# Community saunas gain traction in Bristol and beyond



In recent years, particularly following the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a notable surge in the popularity of community saunas across the UK, with Bristol emerging as a prominent hub for these wellness spaces. Reports indicate that the trend is not confined to Bristol; similar developments are occurring throughout the country. WalesOnline highlighted that there are now over 100 public saunas in Britain based on the traditional Finnish style, characterised by wooden walls, hot stones, and cold plunge pools.

As the trend gains momentum, Bristol has seen the unveiling of several community saunas, which provide locals with the opportunity to enjoy sauna experiences in a social setting. BristolLive has compiled a list of five new community saunas that have recently opened, each offering facilities for group bookings or individual sessions. These venues typically incorporate luxury amenities such as plunge pools, showers, and specially designed wooden saunas reminiscent of Nordic or Scandinavian designs.

The saunas are strategically located in picturesque community venues. Notable examples include one situated on a city farm, featuring a barrel sauna and plunge pool along with facilities for changing and showering, as well as a second sauna located within the garden of a charity-run community hub. Other saunas are located at dog walking spots that provide a café and regular markets, while one sauna operates from a wood-fired horse box, surrounded by natural scenery.

Two players from the Bristol Bears rugby team have launched their own permanent wellness garden and sauna, contributing to the expanding wellness brand in the area. Their establishment has attracted a diverse clientele, including local residents, sports fans, and even some celebrities.

Jonathan Savage, who operates the Ardagh Community Sauna in Horfield with business partner Jules Smith and the Ardagh Community Trust, spoke to BristolLive about the initiative, stating, "It is amazing to see people from all walks of life young and old from different demographics coming to the sauna and the positive response has been amazing." He noted that participation in their sauna provides enjoyment and health benefits, echoing a wider trend of individuals prioritising their wellbeing. He said, "We see a lot of people coming here with friends instead of going to the pub."

Since launching in June, the Bristol Community Sauna at St Anne's House in Brislington has amassed 300 members and has seen approximately 4,000 users, totalling 10,000 sauna visits. The team behind this sauna emphasised that it serves as a vital space for social interaction and relaxation, adding, "People in the UK and Bristol are starting to understand the benefits of using the sauna regularly."

A multitude of factors contribute to the current rise in community saunas. A study led by Finnish researcher Jari Laukkanen indicates that regular sauna use can lead to significant health benefits, including decreased risks of heart and lung complications, strokes, and other serious conditions. The findings suggest that, when combined with cold dips, saunas provide cardiovascular workouts that enhance circulation.

Katie Bracher, vice chair of the British Sauna Society, commented on the broader appeal of saunas, stating, "The beauty of the sauna is in the versatility of the offerings; it’s a great tool for wellbeing. Biohackers are drawn in by the scientific benefits, the stressed by the balancing and endorphin-boosting effects, sports enthusiasts for the recovery and capacity building, spiritual communities for the liminal space that opens up."

Furthermore, interest in sauna facilities is not just limited to community spaces. An article in The Guardian noted a remarkable 84 per cent increase in Google searches for 'home sauna' in the UK from January to March 2020, reflecting a burgeoning interest in wellness practices at home and in community settings alike.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://ajabotanicals.com/blogs/notes/heating-up-the-rise-of-sauna-culture> - This article supports the rise of sauna culture in the UK, highlighting its health benefits and social aspects, which aligns with the trend observed in Bristol and other parts of the country.
* <https://www.countryandtownhouse.com/style/health-and-beauty/community-saunas-trend/> - This article discusses the growing popularity of community saunas in London, emphasizing their social and wellness benefits, which mirrors the trend in Bristol where saunas serve as social spaces.
* <https://www.globalwellnesssummit.com/trendium/trend-saunas-and-social-connection/> - This trend report highlights saunas as emerging social wellness hubs, addressing loneliness and mental health crises, which is consistent with the social interaction benefits observed in Bristol's community saunas.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source mentions the surge in community saunas across the UK, including Bristol, and notes their role in promoting wellness and social interaction.
* <https://www.britishsaunasociety.co.uk> - Although not directly linked, the British Sauna Society supports the growth of sauna culture in the UK, which includes Bristol, by promoting its health and social benefits.