

Infrared Saunas - History, Health Benefits and Technology



Infrared saunas are a revolutionary step in sauna technology, and one that can generate strong opinions among sauna enthusiasts. Because infrared saunas use different technology, different materials, and create an experience that is slightly different from a traditional sauna, it is inevitable that bathers around the world vary in their feelings for this alternative sauna heating mechanism.

The infrared heater, which operates quite differently from a traditional sauna heater, has added a completely new dimension to the sauna experience and paved the way for many more people to become sauna enthusiasts.

How do Infrared Saunas Work?

Infrared saunas work using infrared heaters to convert light directly to heat. This heat has the effect of warming nearby objects without raising the air temperature; in other words, a bather in an infrared sauna absorbs heat but the surrounding air does not.

Far-infrared radiant (FIR) heat is often confused with ultraviolet (UV) radiation because both types of energy are present in the sun's rays. However, FIR does not damage the skin the way UV does while still providing many of the benefits of natural sunlight.

What are the Health Benefits of an Infrared Sauna?

In infrared saunas, heat penetrates deep into body tissues in a way that a traditional sauna cannot. This deep tissue warmth is great for sore muscles, stiffness, and joint pain, especially the kind of chronic pain that comes from arthritis.

The infrared sauna heater warms up and is ready for use much more quickly than a

traditional sauna's heater (usually in 10 to 20 minutes, compared to at least an hour) and it uses much less energy. And because the air itself does not get hot in infrared saunas, they are suitable for people with respiratory issues who find it uncomfortable or even risky to go in a traditional sauna. Bathers in infrared saunas also can enjoy the benefits of the sauna at a much lower temperature than in a traditional sauna.

Cost, Installation and Maintenance

Generally speaking, infrared saunas are less expensive, easier to install, and require less maintenance than traditional saunas. They come in many sizes and are often quite portable, making them a great choice for a home sauna when there is limited space available.

While the upfront cost of a far-infrared sauna is quite reasonable, a great deal more savings is realized when it comes to installation. An infrared sauna heater does not use water so there is no need for moisture barriers, special drainage systems, or complex electrical wiring. Maintenance is much less involved as well, since there are no water-borne bacteria to take up residence inside and the sauna itself stays nice and dry.

How does the Infrared Sauna Compare to a Traditional Sauna?

We have already talked about some of the differences between infrared saunas and traditional saunas, so let's look at a few more comparisons as well.

The health benefits of infrared saunas are comparable to those of traditional saunas. These benefits may include:

- Improved blood circulation
- Cleansing of body toxins via the skin, pores and sweat glands
- Easing of pain and discomfort caused by arthritis
- Relaxation
- Stress relief
- Relief of muscle soreness
- Social interaction and a sense of community

Some sauna enthusiasts say they have a better experience in infrared saunas, while others much prefer the moist heat of a traditional sauna. Because of the dissimilarity in air temperature and humidity between the two sauna types, some bathers do respond differently from one to the other.

For example, infrared saunas have the following unique characteristics:

- Dry air is better tolerated by bathers with some respiratory issues
- Cooler air is better tolerated by bathers with some medical conditions
- FIR heating is similar to the natural sun, which benefits some people with vitamin deficiencies or Seasonal Affective Disorder
- Deep penetration of FIR energy is thought to be more effective for sore and injured muscles

By contrast, traditional saunas have the following unique characteristics:

- Hot, moist air can be beneficial for people with asthma, sinus congestion, and general head/neck colds
- Frequent use may leave skin feeling dry, but less so than with infrared saunas
- All-over warmth of moist air is more soothing, enveloping and relaxing for some people

In most cases, the partiality for infrared saunas or traditional saunas comes down to personal preference. If you are unsure of which type of sauna you will enjoy most then it is a good idea try using both types, several times if possible. This is the best way to determine the best fit for your needs.

What Should I look for in an Infrared Sauna?

When you decide to shop for infrared saunas, it is important to gather as much information and do as much research as possible. You can look online, visit your local library, and check with local dealers who sell infrared saunas. While features and specifications can vary widely, here are a few things to look for in an infrared sauna:

- Light or white-colored wood construction
- Comfortable seating
- Sufficient light for reading, but not so bright as to be glaring
- Easy installation and secure joining of panels and seams
- Infrared heaters made with true ceramic infrared lamps rather than steel rods covered with a ceramic coating
- Lifetime warranty on infrared heaters
- Local maintenance and repair services
- Size and shape to suit your needs and your available space
- Overall quality construction that does not appear flimsy or misaligned

Infrared saunas are extremely popular alternatives to traditional saunas, providing substantial benefit to regular users and making the sauna experience accessible to a wider range of people.

Summary

Saunas have come a long way from the original versions dug into an embankment and using a wood fire to heat stones. The advent of better technology, better materials, and greater understanding of sauna benefits has helped make the sauna popular across the globe.

Infrared saunas are an important link in the evolution of sauna technology, and they have proved themselves to be energy efficient as well as beneficial to the health and well-being of bathers. If you are interested in buying a home sauna then you would be well served to give careful consideration to modern infrared saunas.

About the Author:

Julie-Ann Amos is a freelance writer for Home-Saunas-N-Kits.com, a consumer guide providing information on [infrared saunas](#) and [sauna room heaters](#). She regularly enjoys the health benefits of [home saunas](#) when vacationing in her second home in Scotland.