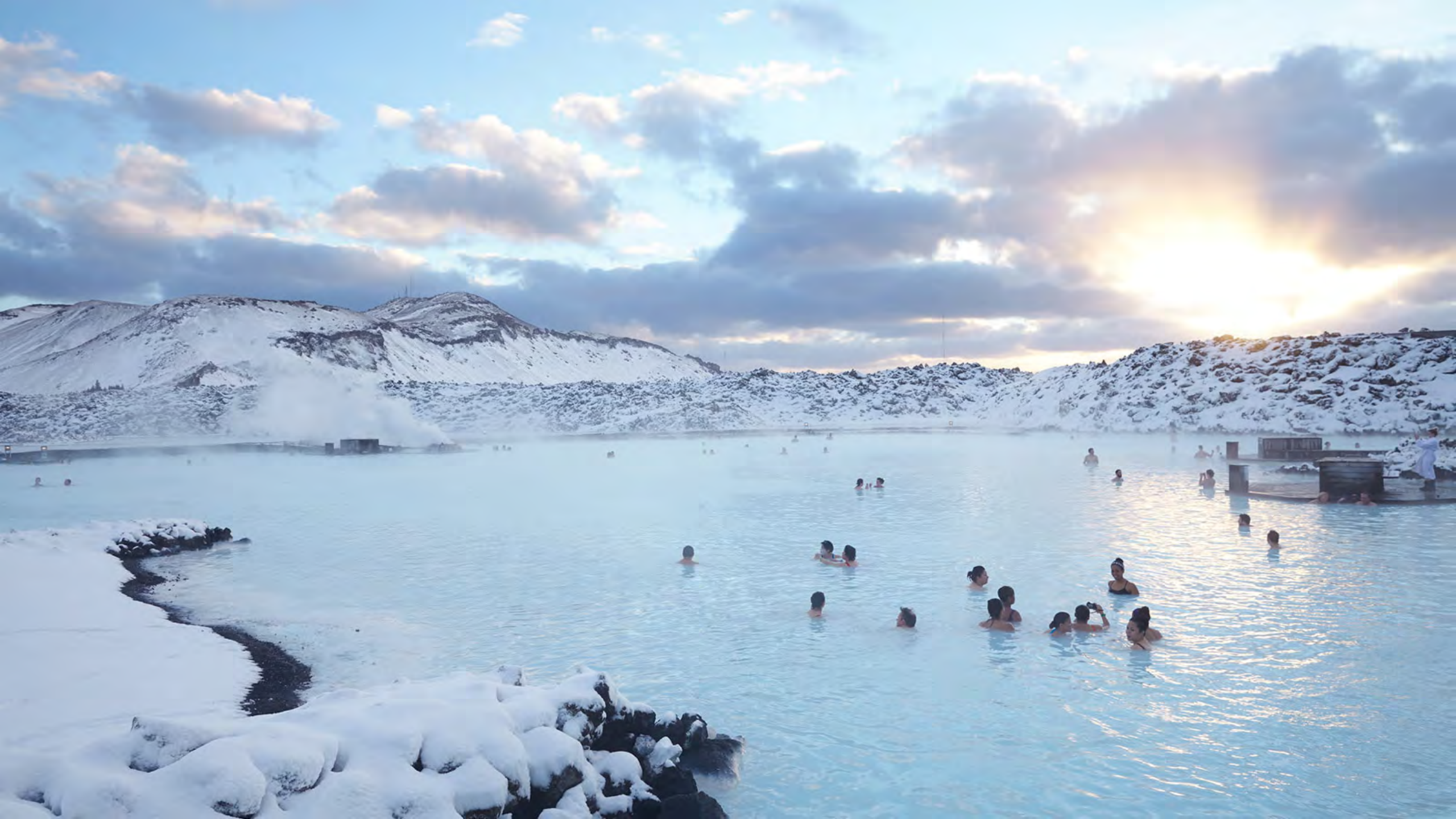

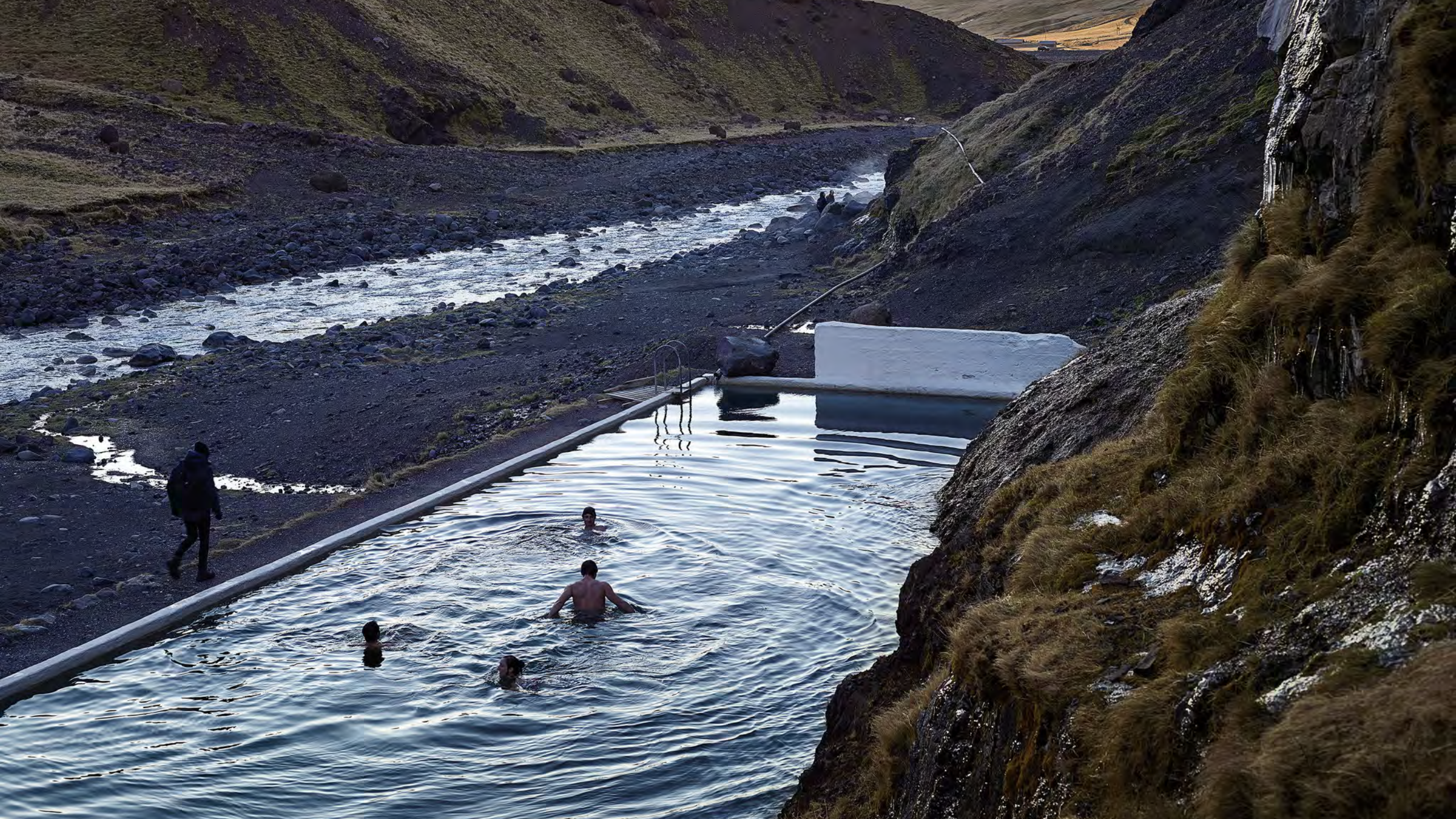

