

Be our guest

Put your service to the test when visitors arrive with our tips for creating a welcoming guest retreat

WORDS ANNA KOOREY

'TIS THE SEASON to share your home with others, as hordes of relatives and friends descend from all corners of the globe for the holidays. If you don't have a dedicated guest room, don't despair – it's the little luxuries that make staying on a sofa bed all the more comfortable. Whether you need to prepare the study or sitting room for guests, or are lucky enough to have a dedicated spare room, there are a few simple things you can do to make visitors feel at home. >





REST ASSURED

How often guests stay, the space you have and who they are – elderly visitors will need a more substantial put-me-up than teens, for example – will dictate sleeping arrangements. For occasional visitors or a double-duty room, a daybed or sofa bed is a good option; Ikea's 'Hemnes' daybed has drawers underneath the seat that pull out to support a queen-size mattress. If you have a spare room or regular visitors, opt for a proper bed without a kickboard to accommodate tall guests. "Most people sleep on a medium to firm mattress, so if you go too soft it may not be suitable," advises Stephanie Inglis from Forty Winks. Sleepmaker's 'Duracoil Advance' mattress, from \$700/queen, provides medium support; visit sleepmaker.com.au.

Your nearest and dearest won't expect a hotel-style pillow menu, but having two – one firmer, one softer – on each side of the bed will ensure they can select whichever ones they prefer. Tontine's Luxe Classic Luxury and White Goose Feather & Down pillows come in a range of height and feel options to suit most sleepy heads.

On top, layer light covers rather than a heavy doona, and choose natural fibres and the highest thread count you can afford. Even a blow-up mattress is comfy when covered with luxurious sheets!

SPACE TO HANG

Clearing space in a chest of drawers or the wardrobe, with wooden or satin-covered coathangers waiting, will always be appreciated – who wants to wear crumpled clothes straight out of a suitcase?

"Thick, fluffy white robes waiting in the cupboard are another welcome luxury," comments Debbie Wild of Jo Malone. If you store clothes in the spare-room wardrobe, then chances are you don't wear them that often, so consider storing them away in vacuum-packed bags, or take the opportunity to do a wardrobe clearout. A full-length mirror – perhaps on the inside of a wardrobe door – is another thoughtful touch.

If there isn't a wardrobe, consider a temporary solution such as a freestanding clothes rail that can be dismantled and packed away when not in use. Pretty wall hooks can be left in place as a decorative element, while more functional ones work well on the back of the door. Try the over-door variety if the room serves another purpose for most of the year. >

best basics



'Mandalay' quilt, \$517/queen, and sham, \$80 each, Linen & Moore.

'Mysa Strå' warmth rate 1+3 quilt, \$109/queen, Ikea.



'Hemnes' daybed, \$599, Ikea.



'Houdini' modular sofa bed, from \$3990, King Furniture.



'Bordeaux' armchair in Antique White & Taupe, \$990, French Dressing.



'Gosa Aster' European pillow, \$8.99, Ikea.



4-hook over-door rack, \$11.95, Howards Storage World.



'Laurent' armoire in Swedish White, \$2599, La Maison.



Satin hanger, \$795/pack of 5, Howards Storage World.



'Otto' storage box in Matteo Stone, \$999, BedNest.

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PHOTOGRAPHY (TOP LEFT) JOHN PAUL URIZAR, (OPPOSITE) DULUX AUSTRALIA



ROOM SERVICE

Apart from the obligatory dust and vacuum, cleaning the blinds, sponging marks off the walls, cleaning light switches or powerpoints and washing the windows will instantly revitalise a seldom-used space. If guests are visiting in summer, replace ripped flyscreens or consider installing one, and ensure windows are easy to open.

Air the room the week before guests arrive to banish mustiness, and add fragrance sachets to drawers and cupboard doors. "A great way to lift a room is to spray your linen and towels with a linen spray, and light a candle an hour before your guests arrive for a wonderful scented welcome," says Debbie Wild of Jo Malone. The final touch? A vase filled with flowers from the garden – violets, gardenias and jasmine are all common garden blooms with a heavenly scent.

SLEEPING BEAUTY

Create a restful haven with a neutral decor and layers of texture. A cosy throw and piles of plush cushions will distract from a tired quilt cover – soothing greens or blues work well as accent colours. If the room doubles as an office, clear desk clutter so guests don't feel like they're intruding. Store linen and pillows in a wicker basket next to the daybed or sofa bed, and choose side tables that work as bedsides, with a lamp on each. The spare room isn't the place for anything overly personal, so keep family photos in shared living areas, and decorate bare walls with a mirror.

WARM WELCOME

Channel the best hoteliers: "We always try to anticipate what our guests will want, before they have thought of it themselves," reveals Larissa Wolf-Tasker of luxury retreat Lake House Daylesford in Victoria. Make sure the bedside has a good reading lamp, and place a few books or magazines nearby, or invite guests to choose from the family's collection before bed. A carafe of chilled water with a glass is another considerate touch, as is an alarm clock. Leave neatly folded towels on the end of the bed, perhaps topped off with a beautiful soap. You could even go all out with a guest pack filled with travel-sized shampoo and conditioner, soap and toothbrush.

A chocolate on each pillow or a jar of freshly baked biscuits on the mantelpiece might be going too far, but we know we'd be very happy to find either awaiting us after a long journey – and there's no better time than the festive season to indulge your loved ones a little! 

finishing touches



Fragranced candle in Pomegranate Grove, \$39.95, Crabtree & Evelyn.



Maria Evora fragrant sachet in Carob Mineral, \$16.96, Saison.

A Living Cologne room fragrance, \$130, Jo Malone.



'Ishmir' antiqued mirror, \$499, Freedom.



'Cashmere Mix' throw in Coffee/Oatmeal, \$154, Linen & Moore.



'Coco' bedside chest in White, \$299, Dare Gallery.



'Elliot' clock, \$49.95, Freedom.



'Hyacinth' basket, \$34.99, Domayne.



'Leaves' cushions, \$60 each, Linen & Moore.



Côté Bastide room fragrance in Fleurs D'Oranger, \$49.95, Saison.



'Angle' desk light, \$79.95, Freedom.



'H2O' round bottle in Aqua, \$4.95, Maxwell & Williams. Stockists, page 211



'Ikot Spot' tailored pillowcase in Sesame, \$49.95, Aura by Tracie Ellis.