

Home Wellness Room Design: Sauna, Steam, Cold Plunge and Rest Area

How to lay out a private wellness suite, using manufacturer guidance on sauna size, benches, wood, lighting, ventilation, steam room slope, drainage and cold plunge placement.

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A full wellness suite usually links a shower, a sauna, a steam room, a cold plunge and a rest area. This guide gives the planning numbers that manufacturers and trade bodies publish. Your equipment manual and local code come first.

Layout and flow

Put the shower at the center, because people use it between the other zones. Keep the steam room and plunge near a floor drain. Put the rest area out of the steam and splash zones, with fresh air, seating and drinking water. We found no manufacturer standard for the rest area.

Sauna size and benches

| Item | Guidance | Source | |---|---|---| | Bench length per person | 2 feet | Finnleo | | Width of one sitting place | 600 mm | Harvia | | Ceiling height | 75 in minimum, 96 in maximum | Finnleo custom saunas | | Upper bench to ceiling | 1,100 to 1,200 mm | Harvia | | Upper bench depth | At least 500 mm; 600 mm or more to lie down | Harvia | | Step height between benches | 350 mm | Harvia | | Room width | 2,200 mm minimum; 2,500 mm for extra legroom | Harvia |

Finnleo's sample custom layouts range from 4 by 6 feet to 12 by 12 feet. Glass changes the heater size. Harvia's Spirit manual adds 1.2 m³ to the room volume for each square meter of glass, tile, concrete or other non-insulated surface. In its example, a 10 m³ room with a glass door needs the output of a 12 m³ room.

Wood

Harvia says low-density, porous woods do not get too hot to touch. Spruce handles moisture best, followed by pine, alder, aspen and heat-treated alder. Finnleo offers cedar, hemlock, or spruce walls with abachi benches. It says not to paint, varnish or stain the interior, because the wood must breathe.

Under and near the heater, Harvia recommends dark grout and stone floor coverings, because stone fragments wash down and mark light floors.

Lighting, power and the door

Harvia's Spirit manual (North American edition) says:

- Use a vapor-proof, wall-mounted light 6 in (150 mm) from the ceiling, not over the heater or upper benches. It can go under the benches.
- Do not put receptacles or plugs in the sauna room.
- The door must open out and must not have a lock or latch.

Sauna ventilation

The same manual asks for six air changes per hour. With mechanical ventilation, the supply vent goes above the heater. With natural ventilation, it goes under or next to it. The exhaust vent goes near the floor, far from the heater, with twice the supply pipe diameter.

Steam room

Mr. Steam's residential manual lists these room guidelines:

- Enclose the room fully. A gasketed door is recommended.
- Use non-slip flooring and non-porous walls and ceiling, such as tile, marble or acrylic.
- Slope the ceiling so condensate does not drip.
- Provide a floor drain.
- Use double-pane tempered safety glass for windows.
- Limit the ceiling to 8 feet, or use a larger generator.

Marble or glass walls increase the generator size. For the slope, an NTCA answer quotes TCNA methods SR613 and SR614: at least 2 inches per foot. Sloping from the center reduces run-down on the walls.

Cold plunge placement

Renu Therapy says its plunges can go indoors in a well-ventilated room, or outdoors all year. Each plugs into a standard 120V / 15A outlet, ideally on a dedicated circuit, on a flat, level surface. Ice Barrel says its barrels fit through a standard 31-inch door. For a built-in plunge, ask your builder about floor load, drainage and chiller access.

To find builders, designers and installers who plan full suites, compare builders, dealers and installers near you in the directory.

Sources

- [Finnleo: Custom Built Traditional Indoor Saunas](#) (fetched 2026-10-29)
- [Finnleo: Sauna Care and Maintenance](#) (fetched 2026-10-29)
- [Harvia: Choosing sauna benches, frequently asked questions](#) (fetched 2026-10-29)
- [Harvia Spirit Owner's/Operator's Manual \(PDF, hosted by Saunaplace\)](#) (fetched 2026-10-29)
- [Mr. Steam: Installation, Operation and Maintenance Manual, residential models \(PDF\)](#) (fetched 2026-10-29)
- [TileLetter \(NTCA\): Ceiling slope in a steam shower](#) (published 2025-01-01)
- [Renu Therapy: Cold Plunge and Sauna FAQ](#) (fetched 2026-10-29)
- [Ice Barrel: FAQ](#) (fetched 2026-10-29)

Frequently asked questions

How much bench space does each person need in a sauna?

Finnleo recommends 2 feet of bench per person. Harvia uses 600 mm for one sitting place as a rule of thumb.

How high should a sauna ceiling be?

Finnleo gives 75 to 96 inches for its custom saunas. Harvia recommends 1,100 to 1,200 mm between the upper bench and the ceiling, because extra space above the bathers wastes heat.

Why does a steam room need a sloped ceiling?

A sloped ceiling stops condensate from dripping on bathers. The TCNA steam room methods, as quoted by the NTCA, call for a slope of at least 2 inches per foot.