



Sauna - a bath involving a spell in a hot steamy room followed by a plunge into cold water or a light brushing with birch or **cedar boughs**+

The oldest known saunas were pits dug in a slope in the ground and primarily used as dwellings in winter. The sauna featured a fireplace where stones were heated to a high temperature. Water was thrown over the hot stones to produce steam and to give a sensation of increased heat. This would raise the apparent temperature so high that people could take off their clothes.

The first Finnish saunas are now called *savusaunas*, or smoke saunas. These differed from present-day saunas in that they were heated by heating a pile of rocks called *kivas* by burning large amounts of wood about 6 to 8 hours, and then letting the smoke out before enjoying the *löyly*, or sauna heat. A properly heated "savusauna" gives heat up to 12 hours. These are still used in present-day Finland by some enthusiasts, but usually only on special occasions such as Christmas, New Year's, Easter, and *juhannus* (Midsummer). As a result of the industrial revolution, the sauna evolved to use a metal woodstove, or *kivas* ['kiu.as], with a chimney



The first Finnish-American saunas were one-room structures made from squared logs, hewn and mortised at the ends and placed horizontally on top of each other, and with pitched roofs. This early type of bathhouse, called *savusauna* (smoke sauna), had no chimney; smoke from the wood fire encircled the walls, ceiling, and tiered benches, escaping through a small vent near the roof or through the door. The interior became black and fragrant from years of smoke.

+ <http://www.dictionarycentral.com/definition/sauna.html>

i **Sauna stove**. Creator: Matti E. Kaups Photograph Collection, 1974 Visual Resources Database
Minnesota Historical Society
Location No. GT2.53 p11 Negative No.

ii **An abandoned one-room east Finnish *savusauna* near Toimi, Lake County.** Photograph Collection, 1972 Visual Resources Database Minnesota Historical Society Location No. ML3.3 r12 Negative No.

iii <http://www.folkstreams.net/context,90>



A smoke sauna (savusauna)

One reason the sauna culture has always flourished in Finland has been because of the versatility of the sauna.

When people were moving the first thing they did was built a sauna. You could live in it, make food in the stove, take care of your personal hygiene and most importantly, give birth in an almost sterile environment. You lived in the sauna while you built the house.

Unlike many other, more densely-populated places in Europe, availability of wood needed to build and warm the sauna has never been an issue. Another reason for its popularity is that in such a cold climate, the sauna allows people warmth for at least a short period of time. However, it is just as popular in the summer as in the winter.**

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b8/Smoke_sauna.JPG

**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finnish_sauna Feb 07, 2012 7:35 PM



Historically, joint families were common in the eastern Karelian area, where a founding couple, their adult male children, and the male children's wives formed multiple-family farm households that were among the largest (twenty to fifty persons) in Scandinavia. Elsewhere, it has been common for only one child to remain on the parents' farmstead, and smaller "stem" and nuclear families have prevailed. Overall, family size has become smaller under the impact of urbanization, dropping from an average of 3.6 persons in 1950 to 2.7 in 1975. Among families

with children, the number of offspring declined from an average of 2.27 in 1960 to 1.9 in 1997. **

http://www.everyculture.com/images/ctc_02_img0393.jpg

**<http://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Finland.html>

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Currently there are five million inhabitants and over two million saunas in Finland - an average of one per household.^[1] For Finnish people the sauna is a place to relax in with friends and family, and a place for physical and mental relaxation as well. Finns think of saunas not as a luxury, but as a necessity. Before the rise of public health care and nursery facilities, almost all Finnish mothers gave birth in saunas. **

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/50/Sauna_2.jpg

** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finnish_sauna Feb 07, 2012 7:20 PM



Statistics Finland defines a cottage (in Finnish: *mökki*, in Swedish *stuga* or *villa*) as "a residential building that is used as a holiday or free-time dwelling and is permanently constructed or erected on its site". Finnish cottages are traditionally built of logs but other wood constructions have become common. They are usually situated close to water and almost all have a sauna.

