

# Sauna Design Key Features



## 1. Sauna Ventilation

The number one feature for a clean long lasting sauna is proper air exchange. There should be an **upper outlet vent** approximately 3 feet off of the floor, usually under the top bench. The **lower intake vent** should be at floor level, near the sauna heater which helps to circulate by convection. For indoor saunas, instead of the lower vent it is acceptable to just leave a 1/2" gap under the door.



Leave vents open (and door open if possible) when finished using the sauna, to minimize the time that bacteria are exposed to an ideal growing environment. Building codes require similar air exchange and with the high temperatures and humidity in saunas it is very important so bacteria and fungi do not grow as fast and destroy wood grain. → More Info: [Sauna Vents](#)

## 2. Sauna Vapor Barrier

It is important that the foil vapor barrier is used in sauna design to keep moisture out of walls. Foil vapor barrier adds 1R of insulation value. Plastic or synthetic vapor barriers are not designed for high temperatures of sauna and will likely breakdown and release toxic gases and be rendered ineffective. Any hot spots like knots in paneling can melt holes in plastic and synthetic vapor barriers, exposing the inner wall to damaging water vapor. Simply install by stapling vapor barrier around walls and ceiling with foil side facing you. Recommended 2 to 3" overlap and use aluminum foil tape on seams for best results. → More Info: [Sauna Foil Vapor Barrier](#)



## 3. Sauna Wood Types

The woods used for sauna steam rooms vary widely, usually depending on what types of wood are available locally. Sauna woods for walls and ceiling are milled with tongue & grooves (T&G) that interlock and make installation easy.

In Europe and Scandinavia the most commonly used woods are tight knot Spruce, Aspen and Basswood. Many hospital saunas in Finland use Aspen which is the most non-allergenic wood for sauna use. This means that more people (especially in public or club saunas) can enjoy the health benefits of sauna without irritating certain respiratory conditions, as the famous Cedar wood aromatic scent sometimes can. Aspen is very light in color for a more soothing sauna experience. Superior Sauna **Aspen sauna wood** comes with a milled relief groove on the backside to allow airflow to both sides of the wood. It also features a waterfall style T&G design for a more effective water resistant seal.



**Western Red Cedar** is a very popular sauna wood with its varying shades of color and aromatic scent. Western Red Cedar T&G sauna wood is available in a couple of sizes and grades for sauna building. White Cedar paneling is usually considered a lower grade and has more of a rustic look and feel with knots compared to smooth clear Red Cedar without knots. Cedar sauna woods have natural oils which give the are naturally resistant to many bacteria, fungi and insects.

**Sauna Wood Paneling Install:** note that **Stainless steel finishing nails** must be used to attach sauna paneling because regular or galvanized nails will corrode over the years and leave dark streaks and stains on the walls. We offer 15, 16 and 18 gauge sizes of nails to fit many nails guns (for speed and accuracy). Start with your 2"x4" or 2"x6" framed insulated sauna room walls and ceiling. As you construct your sauna room the only place you may want to use a treated material is on the sill plate. Plan wiring well in advance for sauna light, sauna heater unit and heater control panel. While paneling and trim are being installed, make sure to keep it 1½" off of floor so it doesn't wick moisture and so there is clearance for ipe wood flooring tiles or duckboard.



Remember the sauna woods must breathe, so never use sealants or coatings that would break down from the heat and release harmful gases. There is now a safe non-toxic [Sauna Wood Treatment](#) oil available that can be applied to paneling and benches that helps keep wood cleaner by not allowing excess perspiration to soak into wood fibers. The oil treatment is great for high maintenance commercial saunas or daily used home saunas. ↪ More Info: [Cedar and Aspen Sauna Wood Paneling](#) [Stainless Steel Nails](#)

#### 4. Sauna Benches

Superior Sauna benches are made of clear grain knot-free woods, white Basswood or Red Cedar and feature fully rounded edges for maximum comfort. Many of our bench designs utilize wall mounted rails that allow bench seats to lift out and easily be removed for cleaning sauna. Benches and backrests should be made with clear lumber, as knots make for uncomfortable 'hot spots'. Be sure to install benches with hidden fasteners (from bottom through support into bottom of bench top board) so there are no exposed hot metal fasteners to burn sauna users. Basswood bench stock measures 5 ½" wide by 1 ¾" thick. Red Cedar size is 5 ½" wide by 1 ½" thick. These commercial quality materials will outlast other types of sauna benches, as the surface can be sanded every year or so to maintain a 'new' look. Portable sauna benches are another option for additional guest seating or as a cooling off bench outside of sauna. Portable benches can be made to ANY custom size.



