

# Mikkel Aaland



*"It's All An Adventure"*

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## Sauna aid

*A week ago, I watched in dismay as Russian forces invaded Ukraine. I was inspired by the Ukrainian people who responded passionately in the defense of their country. What could I do to help? For the last week I have worked with an amazing group of people to launch Sauna Aid and help bring the healing power of the sauna to the fleeing refugees. What we are doing might seem like a drop in the bucket in the big picture, but peace starts with a small step. We are doing the best we can with what we know how to do. I hope you will join us.*

### **Sauna Aid for Ukrainian Refugees**

Sauna Aid is a multicountry initiative, sponsored by the International Sauna Association (ISA), to provide movable sauna facilities and supportive volunteers to displaced Ukrainians fleeing their war-torn country.

Movable sauna facilities will first be sent to select locations in Poland and Lithuania. Other countries accepting Ukrainian refugees will follow. ISA affiliates in Poland, Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Denmark, United Kingdom, and Finland are coordinating the movement of the saunas, as well as recruiting and organizing volunteer bath attendants to run and maintain them.

The sauna, or *laznia/banya*, as it is known among Ukrainians, is an important part of everyday life and provides a means of hygiene, stress relief, socialization, psychological comfort, and social identity. It is not considered a luxury, nor is it only about cleanliness. It is a social event that brings together the young and the old, the rich and the poor and promotes peace and a common sense of humanity. Ukrainians call the banya their "second mother".

Providing sauna support during disasters is not new to the ISA. During the 2011 Fukushima tsunami and nuclear plant accident, ISA and the Japanese Sauna Society maintained a tent sauna for five weeks and used it for decontamination and cleaning of over a thousand locals.

*Sauna Aid is accepting monetary donations and equipment as well as recruiting volunteers to help staff the saunas.*

*To donate money, go to: <https://sauna-aid.com>*

*To volunteer your time as a bath attendant or to provide movable saunas or sauna accessories, sign up here: <https://sauna-aid.com>*

*To follow Sauna Aid on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/saunaaid>*

### **Sauna Diplomacy**

As well as providing Sauna Aid, the ISA is offering Ukrainian and Russian officials a suitable location and sauna to meet and work out a peaceful settlement. Sauna diplomacy was used famously during the Cold War when Finnish President Kekkonen hosted Soviet and Western leaders to a secret sauna just outside Helsinki to sweat and discuss the future of the world while comforted by the relaxing heat and steam of the sauna.

### **About The International Sauna Association (ISA)**

The International Sauna Association (ISA) is a non-profit association of over 20 national sauna societies. The ISA was founded in 1958. Its goal is publicizing the sauna and promoting its use on a global scale by rallying supporters of sauna activities in different countries as well as promoting the scientific studies of the history, sociology, and medical benefits of the sauna.

### **Participating organizations:**

Lithuanian Bath Academy, British Sauna Society, Finnish Sauna Society, Polish Sauna Society, German Sauna Association, Japan Sauna and Spa Association, Norwegian Sauna Society, Danish Sauna Society, Finnish Embassy in Poland, North American Sauna Society, Swedish Sauna Academy, New Zealand Sauna Society, The Australian Sweat Bathing Association, Finnland-Institut Berlin, Austrian Sauna Society, and the Czech Sauna Association. (More organizations to follow.)

You can find links to the individual participating organizations here: <https://saunainternational.net/members/>

### **For more information contact:**

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