

The Healing Heat of the Saunas and Banyas

The conditions are ideal—hot, dry, and steamy at the same time—for soothing your muscles, calming your mind, and deeply purifying your skin.

For Freya McOmish, the highlight of her week is when she heads to a dimly lit, wooden room to ladle water over hot stones—and have the best sweat of her life. “That’s the day I go to the sauna,” says the Copenhagen-based co-founder of the Scandinavia Standard, a digital site devoted to Scandinavian culture and design. The experience, she says, is immensely restorative. “It’s a moment of reflection,

meditation, and connection with your body.” You emerge, she says, with thoroughly cleansed pores, limber muscles and “an intense feeling of euphoria.”

The post-sauna high is not unlike the elation that comes from exercise—only here, basking in the warmth of cedar-scented air, you have barely moved. “It’s all about relaxation and detoxification,” says Jasmi Bonnén, the Finnish founder of Nuori skincare, of the ritual’s appeal. The origin of the word “sauna” is Finnish, simply meaning a wood-lined, insulated room heated by a stove. Stones placed in the stove release a soaring heat that can reach beyond 100°C (212°F), which sounds unbearable but apparently you get used to it. Purists will tell you that sauna



At VIVAMAYR Altaussee you can relax in several saunas, steam and brine baths.