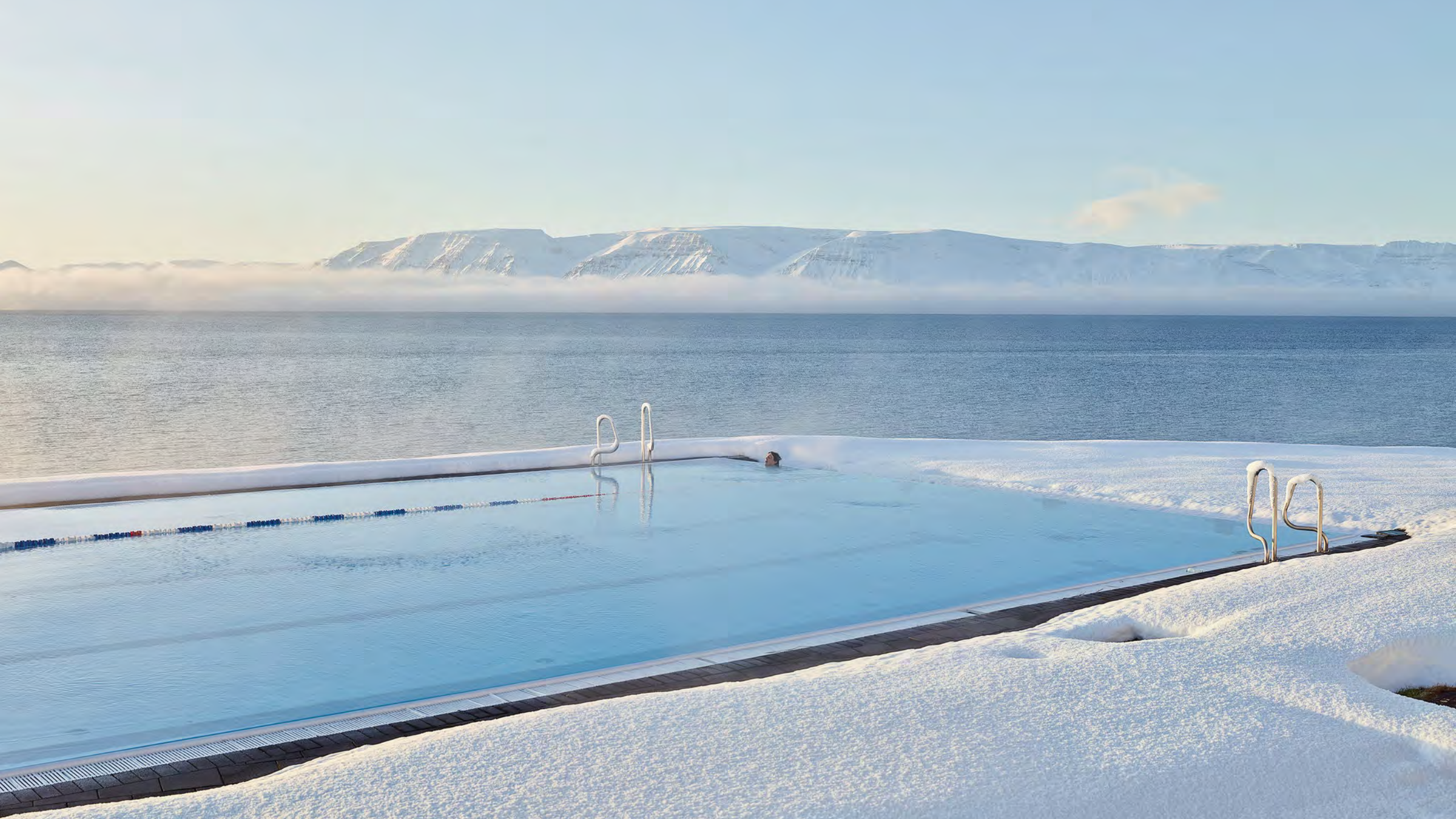

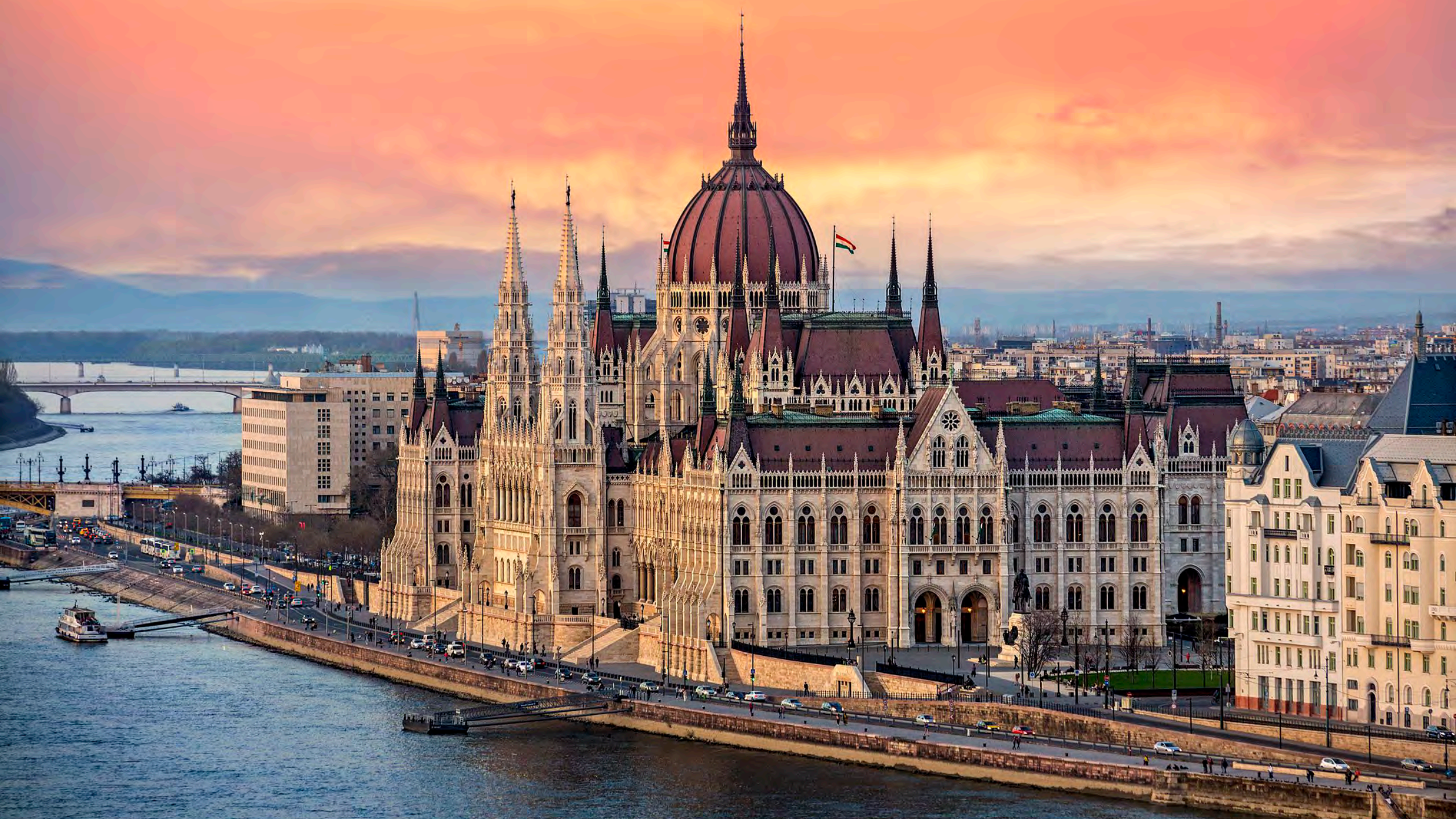

