

Sweat it out!

The sauna is Finland's great export to the rest of the world. It purifies the body and relaxes the mind as Julie Ritter discovers.

Think of saunas and most of us immediately think of the population of Finland sweating profusely while beating their backs and limbs with birch leaves, and then rolling in the snow. To the Finns the sauna is a way of life, and the country boasts one sauna for every seven people.

With this in mind one can't help but wonder what it is about saunas the Finns find so appealing, and if indeed there is more to saunas than just hot air? The great physician Parmenides said: "Give me a chance to create fever and I will cure any disease". Today, in exclusive health spas around the world, the sauna is widely used for those wishing to regain optimum health as well as those suffering from long-term ailments.

The Finns themselves believe that the sauna makes joints and limbs more supple for graceful movements, while soothing the muscles and refreshing the mind. Certainly a weekly sauna is marvellous for the skin. Many skin problems, such as acne and dull lifeless complexions are an indication that the body is not eliminating its waste properly. The



sauna relieves these symptoms by enhancing circulation, opening blocked pores and improving skin texture. Incidentally, all that masochistic switching of birch leaves is to increase the effect of heat on skin and thus further stimulate the circulation.

In theory, we should all be able to eat what we like so long as our

Traditional pine cabin or modern apartment block cubicle, the sauna principle works equally well in either.