↪ More Info: [Cedar and Basswood Sauna Benches](#)

#### 5. Sauna Heater

There are a variety of types and sizes of Sauna Heaters for any location, commercial or residential. All of our sauna heaters can have water poured over the rocks to produce steam like in traditional Finnish steam saunas.



**Wood Burning Sauna Stoves** are the most traditional type of sauna heater and offer the most heat output. Wood sauna stoves usually have the option of a built in water heating tank for bathing after the sauna session. **Electric Sauna Heaters** are the most convenient to use and take up little sauna room space. Propane or Natural **Gas Sauna Heaters** have a larger rock tray for higher steam output. Electric or gas sauna heaters should have a sturdy heater guard installed according to heater manufacturer specifications. Woodburning sauna heaters have much hotter surface temps, so they don't typically use a heater guard and usually require a brick or stone wall inlay near heater to act as a heat shield. Water can be used on the rocks for steam with all of Superior Saunas heaters. The Finnleo brand sauna heaters are excellent when used wet or dry. Finnleo has the best warranty in the industry with 5 years for residential use and 1 year for commercial installations. Tylo, Scandia and Polar are other brands of quality electric sauna heaters. We offer replacement parts for most sauna heaters in service, brands like Polar, Finnleo, Helo, Saunatec, Amerec, Scandia / Vico, Tylo and more.

↪ More Info: [All Sauna Heaters and Stoves](#)

## 6. Sauna Door

Sauna Door types are all wood, wood with small window, or full glass panel. There are several sizes available from standard 24" wide to 36" wide handicap accessible doors. The all wood door is paneled on both sides with your choice of T&G wood and features an insulated core. Glass panel sauna door is standard with sealed pre-hung jamb, 1/4" plate glass door, and all hardware with special coating for sauna use. Custom sauna doors can be ordered to fit any existing sauna room and pre-hung is optional.



Rough openings for pre-hung sauna doors are typically framed in 3" larger on width and height, from door jamb size. It is recommended to frame in doors and windows after they arrive for a perfect fit with casing and door jamb thickness.

If you plan to build your own sauna door, our Sauna Door Hardware Kits feature heavy duty stainless steel spring hinges, spring ball catch latches and quality wood handles.

↳ More Info: [Sauna Doors and Door Hardware Kits](#)

## 7. Sauna Window

Sauna windows allow ambient light to enter and help make the sauna space seem larger. For outdoor sauna cabins, the sauna window allows a nice view of the lake or the use of an oil lantern for night time lighting, hung outside the sauna of course. For indoor saunas, you can set up a TV on a shelf outside the sauna window. Tempered double pane, insulated glass units are used for efficiency and safety. Window frames are made with quality select woods.



Rough openings for windows are usually framed in 3/4" larger on width and height from window casing size.

↳ More Info: [Sauna Windows](#)

## Recommended Sauna Maintenance

Recommended sauna maintenance and cleaning: **Sauna Clean** is an imported concentrated cleaner solution designed for maintaining sauna woods. Commercial facilities can benefit from using an **Ozone Generator** automatic sanitizing system to save on labor hours of cleaning sauna by hand. The PowerZone 400 unit works by safely neutralizing bacteria before it has a chance to multiply and break down sauna wood fibers. ↳ More Info: [Sauna Cleaners](#)

## Optional Sauna Accessories

A sauna is not complete without the essential accessories: water bucket & ladle and thermometer. We also have hygrometers, 15 minute sand timers, eucalyptus oil, backrests, headrests, sauna speakers and more.

↳ More Info: [Sauna Accessories](#)

Superior Sauna manufactures many sauna wood parts and components. Sauna heaters, vapor barrier, sauna hardware parts and sauna accessories are distributed worldwide. For Contractors and Dealers, we offer discounts and wholesale most items. See all products at our complete online store.

[www.SuperiorSaunas.com](http://www.SuperiorSaunas.com).

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