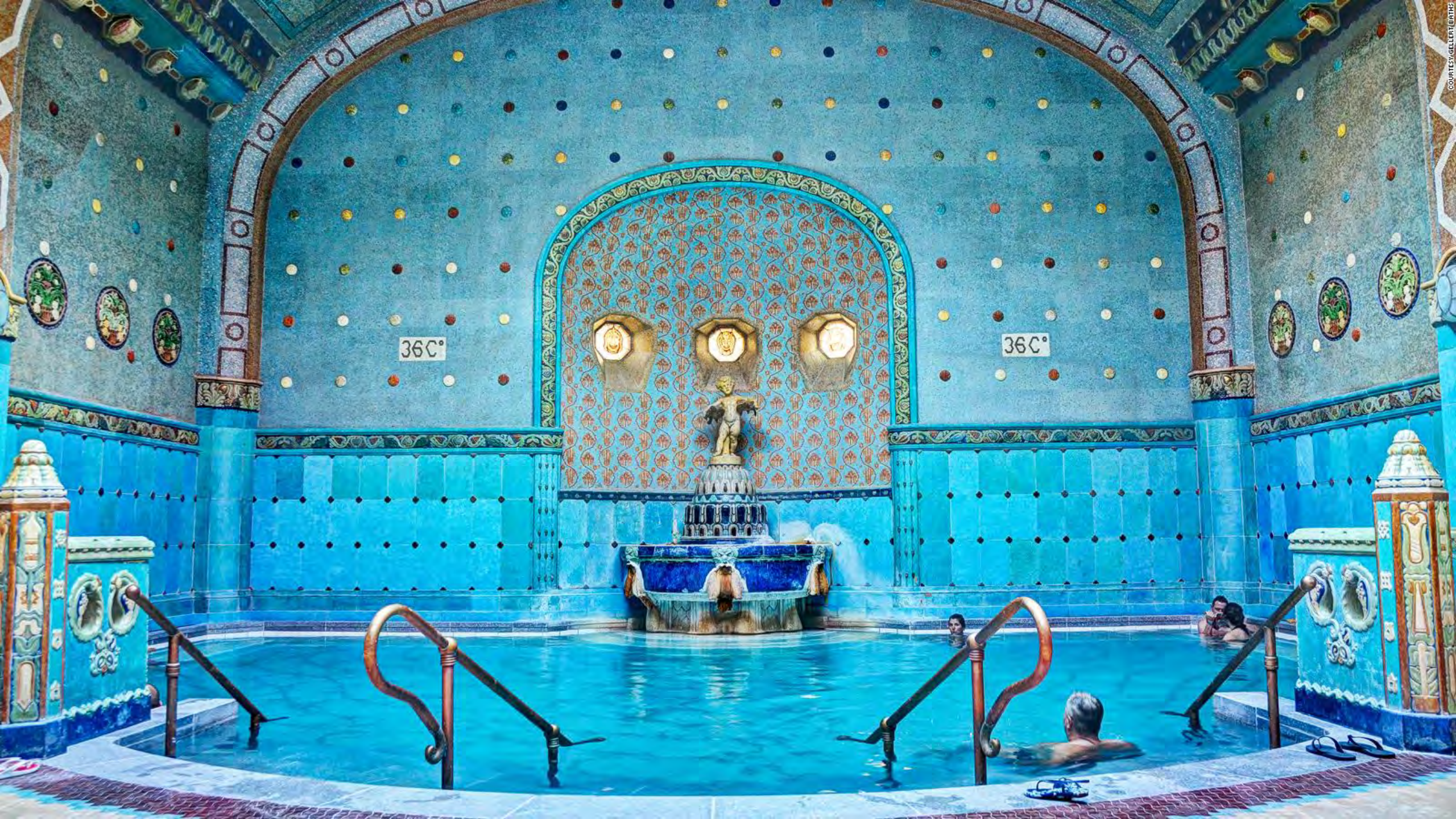

