Choosing the Right 4 Person Sauna for Your Home

Why Size Matters When You Shop for a Home Sauna

When I started looking at home saunas a few years back, I figured bigger was always better. A 6-person model seemed like the obvious choice for a family of four plus guests. But after talking to a dozen homeowners and a few experienced installers, I realized that a 4 person sauna often makes more practical sense for most houses. It fits into a smaller footprint, uses less energy, and still gives you enough room to stretch out or sit with a couple of friends.

The trick is finding the one that matches your space, your budget, and your expectations for heat and comfort. I have spent time in barrel saunas, indoor custom sauna kits, and even a few infrared models, and each type serves a different need. Let me walk you through what I have learned so you can avoid the mistakes I made early on.

What a 4 Person Sauna Actually Looks Like

A typical 4 person sauna has an interior floor area around 4 feet by 6 feet, sometimes a bit larger if you want a 4-foot bench on each side. That gives two people room to lie down and two more to sit upright. The ceiling height usually runs between 6.5 and 7.5 feet, which is tall enough for most adults to sit comfortably on the top bench without hitting the ceiling.

I have seen models with a single tier of benches and others with two levels. The two-level design is more common in traditional saunas because it lets you control your heat exposure. The top bench can be 20 to 30 degrees hotter than the lower one. If you are new to sauna bathing, that lower bench is a good place to start.

One thing I wish someone had told me earlier: check the bench depth. A shallow bench makes it hard to sit up straight without your knees hitting the wall. Look for at least 18 inches of sitting surface, preferably 20 inches, especially if you plan to use a 4-foot bench on the back wall.



Wood Choices: Cedar, Hemlock, and Thermowood

The wood you choose affects the look, smell, and durability of your sauna. Cedar is the classic choice. It resists moisture naturally and has a pleasant scent that many people love. Almost Heaven Saunas uses Western Red Cedar in many of their kits, and I can tell you the aroma is strong at first but mellows out over a few months. Hemlock is a lighter, less aromatic wood that stays smooth to the touch. It does not have the same insect-repelling properties as cedar, but it looks clean and modern.

Thermowood is a more recent option. It is heat-treated to improve stability and resistance to moisture. I have sat in a Saunacore cabin built with thermowood, and the surface felt almost silky. No splinters, no rough grain. Thermowood also tends to stay cooler to the touch, which can be nice if you have kids who might brush against the walls.

Each wood has its trade-offs. Cedar is softer and can dent more easily. Hemlock is harder but may show water stains if you do not keep the sauna well-ventilated. Thermowood costs more but lasts longer. Your choice comes down to budget and how much maintenance you want to do.

Heater Types: Traditional vs. Infrared

The heater is the heart of any sauna. For a 4 person sauna, you have two main paths: a traditional stove that heats rocks or an infrared heater that warms your body directly.

Traditional heaters, like those from Harvia or Tylö, use electric elements to heat sauna stones. You pour water over the stones to create steam and that burst of heat known as l?yly. This is the classic sauna experience. The room gets hot, around 170 to 195 degrees Fahrenheit, and the humidity rises and falls as you add water. I prefer this method because the heat feels enveloping. It warms the air and then your lungs, not just your skin.

Infrared heaters, on the other hand, use Far Infrared or near-infrared wavelengths to heat people directly without heating the air as much. The room stays around 120 to 140 degrees. Many people find infrared more tolerable for longer sessions. EOS Sauna and Sauna360 make popular infrared models that fit a 4 person sauna footprint. If you have respiratory issues or just dislike very hot air, infrared might be your better bet.

Some manufacturers offer hybrid units that combine both technologies. I have not tried one myself, but a friend who owns a Sauna360 unit says it gives her the option of a quick infrared session on weekdays and a full steam session on weekends.



Indoor vs. Outdoor Placement

Where you put your 4 person sauna matters almost as much as the sauna itself. An indoor sauna can be installed in a spare bathroom, a finished basement, or even a large closet. The key is ventilation and moisture control. You need an exhaust fan or a window to let out the humidity after each use. Finlandia Sauna makes prefab indoor kits that fit through standard doorways, which saves you from having to knock down walls.

Outdoor saunas, especially barrel saunas, are easier to install because you do not need to worry about floor waterproofing or ceiling height. A barrel sauna sits on skids and can be placed on a concrete pad or gravel bed. I helped a neighbor set up a barrel sauna from L键 saunas last fall. We had it assembled in a weekend. The curved shape sheds rain well and the wood ages to a nice silver gray if left unfinished.

If you live in a cold climate, an outdoor sauna has a bonus: the contrast between the hot sauna and the cold air is one of the best feelings. Just make sure the door opens outward so snow does not block it.

Custom Kits vs. Prefab Models

If you have a specific space in mind, custom sauna kits give you flexibility. You can choose the wood, the bench layout, and the heater placement. Tempo Sauna offers modular kits that let you adjust the width and depth in six-inch increments. I have seen a beautiful custom build from Saunacore that used thermowood on the walls and cedar on the benches, combining the best of both materials.

Prefab models are faster and usually cheaper. Almost Heaven Saunas ships pre-cut panels that fit together like a puzzle. You do not need to be a carpenter to assemble them, but a second pair of hands helps. The trade-off is that you have less control over the final dimensions. If your space is an odd shape, a custom kit might be necessary.

Budget Considerations

A decent 4 person sauna kit runs between $2,500 and $6,000 for a traditional electric model, depending on wood quality and heater brand. Infrared models tend to be a bit less, starting around $1,800 for a basic unit from EOS Sauna. Custom builds can go much higher, especially if you choose premium thermowood or add features like Bluetooth speakers and chromotherapy lights.

Do not forget the cost of installation. Indoor saunas may require electrical work, a dedicated 220V circuit, and sometimes a floor drain. Outdoor saunas need a level foundation and possibly a permit. I always recommend getting a quote from a local electrician before you buy the kit. That way you know the full cost upfront.



Maintenance and Longevity

With proper care, a wood sauna lasts 15 to 20 years. Wipe down the benches after each use to prevent sweat from soaking into the wood. Leave the door open for an hour after each session so the interior dries out. Once a year, lightly sand the benches if they start to feel rough. I use a fine-grit sandpaper and then wipe the dust away with a damp cloth.

If you own a traditional heater, replace the stones every two years. They crack and crumble over time, which reduces heat retention. Harvia sells pre-washed stones that are ready to go. For infrared models, the heaters themselves rarely need replacement, but the control panels can fail after a decade. Keep the manufacturer's contact info handy.

Final Thoughts

A 4 person sauna hits a sweet spot for most households. It is big enough for a family of four or a small group of friends, yet compact enough to fit into a standard room or a modest backyard. Whether you choose a cedar barrel from L键saunas or a custom kit from Saunacore, the key is to match the heater type and wood to your lifestyle. Take your time, sit in a few different models if you can, and think about how you will actually use it. That careful choice will reward you with years of relaxing heat.