There are 474,277 cottages in Finland (2005), a country with 187,888 lakes and 179,584 islands... **

<http://www.hietasenlomamokit.fi/mokki5/mokki5.jpg>

** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cottage#In_Finland

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Traditionally saunas are taken in the nude, as tight clothing like swimming suits restricts circulation that a sauna is trying to promote, but if you are modest, wrap yourself with a large towel. Everyone can go to the sauna at the same time, men and women may take sauna separately, or each family can go to sauna separately. Mixed saunas with non-family members are most common with younger adults, and are quite rare for older people or on more formal occasions. It is common for teenagers to stop going to sauna with their parents at some point.

Saunas have been used for centuries in places like Finland for relaxation and hygienic purposes. Saunas do not require the user to bathe in the traditional sense, using soap and water, but provide the proper conditions for the body to clean itself using the natural sweating mechanism.

The dry heat of a sauna allows the pores to open and the impurities to escape without the aid of abrasive soaps. It also increases circulation throughout your body.*

In the sauna it is a *faux pas* to wear clothing in the hot room, although it is acceptable to sit on a small towel or *pefletti*, a disposable tissue designed to endure heat and humidity (it can be mandatory in a public sauna, such as at a public swimming pool). While cooling off it is common to wrap a towel around your body. Although mixed saunas are quite common, for a typical Finn the sauna is, with few exceptions, a non-sexual place. In Finland "sauna" means only a sauna, not a brothel, sex club, or such.**

In Finnish folklore, the sauna is the home of the sauna-elf, a spirit of the sauna (*saunatonnttu* in Finnish).

* Read more: How to Wash in a Sauna | eHow.com http://www.ehow.com/how_5712214_wash-sauna.html#ixzz2JkII9BNE

** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finnish_sauna



Finnish *vihta* (*vasta* in Eastern Finland), made of birch. It is used in traditional sauna-bathing for massage and stimulation of the skin



A Finnish smoke sauna stove. This one is located in a museum area close to the Utsjoki church. The sauna was used by long-distance church-goers overnighing in the log cabins next to the church..



A wood-heated sauna in Korpilampi***

How to Sauna

1 Take a shower or a quick swim to rinse visible dirt particles from your body. This rinse ensures that the sauna remains hygienic. Removing visible dirt particles from your body unclogs your pores so that when they open in the heat, the impurities can escape.

2 Place the small towel on the spot you wish to sit. This is unnecessary if you plan to keep your towel on. Lean back, relax and let the heat work on your body. A novice should do this for about 10 minutes. Sauna veterans can last up to 30 minutes.

3 If you are a little more adventurous, you can bring a vihta into the sauna. In Finland, vihtas are bunches of birch or cedar branches that are slapped onto the body to promote circulation. Pouring water on the stones in the sauna will increase the temperature and humidity.

Alternate between sitting in the sauna with breaks of cool air, either in an adjacent cooling room or outside. It is customary to jump into a lake, sea, or a swimming pool, or to have a shower. In the winter rolling in the snow or even swimming in a hole cut in the ice, an *avanto*, is sometimes used as a substitute. Listen to your body; you'll know when you need to cool down. Allow between 30 and 60 minutes for a proper sauna, getting in and out as often as your body tells you to, but at least twice. The number and duration of cycles varies from person to person according to personal preference. Usually one takes at least two or three cycles, lasting between 30 minutes to two hours. In Finland's numerous summer cottages bathing might go on well into the night. This is especially true in the summer when there is virtually no darkness. For many Finns, the sauna is almost a sacred place. It is usually considered especially rude to swear in sauna, even in company that does not usually shy on swearing. Thorough washing will end the session of sauna. Conversation is relaxed and arguments and controversial topics are avoided. It is also rare to use titles or other honorifics in the sauna.

4 Rinse your sweaty body in a cool shower or with another quick swim when you are finished going into

the heat.

5 Drink a tall glass of room-temperature water and pat yourself dry with a large towel. Apply lotion from head to toe to counteract the drying effects of the sauna. Allow your body to cool and the lotion to absorb thoroughly prior to getting dressed*

* Read more: How to Wash in a Sauna | eHow.com http://www.ehow.com/how_5712214_wash-sauna.html#ixzz2Jklq6aNK

** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Smoke_sauna_stove_Utsjoki.JPG

*** http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Finnish_Sauna_in_Korpilahti.jpg