

The Home Designer

Inviting Guest Rooms

By Brandon Neff

It's the holidays, and chances are your home may be the outpost for a traveler, or two. Hopes are high for a joyful and peaceful time had by all, so take my advice and get that guest room ready. Creating a five star experience for your guests doesn't take a lot of money, but rather, it takes creativity, effort and some imagination.

What do all great guest rooms have in common? Comfort. Style. Luxury. Yes, and a few touches that make your guests feel spoiled.

What makes a guest room great are the thoughtful items that show your friends and family who stay there just how much you care about them and the time they spend in your home. To paraphrase the eccentric and flinty Diana Vreeland, it takes just as much energy to create an ugly space as it does to create something wonderful. Which do you prefer?

Bedtime Stories. When I have guests I always try and bring something spe-

cial to their stay, and I start with the bed. Nothing pampers your guests more than freshly washed sheets and fluffy down pillows. The simplicity of good bedding goes a long way toward saying, "Welcome home."

Add a touch of lavender to the sheets either in the wash, or by using scented dryer sheets - try Mrs. Meyers - a seductively simple, aromatherapy sleep inducer. Always keep an extra blanket handy, and a change of sheets available and at the ready. Extra points for a feather bed to pad the mattress. Heaven.

Hit List. Stocking the nightstand with the essentials is essential. Making your guests feel comfortable is the key, and anticipating a few of their needs will make everyone's visit (theirs and yours), more enjoyable. There's nothing worse than being woken up in the middle of the night by a voyager in search of a box of Kleenex, or an extra outlet to plug in

their ipad - am I right?

In addition to orienting your lodger with the lay of the room, I have a few items I always place by the bed for my guests - these are my preference, and I encourage you to come up with a few of your own. For starters, keep a glass handy and drinking water in an interesting flask or bottle, a vase with fresh flowers in one color (mandatory!), a pad of paper and a pen, an unscented candle (no one likes that Strawberry Shortcake variety) and a proper reading light.

Trust me, even the most modest accommodations will shine when accompanied by a few luxury touches.

Step up the pampering with a couple of good reads (a juicy paperback or travel book), a deck of cards and a local map or guide outlining a few sites you recommend in the area. If this all sounds a bit too Martha, get over it. This is your chance to open your home to the people you care about in a gesture of solemn generosity. I promise that in return you'll receive not only high praise from your guests, but the joy that comes from providing a taste of gracious living - it may even soothe a few savage beasts around the holidays! Can I get an Amen?

Design Is In The Details. In addition to the bedroom, take a look around the bathroom they'll be using - a close look around. Now is the time swap out that moldy shower curtain and polish up those dingy tiles - you're not running the Bates Motel, so step it up, people.

Keep an extra toothbrush, razor and hair dryer within reach - travelers tend to forget the simple things, and your thoughtfulness will not go unnoticed. Place your guest's shower and hand towels out - I suggest a different



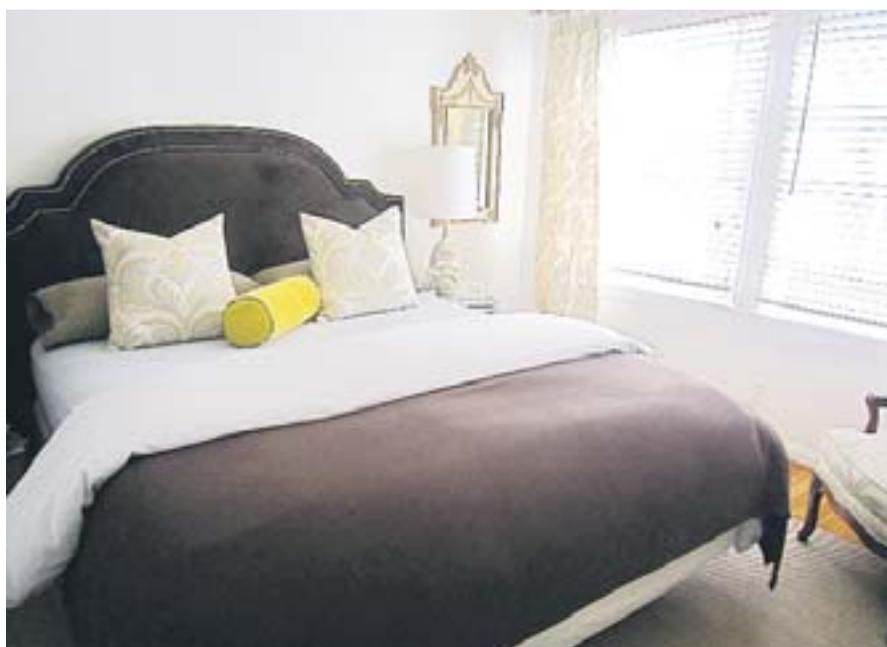
Just a few amenities make your friends and family feel pampered

Photo courtesy A. Nisbet

color than your own if sharing the bathroom - in their room to avoid confusion.

Lastly, maybe most importantly, put out extra toilet paper - enough said about that.

I often say that life is short - fleeting and ignored by most. Sharing beautiful moments and providing comfort to those that you care about is your legacy. You have a choice to either go through your life like the masses, or to create your own experience for yourself and those you love - choose wisely.



Fresh sheets and an extra blanket make for a welcoming guest room.

Photo courtesy Brandon Neff Design



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