

## Interiors

# Create a sleepover they will never forget

Spare room or not, welcome overnight guests back into your home with the most thoughtful details. By Olivia Lidbury

It has felt like a long time coming. Finally, from May 17, we can graduate from weather-dictated walks and huddling in gardens to proper, extended stays under someone else's roof. If you have mastered your tablescapes (2020's answer to dining out), then this year's aim is to elevate the sleepover experience. Interior designer Linda Boronkay, who was formerly design director at Soho House, suggests going big on personality if you have a spare room to play with.

"Hotels always create a sense of escapism and you can create that yourself with a bit more consideration to your colour schemes. I think painting the walls and adding a nice rug under the bed makes a huge difference and creates a whole new look."

If you are going down the fresh-paint route, Sophie Gunning of Project Home (an interior design consultancy with remote services starting from £80; projecthome.uk) says: "Warm, earthy, rich hues are ideal for a room used primarily at night. Painting the ceiling the same colour cocoons a space. We've just used Tuscany by Little Greene for a bedroom – by day it's cheery and bounces around the light, and by the evening it's so cosy."

Furniture should serve a function but you do not need masses of it. Nicola Harding, who designed the highly desirable rooms at The Rose hotel in Deal, says: "I like using a mix of different pieces from various periods. Don't fret about symmetry – it's nice to have a bedside table on one side and then a little writing desk with a stool on the other." If you have a chest of drawers, try to clear at least one drawer for each of your guests to unpack their essentials. And simple hooks on the back of the door are handy if there isn't a wardrobe.

Everyone I canvassed for this feature was united on providing good lighting to make your guests feel catered for. And so, if by some fluke your spare room needs rewiring, then the winning formula is a combination of wall lights and side lights for reading – all of which are controlled from a central toggle switch on each side of the bed. "But a plug-in reading lamp, one on each bedside, is ideal," reassures Harding.

Of course not everyone has the luxury of a dedicated guest room, and that is where the sofa bed comes into play. Emma Valerio, home design stylist at John Lewis & Partners, says sofa-bed sales are up 46 per cent on this time last year. "When buying one, it's best to consider what it will be used for the majority of the time," she says. "If it's for the living room, then go for a design with arms, a supportive back and a fold mattress; if it's for occasional use and will live in an office or small space, then a clic-clac style commands less room and offers a more streamlined aesthetic."

John Lewis has just launched the Clapton (with the aforementioned easy clic-clac release mechanism), which starts at £299. Part of the retailer's purse-friendly Anyday range, it has garnered a four-star (out of five) rating.

For those with a heartier budget, Gunning suggests looking up the Isaac from sofa.com, the Sophie from Love Your Home, and the Pudding from Loaf. "They're comfortable and don't look like a rigid, generic sofa bed. And remember: a two-fold mattress is more pleasant to sleep on than a three-fold."

Gunning is also a fan of vintage screens to zone-off the sleeping area and offer privacy. "They are charming additions to living rooms and great for dividing open-plan spaces," she says. "Etsy, eBay and vintage market-

places such as Pamono and Vinterior have lots."

Perhaps controversially, Harding is of the view of doing away with a sofa bed entirely. "I would opt for a good quality, blow-up mattress instead, as they don't take up much space. Argos and John Lewis have great ones, and it's worth getting an electric pump to save the hassle of manually pumping."

She also champions double beds in children's rooms: "Guests get a whole bedroom to themselves and kids love the novelty of camping in their parents' rooms on yoga mats or blow-ups. They're also much easier to read bedtime stories in!"

Wherever it is that guests are resting their heads, crisp bedding and ample pillows will make up for a haphazard set-up. "For that luxurious, hotel experience, add some 65cm x 65cm cushions," advises Gunning, "and layering the bed with bedspreads creates an abundance of tactility – try a colourful Welsh blanket."

Ironing will also win you brownie points. "Ironed bed linen makes a space feel loved and transforms a sleeping experience," shares Harding.

And don't forget those simple but thoughtful finishing touches that can make your guests truly feel at home.

Soho House is renowned for its pack of take-away toiletries; Boronkay's money is on "some lovely hand cream or night cream at the side of the bed to add that next-level experience."

