



## Sauna and Steam Baths

### Get all Steamed Up

What links the ancient Mediterranean civilisation of Turkey with Scandinavian countries such as Finland? The answer is heat and steam! For hundreds of years both cultures have valued the benefits of heat and steam for their cleansing and rejuvenating properties. In the case of Finland, the sauna, or 'Finnish Bath' is the traditional manifestation of this aspect of their culture and in Turkey it is the 'Turkish Bath'.

The fundamental differences between them are the amount of moisture in the air and the temperatures at which bathing takes place. Both saunas and steam rooms are available in domestic forms, as self contained units or, in the case of steam bathing, combined with a shower. With both systems, relaxation is the key, as soon as you step into your steam room or sauna the warmth opens the pores of the skin, creating a flow of perspiration lifting out the grime of everyday life.



### Saunas

A sauna is usually a wooden construction where the internal air is dry, operating at temperatures above 80°C with humidity as low as 3%, but usually between 5 and 20%. The humidity in a sauna is increased by sprinkling water over hot rocks on a sauna stove resulting in steam.

Installing a sauna in a domestic situation is a straightforward procedure as they can be supplied in prefabricated kit, ready for a specialist installer, or competent self builder, to construct. It usually takes less than a day to do and being completely insulated, the sauna has no effect on any surrounding structure or decoration. It does not require a floor drain (although this may be recommended in commercial installations) and is simple to maintain with the occasional coat of wood preservative to the outside.

Saunas are available with capacities ranging from one to two people up to 18 plus, although in domestic situations, a 3 to 4 person module is the most common. The sauna can be positioned anywhere in the house; a basement, garage, attic, playroom, spare bedroom or even in a garden chalet. All that is required is a flat floor of wood, ceramic tile, concrete or vinyl tile finish. The heating stove on which the thermal rocks are placed and the lighting for the sauna can usually be run off a normal domestic electricity supply. However the actual requirement of the particular model should be checked against the actual available supply in the property, by a qualified electrician, who should also make the final connection.





### Infrared Thermal Cabins

The latest alternative to the traditional sauna uses infrared heating to heat your body directly, without increasing the temperature of the air. A 30 minute session is sufficient to create the feeling of wellbeing associated with the sauna experience.

Infrared radiation operates at a lower temperature than conventional saunas and is therefore more comfortable for those who find higher sauna temperatures uncomfortable.



### Steam Room

A steam bath operates at a temperature typically up to 45°C with a high humidity of around 90 to 100%. Although steam rooms are most often found in sports and leisure clubs, hotels and holiday centres, compact models, seating from one to eight people are available and may be suitable for residential installation.

### Steam Shower

For most domestic situations, the ideal solution is a luxury steam shower which combines the benefits of your own personal steam bath with a conventional shower unit. A steam shower is a shower cubicle which includes a seat and a dome or ceiling to keep the steam in. The steam is created by a special generator, as in the steam room described above. Given the right sort of cubicle, you can even have a steam generator fitted to your existing shower unit.

Complete self contained steam shower units with one or two seats are available in a wide variety of finishes, as either built-in or stand-alone cubicles. Steam is allowed to build up to a temperature of up to 45°C before entering the shower. After five to ten minutes in the steam, you can take a cool shower before sitting back and relaxing for another 10 minutes, or for as long as you feel comfortable.

Saunas and steam rooms complement each other. Use a steam bath daily and your sauna at weekends to help relax and wind down after a busy week.



### Saunarium

Another option would be a Saunarium, this is almost a mixture of a steam room and a sauna, the construction is still from wood, but the temperature drops to a less severe 60 - 65°C and the humidity rises to 30-40%. This type of room is often quite a useful compromise between the Sauna and Steam room, especially in a house that only has the space or budget for one room.