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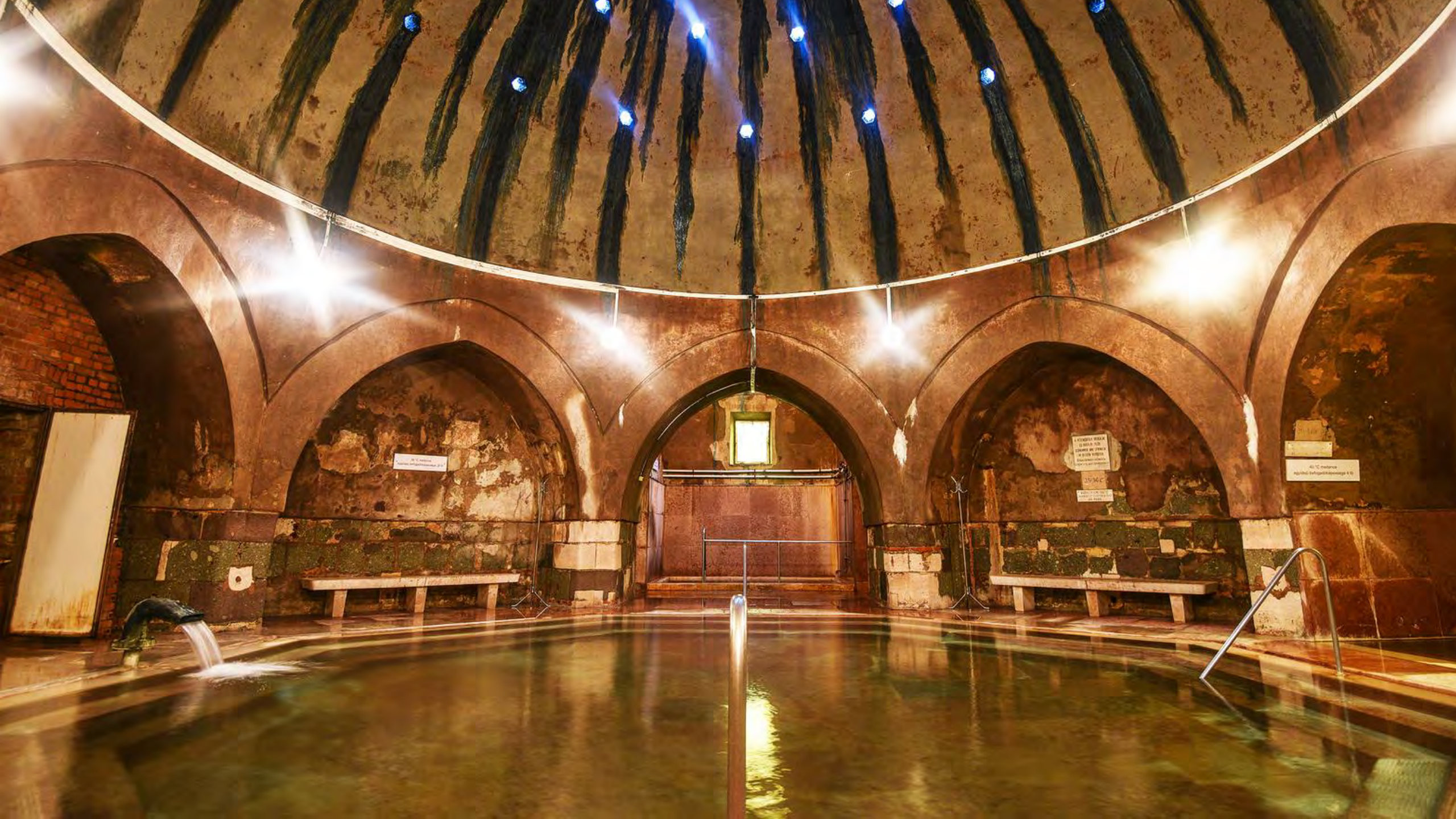

