



# Pillow talk

Guests won't stand for a lump in the mattress or a spring poking in their back, so whether you run a hotel, guest house or B&B, you shouldn't relax without quality beds

**Comfortable night:** The Great Bed of Ware was made in 1590 and measures 10ft by 11ft. It was made to sleep more than 15 people. Proving that great beds really do get noticed, it is even mentioned in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. It is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

**C**omedian Lenny Henry lounges on huge hotel beds in the Premier Inn TV ads because the company has recognised the quality of beds as a key attraction for guests. All accommodation providers need to follow suit if they are to compete. Knowing where to buy a good contract bed, how big it should be and how often you should replace it is essential. Here, we've provided a step by step guide.

- The leader in the UK hotel market is Hypnos, which has a Royal Warrant\* and supplies beds to Buckingham Palace, as well as Premier Inn, Travelodge and the Rocco Forte Collection. Vi-Spring, which has a strong retail customer base also supplies some top hotels such as the five-star Goring in London and the Hotel du Vin group. Buying from a specialist supplier need not break the bank and means you can ensure you get the best advice and choose the right quality to impress your customers. Good quality contract beds, which all meet the highest fire retardancy standards, start at about £350 plus VAT for a 5ft double and £450 plus VAT for a zip and link set. There is often a delivery charge of about £100.

- Buy the biggest beds that will fit into your rooms. If you sleep in a 5ft double bed yourself, you will understand why a king-size bed will be appreciated by your guests. Remember that American visitors will be used to two 4ft 6in beds in a twin room rather than the 3ft versions. Beds are certainly getting bigger in hotel bedrooms and not just in five-star hotels. CitizenM, which opened its first UK hotel in Glasgow recently, boasts about its two-metre-square beds. That's almost 7ft!

- If your guests get a good night's sleep they are much more likely to return, especially if the bed is more comfortable than their bed at home! Experts recommend pocket-spring divan sets rather than open-coil mattresses because they provide the best support. Why not find time to sleep in some of your beds so you can properly assess the comfort they offer? Remember, you can make the mattress even softer by adding an additional top on request. Memory foam mattresses are generally not recommended for paying guests because they can give a hotter than expected night's sleep.

- To ensure even wear and tear of the bed and to maximise the life of the mattress, choose a mattress designed for turning, with sewn-in labels that provide housekeeping with a clear reminder that it should be turned and rotated quarterly.

- A good contract bed will typically last between five and seven years, yet groups such as Premier Inn are said to assess their beds every three years. The inner springs will lose their resilience and support over time – a mattress with a dip in the centre is an indication that the springs have begun to fail.

- If you are confident that you have beds that will make you stand out from your competitors, or you decide to upgrade, maximise the PR potential. Note how some of the hotel groups shout about the credentials of their beds and often name their supplier. A Google search for 'hotels with best beds in England' brought up a TripAdvisor review for The Old Lodge, Malton which said: "Best hotel ever and wow best beds ever". Why not create a new page on your website to tell your guests about your beds?

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- Paddy Burt, who for many years wrote a regular review column in the *Saturday Telegraph*, often mentioned "over-hot duvets". As our winters are getting colder and summers warmer, you might want to consider winter and summer-weight duvets. Offering a top sheet in very warm weather might be appreciated too. There are some really good synthetic pillows on the market now and you might want to consider offering a 'pillow menu' so that guests can choose from feather or synthetic. All the elements are important – the smoothness of the sheets (it's all about the thread count!), the lightness of the duvet, the pillows and the comfort and support of the mattress. Make sure the curtains exclude the light well or consider adding a blackout blind instead of replacing the curtains.

- Make it your New Year's resolution to sleep in some of your beds and score them for comfort. That's what your guests will be doing!

\*Royal Warrants are a mark of recognition for individuals or companies who have supplied goods or services for at least five years to HM The Queen, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh or HRH The Prince of Wales. Warrants have always been regarded as demonstrating excellence and quality, and are highly prized.



**Quality beds:** This standard zip and link bed from Hypnos costs £450 +VAT. Headboard not included.

## BED SIZES

- Single 90cm x 190cm (3ft x 6ft 3in)
- Independence 120cm x 190cm (4ft x 6ft 3in)
- Double 135cm x 190cm (4ft 6in x 6ft 3in)
- Kingsize 150cm x 200cm (5ft x 6ft 6in)
- Super Kingsize 180cm x 200cm (6ft x 6ft 6in)
- Emperor 213cm x 213cm (7ft x 7ft)