



HARVIA CUSTOM CUT

Frequently Asked Questions

Answers on sauna use, Custom Cut planning and design, and preparing the room for build out.

01 Sauna General

Q 01 How long does it take a sauna to heat up?

Most traditional saunas reach bathing temperature in about **30–60 minutes**. Heat-up time depends on room volume, heater size, insulation, cold surfaces such as glass or stone, and the starting room temperature. A correctly sized heater in a well-insulated room heats fastest.

Q 02 What is the difference between a wet and a dry sauna?

A traditional Finnish sauna is both. It runs dry, at low humidity, until water is ladled onto the hot stones. That creates a burst of steam, called *löyly*, which briefly raises humidity and the perceived heat. You control how wet or dry each session feels.

A **steam room** is different: it runs at lower temperatures (typically around 110–120 °F) with near 100% humidity, produced by a steam generator rather than a sauna heater.

Q 03 How should I use a sauna?

- Shower before entering, and stay hydrated.
- Sit for 10–15 minutes, then cool down with a shower or fresh air and rest.
- Repeat two or three rounds as comfortable. Never exceed 30 minutes at one time.
- Add water to the stones a little at a time to create *löyly*.
- Leave immediately if you feel dizzy or unwell, and never sauna under the influence of alcohol or medication.

Q 0 4 How is a traditional sauna different from an infrared cabin?

	TRADITIONAL SAUNA	INFRARED CABIN
How it heats	Heater and stones heat the air, which heats the body	Infrared emitters warm the body directly
Typical temperature	150–194 °F	Roughly 120–150 °F
Humidity	Yes, water on the stones (löyly)	No
Experience	Enveloping, classic Finnish heat	Gentler, lower air temperature

Harvia Custom Cuts are a traditional sauna experience.

Q 0 5 Should you lie down or sit up in a sauna?

Both are fine. Sitting upright on the upper bench is the classic position. Lying down spreads the heat more evenly across the body, since your head and feet are at the same height. When finishing, sit up for a moment before standing to avoid lightheadedness.

Q 0 6 What are the safe temperature ranges in a sauna?

Traditional saunas are typically enjoyed between 150 °F and 194 °F. The Harvia Fenix control sets temperature from 104 °F up to a maximum of 194 °F, the UL safety limit measured at the ceiling. Because heat rises, the temperature at bench level is lower than at the ceiling. Start lower and build up as you become comfortable.

Q 0 7 How much does it cost to operate a sauna?

Estimate the maximum cost per session with: **heater kW × hours of operation × electricity rate.**

Example: a 6 kW heater running 2 hours (heat-up plus a session) at the U.S. average of about \$0.18 per kWh costs up to about \$2.20. Actual cost is usually lower, because the heater cycles off once the room reaches temperature. Your local utility rate will vary.

Q 0 8 What are the health benefits of a sauna?

Research on regular sauna bathing is extensive and growing. For independent, evidence-based resources, we recommend the Global Wellness Institute's Hydrothermal Initiative:

[globalwellnessinstitute.org · Hydrothermal Initiative Resources](https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/hydrothermal-initiative-resources)

Consult your doctor about any health-related limitations before using a sauna.

02 Sauna Planning & Design

Q 09 How many benches should a sauna have?

Most saunas are designed with two tiers. The upper bench places bathers in the hottest, most comfortable heat; the lower bench serves as a step, footrest, or cooler seat. Plan roughly 2 ft of bench length per seated bather, and at least 6 ft if you would like to lie down. L-shaped layouts add capacity in larger rooms.

Q 10 What height should we design our sauna?

We recommend a **7 ft ceiling**; Harvia Custom Cuts can accommodate ceilings up to 8 ft. A lower ceiling keeps the heat close to bathers on the upper bench and reduces room volume, so the room heats faster and costs less to run. Taller rooms require a larger heater and spend more energy heating air above the bathers.

For pitched ceilings, the low wall can be no lower than 6.5 ft, and the heater is placed near the low wall.

Q 11 How many lights are included in the sauna kit?