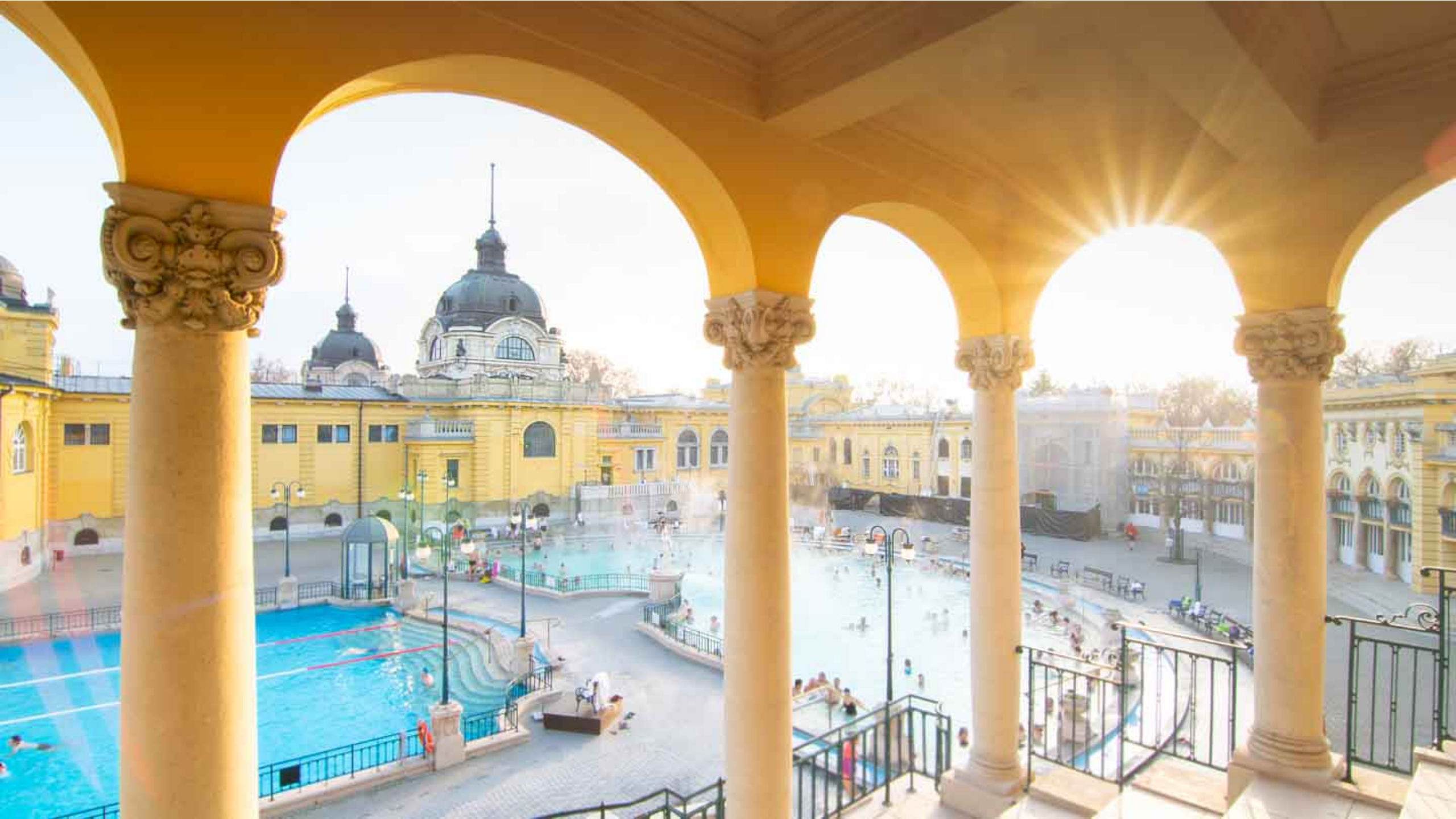

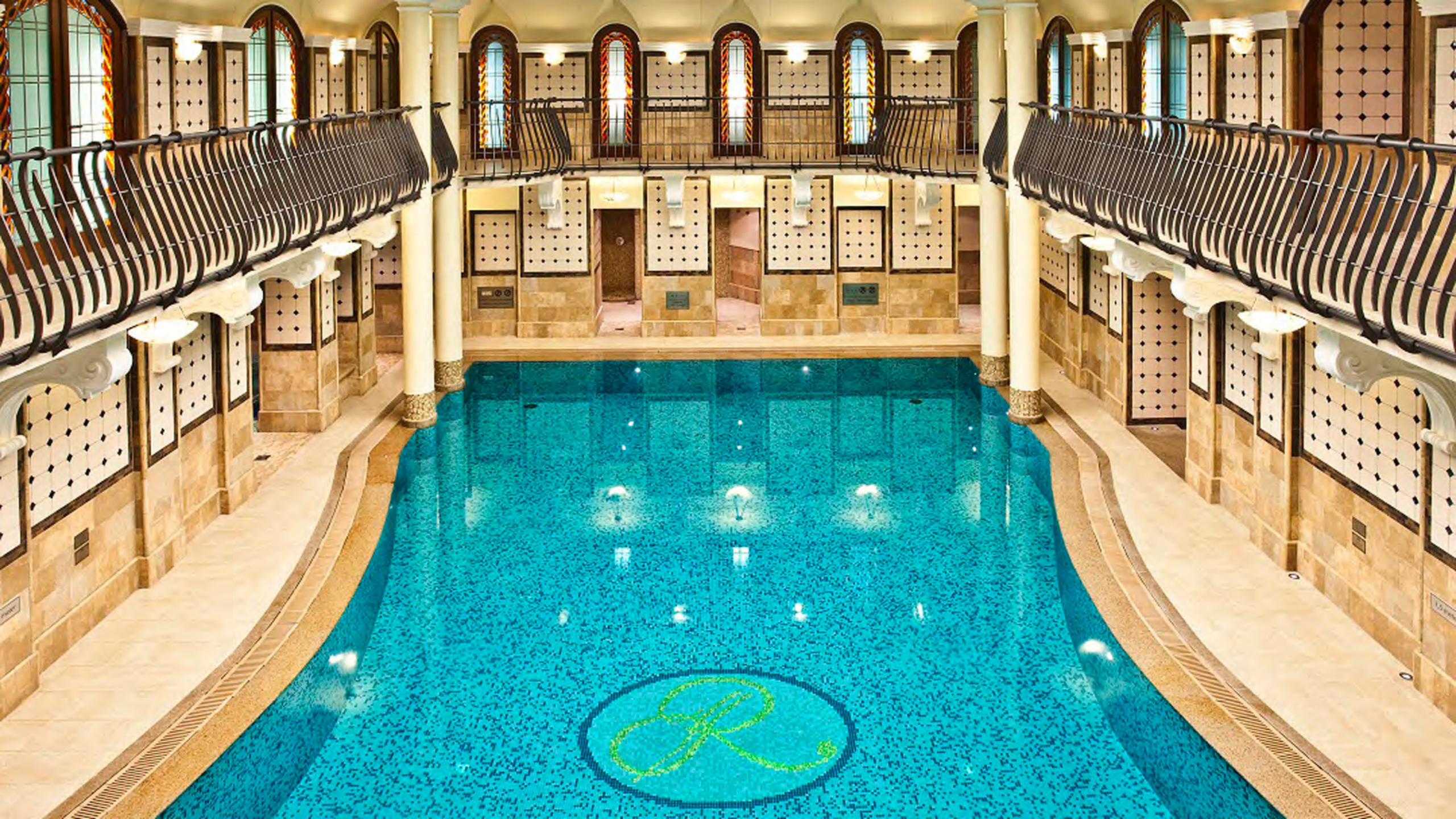

