

What's the Difference Between Infrared And traditional Saunas?

Traditional saunas are a high heat, low humidity environment. Temperatures range between 80-90°C (185-195°F) and water is splashed over the heater rocks to create a blast of hyper-steam and intensify the feeling of heat. For those who enjoy this experience, there is nothing in the world quite like it.

NOTE: There is an exception for the [Tylo Combi](#) sauna heater. The Combi produces its own steam and so operates at a lower temperature. The Combi is the "soft-heat" traditional sauna.

Infrared saunas provide a much milder environment. Infrared rays heat the body directly and the air secondarily. For those who enjoy the "heat bath" experience, but cannot take or do not enjoy traditional saunas, infrared is an excellent alternative.

It is important to keep in mind that **the experience is *not* the same**. Many people who have experienced and enjoyed traditional saunas inquire about infrared saunas thinking it will be the same.

Infrared saunas provide a **very enjoyable** experience but are different from a traditional sauna. If you know and love traditional saunas, you should seek out information beyond the claims of infrared vendors.

Many infrared manufacturers and distributors make comparisons to traditional saunas that are misleading and untrue. As a distributor of both types of saunas, Saunafin would like dispel some of these misstatements:

The chart below lists some of the claims often made and explains them in more detail:

CLAIM	CORRECT INFORMATION
Infrared saunas heat up in under 10 minutes. Traditional saunas require 45-90 minutes	Infrared saunas heat to between 120°F to 150°F. Traditional saunas to 195°F. Infrareds heat up in about 10-20 minutes. A traditional sauna, sized properly, will heat a sauna in 20-35 minutes. However, Heating up an infrared only provides for that "toasty" feeling. To perspire, you must be exposed to the infrared rays. It generally takes 12-20 minutes of exposure to begin sweating.
Traditional saunas are expensive to operate	Electrical costs are a direct reflection of heater size and operating time. The average electrical cost is 7 cents per kw hour. A 1.6 kW infrared sauna will cost 5-10 cents per use. A 6 kw traditional sauna will cost 40-50 cents. Most people use their sauna once or twice per week. So while it is true that traditional cost more, in either case costs are measured in pennies, not dollars.
Infrared saunas assemble in minutes, while traditional saunas take days and require special installation	Infrared saunas come primarily as pre-fabricated panels that snap or screw together. While they are relatively simple to assemble, it is more realistic to assume 1-2 hours for assembly. Traditional saunas are most popularly purchased as do-it yourself kits, which take a few days to install. There are also pre-fab traditional saunas that are built in essentially the same way as infrareds-that is panels that are simply screwed together. And they too can be assembled in a couple of hours.
Traditional saunas require special electrical work. Infrareds plug into any outlet.	Traditional do require a dedicated breaker. While some smaller infrared saunas can plug into any outlet, many mid size to larger require a dedicated 15 or 20 amp plug - which must also be installed by an electrician.
Traditional saunas require a lot of maintenance.	There is absolutely no difference in the amount of maintenance required. Even a heavily used home sauna gets relatively light use - once or twice a week on average. The only maintenance required is to wipe down the walls and benches periodically with a mild solution of water and dish detergent.
Infrared sauna heat is dry and gentle, where traditional saunas are harsh and claustrophobic.	This is really a matter of "to each his own". It is true that traditional saunas are a harsher environment. For many that is the essence of a sauna - extreme heat with blasts of humidity from splashing the rocks. For those sauna purists, there is nothing else. However, for those who seek the benefits of heat therapy, but do not enjoy traditional saunas, infrareds offer a practical and enjoyable alternative.