

EXPLORE

# WILD SAUNA

As saunas pop up alongside beaches, riverbanks and lakes across the UK, author Emma O'Kelly chooses 10 of her favourite locations from her new guide book for swimmers looking to balance cold dips with a dose of heat

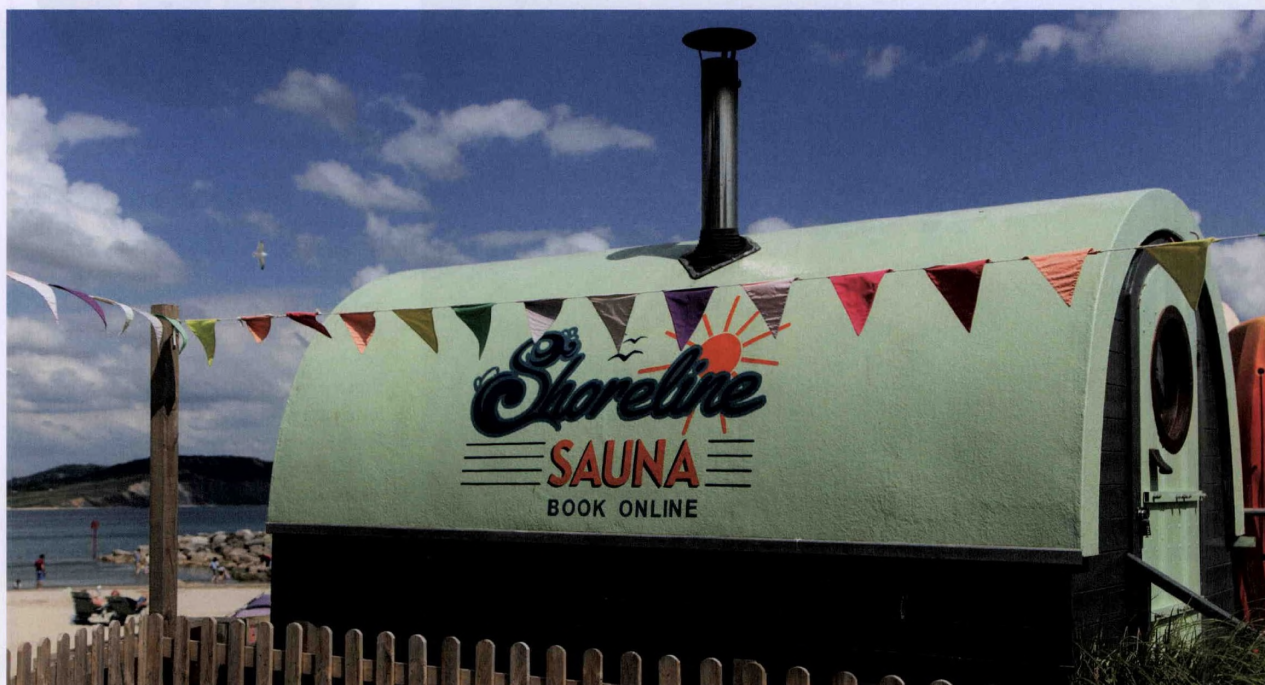


Image: Louise Roberts

## KISHTEY ÇEH, ISLE OF MAN

Founded by Liam Wiltshire, a surfer who discovered sauna on a trip to Ireland, Kishtey Çeh means 'hotbox' in Manx. It's an appropriate name for this bijou beach sauna, perched on the sands at Port Erin. One barrel sauna was followed by another, and wood-fired hot tub and cold plunges. But the sea provides the best cold dip of all; with its gentle waves and white sands, Port Erin is one of the island's finest beaches. A one-kilometer swim across the bay, from the harbour to a derelict Victorian tidal pool in the cliffs, takes in clean blue waters and views to Milner's Tower on the promontory at Bradda Head. This was built in Victorian times as a place of quiet contemplation. It still is. No one stops you scrambling up its

Image: Liam Wiltshire



The bijou sauna, Kishtey Cheh, Isle of Man

stone staircase and looking out to Northern Ireland, to the mountains of Mourne. For those in search of post-sauna beach snacks, The Cosy Nook café and Foraging Vintners

Shoreline Sauna, tucked away at Lyme Regis

offers great food and famous sparkling rhubarb wine. [kishteycheh.im](http://kishteycheh.im)

## SHORELINE SAUNA, DORSET

Despite its 1950s pastel colours, and retro look, the Shoreline Sauna is easy to miss, tucked away by the kayaks and paddle boards on the main beach at Lyme Regis. A cold bath is a fresher option than the balmy sea in summer, though the waters are mostly calm and sheltered all year round. Former customer and wild swimmer Louise Roberts loved Shoreline so much she bought it, and has now tapped into a whole new local community she never knew was there. Special sessions include full moon





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Beside the tidal pool at Cellardyke

followed by two barrel saunas. Bathers pay for an hour's sauna session, but can stay to swim and relax by the lakes all day. There is also a six-acre campsite, ideal for tents and small campervans, while other spaces offer paddleboarding and kayaking (you need to bring your own), and lessons for those who want them, and one lake is lit for winter morning and evening swimming. Also on offer are wellness weekends, sound bath sessions, meditation, moon swims with fire pits, yoga, breath work, ladies' skinny-dipping sessions, a café open from Wednesday to Sunday – and even a choir. [poolbridge.co.uk](http://poolbridge.co.uk)

Image: Jonny Walton

### Straight into the water at Pool Bridge Farm

saunas with whisking and Lou's homemade eucalyptus body scrubs. This September, local swim group Lyme Splash will organise a 3.15km swim from Lyme Regis to Charmouth; those who fancy swimming a few extra miles to Seatown can head on to the Seaside Sauna Haus to warm up. [shorelinesauna.co.uk](http://shorelinesauna.co.uk)