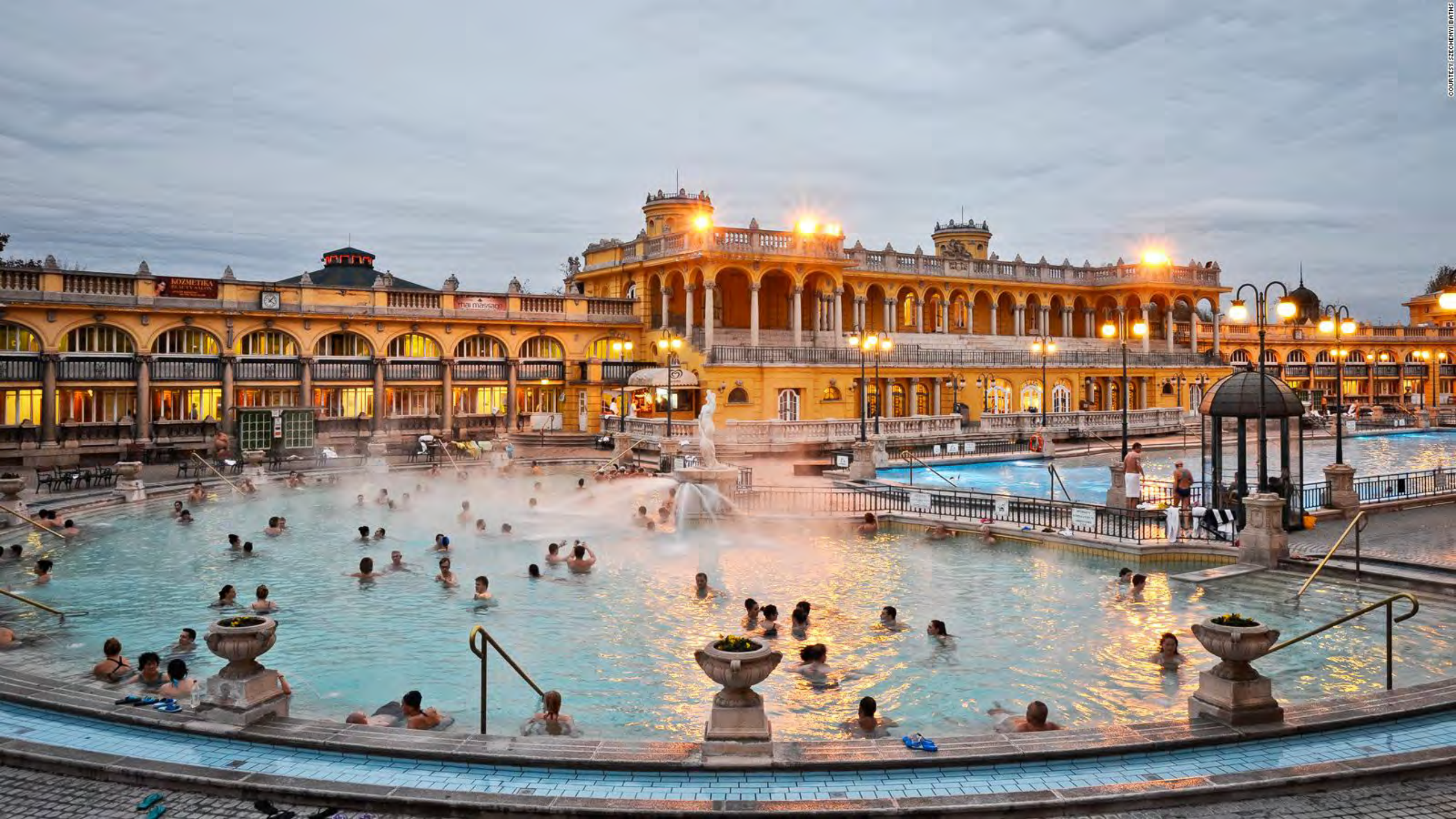

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