

Why Are Austrians Always Naked? Sauna Etiquette Explained

According to a 2025 report by non-profit advocacy organisation [Global Wellness Institute](#), the health and wellness industry represents a \$6.8tn market and is projected to grow by 7.6% annually until 2029, reaching an estimated \$9.8tn. Austria is among the forerunners when it comes to wellness holidays. And saunas are especially popular. In Austria, they are more than just a place to relax, they're a part of the daily lifestyle and culture, encapsulated by the locals' approach to sport, health, and wellness.

Austrians are known for their laid-back attitude, love of nature, and a strong focus on well-being. This attitude extends to the use of saunas, which are considered spaces for relaxation, socialising, and rejuvenation.

So when you're on your next trip to Austria you might find yourself with the opportunity to take part in a sauna session after a hard day's skiing or hiking - and we suggest you should definitely take it. However, depending on where you're from, you might be shocked to discover that most saunas in Austria (and across Europe) forbid any type of clothing or swimwear.

But why do you have to be naked in the sauna? Is there a valid reason for this? Or is it simply an exhibitionist Austrian tradition?

Why take off your clothes?

There are two primary reasons: tradition and health.

Wearing clothes in a sauna [can trap heat and sweat](#), making the experience less comfortable and hygienic. Sweat also tends to collect in bathing suits such that it doesn't evaporate and cool the body as intended, which counteracts the desired effects of a sauna.

Synthetic bathing suits may let off steam from the heat. This process can have negative effects on your health as well as that of other sauna visitors. This is particularly important if you've been in any form of hot tub or swimming pool that has been treated with chlorine as it can cause steam released from swim-shorts to be mildly toxic.

Chemicals, dirt & the principle of egalitarianism

Clothes, especially workout clothes, are made with a number of potentially toxic chemicals and [research shows](#) that sweating while wearing these clothes can leach these chemicals into your skin. Since these synthetic materials don't breathe well, they can make you feel sweaty and clammy, which is not a pleasant sensation when trying to relax.

Nudity ensures that the body is exposed to the heat evenly, allowing for a more effective and enjoyable sauna session. The primary benefits of a sauna come from exercising your skin by exposing it to heat. Clothing blocks the heat transfer to your skin and holds the sweat against it that's trying to evaporate, negating most of those benefits.

Nudity also emphasises the egalitarian nature of the sauna: everyone is equal in their natural state, and there is no judgment based on appearance or attire.

Before entering a sauna

Before entering the sauna, it is customary to shower to remove any lotions, perfumes, bacteria or sweat. Inside the sauna, always sit on a towel to keep the benches clean and dry. This rule is in line with the Austrian emphasis on hygiene and consideration for others.

Nudity is only required in the sauna rooms themselves. You are welcome to wear a towel or bathrobe in the rest of the sauna area.

So, there you are, there are actually a lot of very good reasons to be naked in a sauna! Next time don't be scared of getting naked – there is method to the apparent madness!

Where to go to get naked?

Sauna fans are well catered for across the country. Here are three examples of different experiences you might have.

[Aqua Dome –Therme Längenfeld \(Tirol\)](#)

Nestled in the Ötztal Valley, Aqua Dome offers innovative design combined with a stunning alpine backdrop. The standout feature are their outdoor floating thermal pools, which give bathers a 360-degree view of the surrounding mountains. The sauna world, "Gletscherglühlen," includes options such as the loft sauna and the earth sauna, offering an unforgettable contrast between the heat and the icy mountain scenery.

[Almdorf Seinerzeit \(Carinthia\)](#)

A more intimate experience, this sauna is located in a traditional alpine hut where guests can enjoy the tranquility of the mountains. The hut's sauna is heated by a wood stove, offering a rustic and traditional atmosphere while surrounded by alpine pastures.

[Zillertal World of Saunas \(Tirol\)](#)

The Zillertal World of Saunas at Erlebnistherme Zillertal in Fügen is a fantastic wellness destination in the heart of the Zillertal Alps. It offers a wide range of saunas and relaxation experiences, including Finnish, herbal, fire, bio, log cabin, and panoramic saunas, along with steam baths, saltwater steam rooms, and infrared cabins, providing both intense heat and gentler wellness options.

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