### CELLARDYKE, FIFE

The Cellardyke Tidal Pool had been a jewel on Scotland's Fife Coastal Path since the 1930s but in recent years it had fallen into decline. That was until a band of locals formed the Tidal Pool Committee and raised £100,000 to restore it. The first two phases of restoration work are now complete, with a newly renovated pool, an outdoor activity centre and a community-oriented sauna in operation. The latter is owned by Judith Dunlop, a 'saunapreneur'

who owns Scottish Seaside Saunas and runs sister sites in Elie and St Andrews. Cellardyke has a tangible buzz; hugely popular with locals and tidal pool tourists, there's an Airstream selling coffees and snacks and a wood-fired pizza hut, too. [cellardykesaunas.com](http://cellardykesaunas.com)

### POOL BRIDGE FARM, YORKSHIRE

For years the lakes at Pool Bridge Farm were one of the best fisheries in the north of England. Today, the lakes form part of 137 acres of rewilded land outside York, and are one of the area's best wild swimming spots. Facebook group The Pool Bridge Farm Swimmers has more than 8,000 members and, to service them, three saunas are discreetly situated around one of the site's four lakes. One of them was a shepherd's hut with no roof that had been on the farm since 1911. It was converted by Pool Bridge Farm co-owner Mike Fletcher into a dark, intimate space seating six. This was quickly



Image: Immense Hebrides

A truly wild experience at Saltbox

### SALTBOX, OUTER HEBRIDES

Travelling between Lewis, Harris and Uig, Saltbox is the only wood-fired sauna in the Outer Hebrides. It's the brainchild of Norma MacLeod, an STA Open Water Coach and ex-competitive swimmer based in Stornoway. In 2019 Norma co-founded Immerse Hebrides,



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which runs retreats and swim tours and boat trips around the islands. She knows all the beauty spots, and servicing them with a mobile sauna was a natural next step. What she has created is the very definition of a wild sauna – often there are no toilets or running water – but that doesn't stop bathers who like their nature raw. Saltbox is touching down permanently on North Uist and is sure to pop up on other islands soon. [saltboxsauna.co.uk](http://saltboxsauna.co.uk)



Watershed at East Findhorn Beach

### WATERSHED, MORAY

Elle Adams and Rupert Hutchinson were sitting in their freezing flat in Findhorn early in 2022 trying to work out a "Scottish winter survival strategy". They saw a horsebox advertised on Gumtree and bought it – impulsively and in the dark. They parked it in a friend's garden and, with his help, converted it into a sauna. Elle charted their progress online and her friends started asking if they could get warm, too, when it was finished. In 2022, Watershed Sauna opened above the eight-mile long East Findhorn Beach. What started as the couple's side hustle has turned into a landmark project, and an inspiration for many younger sauna operators. Made from recycled local wood, and painted black, it stands strikingly among grasses, gorse, sand and sea. Firewood is locally sourced, the granite stones for the stove were collected from the banks of the River Findhorn and only locally produced pine or juniper berries are used in essential oils. When you book a session at Watershed you can buy a seat for someone in need and the Winter Wellness

Image: Marc Miller



Program provides subsidised spots for local residents. A fun addition is 'sauna bingo' where bathers can spot nine different sights and species – among them a basking shark, a dolphin and an osprey. Every completed bingo card wins two free seats. [watershedsauna.com](http://watershedsauna.com)

### SOULWATER, EDINBURGH

In 2022, Kirsty Carver opened her horsebox sauna, Soulwater, on Edinburgh's Portobello Beach. Such is its popularity that a second, bigger, Soulwater wild spa followed in Granton this year. Here, two saunas hold 24 people while cold plunges made from beer fermentation cylinders ensure this wild spa feels wild. It's easy to take a plunge into the sea, and enjoy windswept views of the Firth of Forth and post-industrial landscapes. There's a Sunday Sauna Club and a range of events from ADHD support sessions to aufguss and full moon saunas. Next to the Granton site is The Pitt, a not-for-profit community outfit encompassing a food market, coffee shops, bars and a music and events space. [soulwatersauna.com](http://soulwatersauna.com)

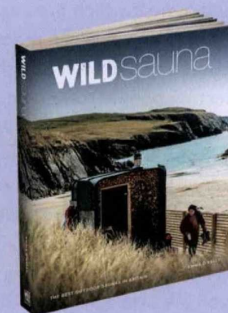
### HOT HAUS, GUERNSEY

Since 1865, the La Vallette bathing pools in St Peter Port have provided safe, free sea swimming to everyone on the island of Guernsey, including eminent visitors such as the writer Victor Hugo and painter Pierre Auguste Renoir. After years of neglect, in

Fermentation cylinder baths at Soulwater

2019, the pools were renovated with new toilets, a cafe and award-winning design. Now they're enjoyed by the thousands of wild swimmers who also congregate on Guernsey's 22 swimming beaches. Among these is Kirstie Allen, founder of Hot Haus sauna. A former health and fitness consultant, Kirstie got into cold water swimming when she moved to Guernsey. Granted a seven-year lease, she runs Hot Haus from a grassy verge opposite the La Vallette pools. Views stretch to the tiny islands of Sark, Herm and (on a good day) Jersey.

[hothaus.gg](http://hothaus.gg)



**Wild Sauna: the best outdoor saunas in Britain is out now (£18.99).** Readers can receive 20% off and free P&P with code OS20 at [wildthingspublishing.com](http://wildthingspublishing.com)