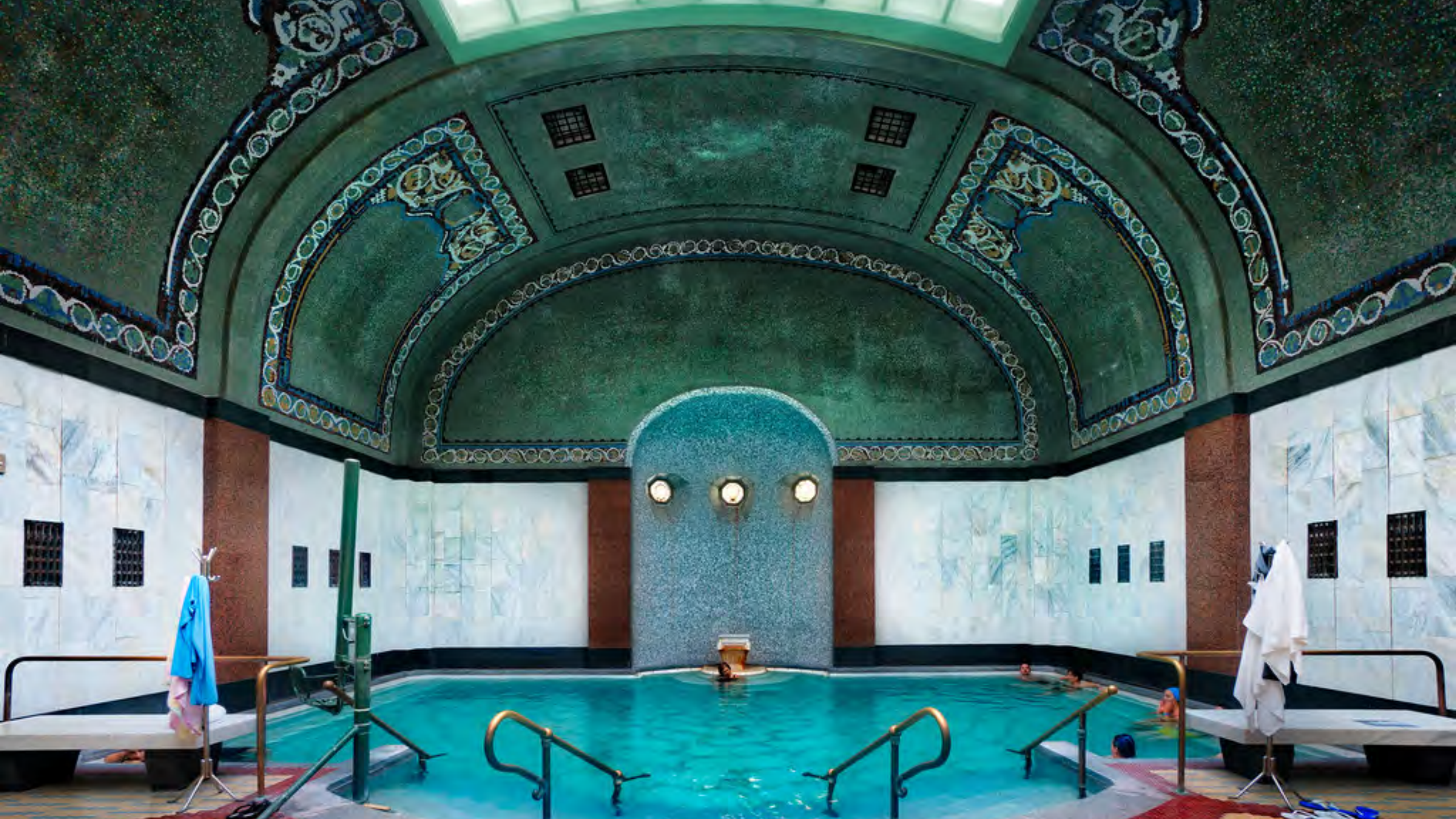