## QUICK FIXES FOR HOSTS

Create a clear, tidy space by decluttering and storing everything away

Upcycle any tired-looking furniture with chalk paint

A fresh bar of soap and scented candle will nod to a hotel experience

Swap out any harsh lightbulbs for more considered, soft-glow alternatives

How does the window open? Explain any quirks or functionalities to your guests

Place extra pillows, blankets and hot water bottles within easy reach

Leave some reading material, such as books and magazines

Add a bit of greenery – even foraged branches can elevate a space



## Remember the FINISHING touches



**Textured cushion (£40)**  
A bold cushion makes even a plain bedspreads look inviting  
*still-life-story.com*



**Gingham lampshade (£75)**  
Go for an eclectic mix by pairing this with an inexpensive stand  
*humlondon.com*



**Floral eye mask (£15)**  
If your curtains let the light in, pop one of these on their pillow  
*libertylondon.com*



**Carafe and tumbler (£72)**  
In lieu of a minibar, keep fresh water to hand for hydration  
*petrapalumbo.com*

## 'I took my inspiration from hotel bedrooms'

Author and blogger Erica Davies lives in Essex with her husband and their two children.  
*Instagram: @ericadavies*



I bought the wallpaper for our spare room (Tropicana in ochre by Linwood; linwoodfabric.com) 18 months ago, but it wasn't until we had the decorators in during the last lockdown to do our children's rooms that we decided to attack this space.

I've always worked from home and the aesthetic of every room in this house is important to me. I wanted to create a hotel vibe and was inspired by what interior designer Kit Kemp does with the Firmdale Hotels: she has such a knack for clashing prints. Her rooms always look so cosy and inviting – that's the feel I wanted.

Here, I've done that through pattern and texture by using rugs and cushions, which add depth. There is a small chest of drawers reserved for guests and the main commode is where I store my out-of-season clothes. Some pieces in here are new, like the mirrored side tables, and some are old, like the Parker Knoll armchair, which was handed down from a family friend and which I had re-upholstered. I also love scouring TK Maxx, as it's great for bed linen.

This room has an en-suite, but rather than ripping it out, we took up the carpet and had it re-tiled. I added hooks for towels and sourced a vintage mirror to pull the theme together.

When family and friends come to stay, I make sure there's fresh towels, a carafe of water and a posy of flowers.

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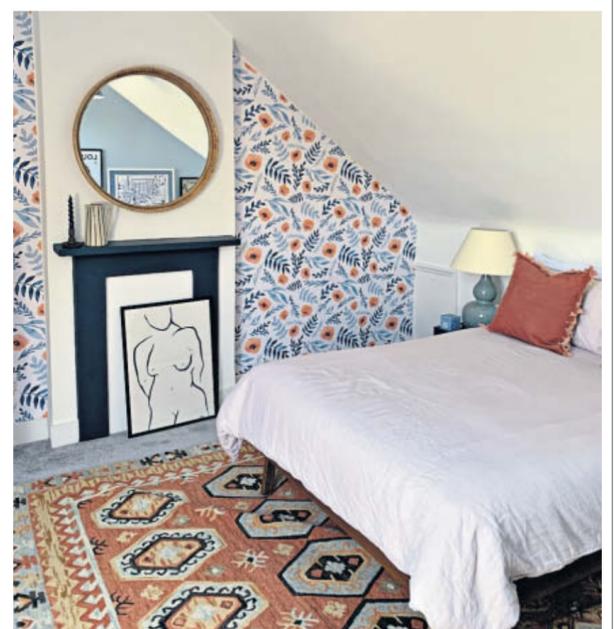
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## 'I've taken care to provide plenty of storage'

Katherine Ormerod moved to a rented house in west London last year with her partner and their two young children.  
*Instagram: @katherine\_ormerod*



Both of my parents live abroad, so having them immersed into our family life with a room of their own when they can come to visit is what made us choose this property. Thanks to a gaping-big hole housing a defunct immersion heater, however, this room was so sad-looking and cold. So I decided to make substantial, rattan-lined cabinet doors to cover it up. I had no experience in carpentry and taught myself as I went along; and while a lot of people said I was mad to go to such lengths for a rental, at £300

for all the materials it cost less than the average piece of furniture. It set the tone for the rest of the room and changed the atmosphere.

I used renters' wallpaper – a peelable covering that doesn't impact the surface of the walls at all – then I tied the colours together by painting the fireplace with a tester pot. The silver-grey carpet wouldn't be my choice, and while the jury's out as to whether you should layer a rug on a carpet, I'd rather look at this patterned rug (from OKA).

Storage was central to doing up this room and I've really taken care to provide enough: there is a nook for a suitcase, as well as cupboard and drawer space. In one of the drawers there's everything you would expect to find if you checked in at Soho House: a hairdryer and a little bag with soap and toothpaste. If you're hosting in succession, then linen sheets over pure cotton are ideal because you don't need to iron them – my hack is to pop an ice cube in while they tumble-dry and it steams them almost perfectly.