Harvia Custom Cut includes **one light bar per bench**; a two-tier layout, for example, includes two light bars. The light bars plug into a standard 110V, 15A outlet, so plan its location during electrical rough-in.

Q 12 Where should the heater be placed in a sauna room?

Heater placement is determined by the heater's installation manual, which sets minimum clearances to walls, benches, ceiling, and the door, plus where the air inlet and temperature sensor must go. Our design team confirms heater placement on your Custom Cut drawings. As a rule, keep the heater clear of the door swing and away from where bathers enter and sit. For optimum performance, place the heater as far from the air outlet as possible, while keeping the stones within reach for löyly.

Q 13 Why does a sauna need ventilation?

Fresh air keeps the sauna oxygen-rich and comfortable, distributes heat evenly, and carries moisture out of the room. Each heater has its own inlet and outlet requirements, so ventilation is always designed to the heater manual. Harvia recommends air exchange 8-10 times an hour.

Q 14 Will the air exhausting from the sauna outlet affect the space it vents into?

In most homes, no. A residential dry sauna adds very little moisture; humidity rises only briefly when water is ladled onto the stones. The warm air leaving the outlet is a small volume that a normally ventilated room or home HVAC system absorbs easily.

Vent the outlet into an open, conditioned space such as a bathroom, gym, or hallway, or duct it to the exterior. Never vent into a closet, attic, wall cavity, or other enclosed space where warm, moist air can collect. Follow the heater manual and local building codes.

Q 15 Why does a sauna need a vapor barrier and insulation?

Insulation keeps heat in the room, shortening heat-up time and lowering operating cost. The foil vapor barrier, supplied with Harvia Custom Cut, reflects heat back into the sauna and keeps moisture out of the wall and ceiling cavities, protecting the structure from condensation and mold.

Q 16 What type of insulation and R-value do you recommend?

RECOMMENDATION	
Type	Unfaced mineral wool (rock wool) batts. It tolerates high heat, resists moisture, and does not off-gas.
Walls	R-13 minimum (2×4 framing); R-15 mineral wool fits the same cavity
Ceiling	R-19 or higher; heat collects at the ceiling, so it benefits most

Use unfaced insulation only. Kraft- or foil-faced batts create a second vapor barrier behind the Harvia foil and can trap moisture in the wall. Avoid foam board and spray foam inside the sauna envelope. Follow local energy and building codes, which may require higher values.

Q 17 Why does a sauna need an out-swinging door with glass?

A sauna door must swing outward and must never lock, so bathers can exit easily and quickly. Glass in the door or a viewing window lets others see into the sauna for safety and brings light into the room. Sauna doors use tempered glass rated for sauna heat. The optional Harvia door is wall-hung and requires a framed wall.

Q 18 Can you add a window to a sauna?

Yes. We provide trim pieces for the window sill and cutout, matched to your lumber selection. Windows must use tempered glass rated for sauna heat. Glass counts as a cold surface, so a window is factored into heater sizing (see Q22). Include the window dimensions and an elevation showing its location on the wall with your Custom Cut request.

Q 19 What glass is required for customer-supplied glass walls?

Use **fully tempered safety glass**, a minimum of **8 mm (5/16 in)** thick, or 10 mm (3/8 in) for larger panels, certified to ANSI Z97.1 / CPSC 16 CFR 1201. Do not use laminated or annealed (untempered) glass, and do not use rubber seals or gaskets; both can soften or warp with regular sauna heat.

Clear, bronze, and gray tints are all suitable. Keep glass outside the heater's required clearances, and include each glass wall's dimensions and location on your request. Glass is a cold surface, so it is factored into heater sizing (see Q22).

Q 20 Does a residential sauna need a drain?

No. A residential dry sauna uses very little water, so a floor drain is not required. It is a convenience some owners choose for cleaning. Always follow local building codes.

Q 21 Does a residential sauna need a wood floor?

No. The floor should be firm, flat, and nonporous, such as concrete, ceramic, or tile, and it stays relatively cool because heat rises. Do not install a sauna on carpet. Flooring is not included with Harvia Custom Cut.

Q 22 Why does the heater need to be upsized for glass or natural stone walls?