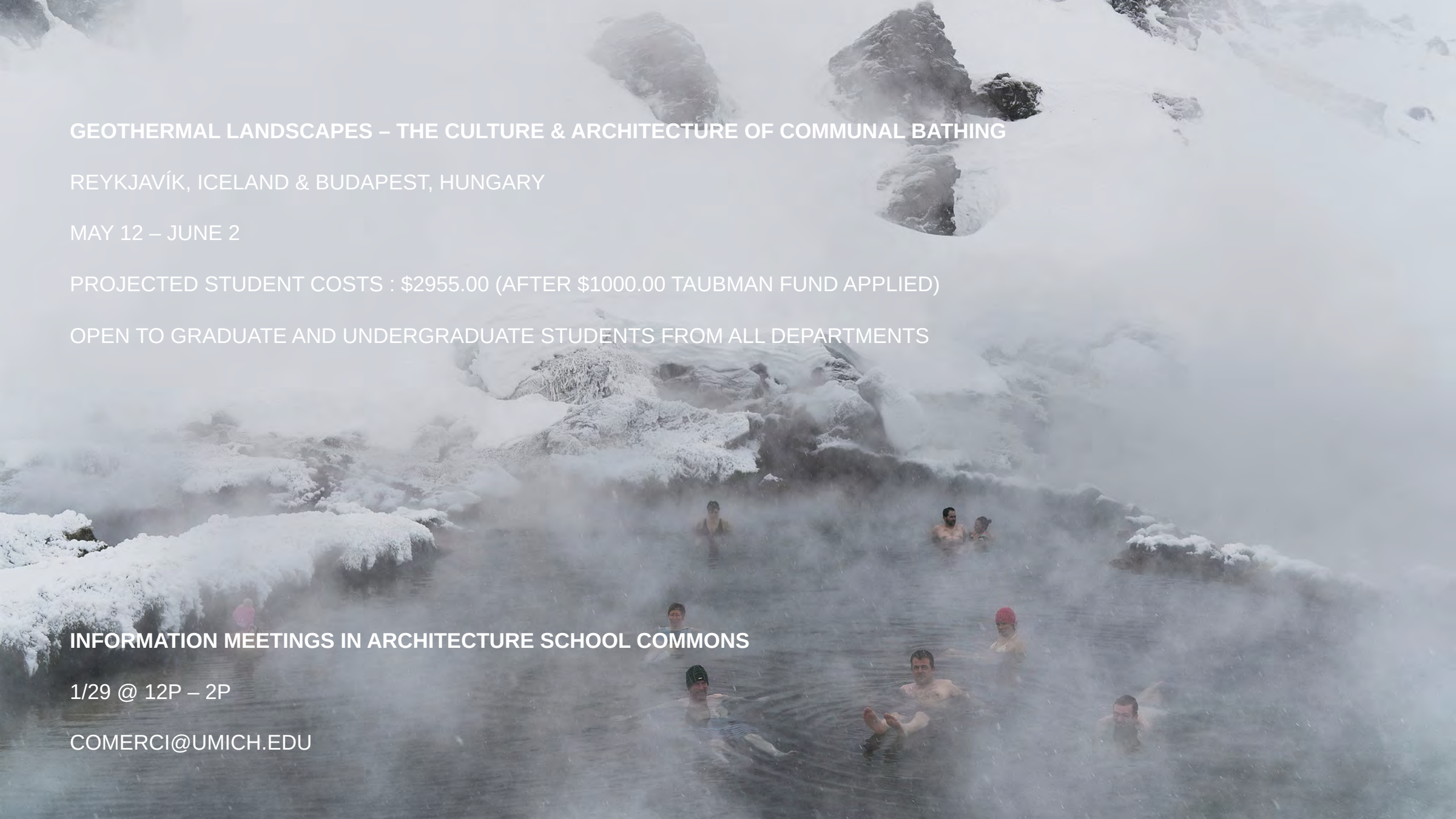

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