Glass, tile, brick, concrete, and stone are cold surfaces. They absorb and release heat differently from insulated wood walls, so the heater has to work harder. Harvia's sizing guidance adds 2 cubic feet to the room volume for every square foot of cold surface, excluding the door.

Q 23 Why is it important to size the heater properly?

UNDERSIZED HEATER	OVERSIZED HEATER
Slow heat-up, may never reach temperature, runs continuously, shortened element life	Heats air too quickly before the stones are hot, weaker löyly, uneven heat, higher cost

We size every Custom Cut sauna heater from your room's volume and wall materials, which is why accurate measurements on your request are essential.

03 Sauna Room Build Out

Q 2 4 Who installs the sauna?

Harvia Custom Cut is a millwork kit installed by the dealer's contractor or builder, following the Harvia Custom Cut Installation Manual. Harvia does not provide on-site installation.

Q 2 5 What needs to be completed before the sauna arrives?

- Framing complete and matching your approved drawings
- A level, nonporous finished floor
- Electrical rough-in, including the heater circuit, Fenix power unit location, and lighting outlet
- Ventilation openings and ductwork planned per the heater manual & drawings
- Insulation installed and inspected, if required by local code

Harvia supplies the foil vapor barrier with the kit.

Q 2 6 Who installs the heater?

The heater and all electrical work must be installed by a licensed electrician, following the heater and Harvia Fenix installation manuals and all local codes. Keep a copy of the electrician's invoice; it is required for any heater or control warranty claim.

Q 2 7 What planning needs to be done to accept delivery?

- Our partner carrier will call or email to schedule a delivery window.
 - Have someone on site to receive and sign for the delivery.
 - Confirm with your dealer whether liftgate is needed and plan a clear path for long board bundles.
 - Inspect all bundles, cartons, and note any visible damage on the delivery receipt.
 - Report missing or damaged parts to your dealer within 7 days of delivery.
 - Store components in a dry, climate protected space, until installation.
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Q 2 8 Does the lumber require any sanding on site?

Occasionally. Natural species can pick up minor marks in transit and may need light sanding on site before installation.

- **Hand sand only** with fine-grit sandpaper, following the grain, to remove blemishes and small dents.
 - **Do not use a power sander.** It can remove too much and leave an uneven surface on the precut boards.
 - **Gouges larger than 6 in long by 1 in wide** qualify for replacement under the Custom Cut finish and material warranty guidelines. Photograph the damage and report it to your dealer within 7 days of delivery.
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04 Care & Maintenance

Q 29 How do I care for the sauna stones?

Use only stones made for sauna heaters. Sauna stones are quarried and quality-tested to withstand repeated heating and water without cracking, and to store and release heat for good löyly. Harvia stones, such as olivine diabase, are matched to Harvia heaters; ordinary stones can crack or break apart.

- **Rearrange the stones at least once a year**, following the stacking guidance in your heater manual.
- **Replace any stones** that have cracked or crumbled, and clear away stone fragments from the heater.

Q 30 Is it normal for sap to appear after sauna use?

Yes. Sap (resin) is a natural part of solid wood, and heat draws it to the surface, most often in the first months of use and around knots. It is not a defect and typically lessens as the wood seasons.

- **Let it harden.** Wet sap smears; once it crystallizes, it removes cleanly.
- **Remove it with the sauna off and cool.** Gently scrape with a plastic scraper or dull blade, then wipe any residue with a cloth lightly dampened with isopropyl alcohol or mineral spirits. Ventilate the room before the next use.
- **Lightly hand sand** stubborn spots with fine-grit sandpaper, following the grain.

Q 31 How should I clean and maintain my sauna?

- **Sit on towels** to keep perspiration off the benches.
- **Wipe the benches** after use, and clean periodically with a mild, sauna-safe wood cleaner.
- **Leave the door ajar** after each session so the room dries out.
- **Never coat** walls or ceilings with varnish, paint, or stain; these can trap resin, off-gas, or discolor in sauna heat.

MORE QUESTIONS?

Contact your authorized Harvia dealer or Harvia Custom Cut Support at customsauna@harvia.com · 800-776-0711.