

Sleeping Beauties

*New Solutions
for Sofabed Woes*

A good night's sleep is possible, even for the person sleeping in the living room.

Ask any property manager, "What's the most frequent complaint at the front desk and on comment cards?" It will most likely be about the sleeping accommodations in the living room portion of resort units. In recent years, designers have started to address this problem and finally, new solutions are available to solve these nightmares—yours, theirs, and the guy's on the sleeper sofa!

Sleeper Sofas: The Next Generation

Unit design in the early 1980s had a simple formula - kings in the master bedroom, twins in the second, and sleeper sofas in the living room. Over the years, the king beds got narrower, the twin beds became double/doubles, but there was no improvement in the sleeper sofa. Within months of installation, the sleeper sofa cushions started to sag and look worn because seat cushions slipped down behind the rail. There is a simple explanation for this. In the typical sleeper sofa, the only support for the seat cushion is the fold out mechanism attached by 4 screws to the frame. It is unrealistic

to think this construction could withstand the weight of today's full-figured owners and guests. Non-sleeper sofas support their bottom cushions with a wood deck or an eight-way tied springs system.

Too many guests have spent the night tossing and turning on a four-inch foam mattress too skimpy to protect them from the mechanism's metal bar across their backs and too slippery for the sheets to stay on the bed.

At last, there are now some very good alternatives. Instead of a metal mechanism that folds in and out, some sofas (such as the one from American Leather pictured here) have a wooden slide-out platform that supports a tri-fold dense foam mattress. When closed, the top third of the foam slides up to vertically integrate into the back cushion of the sofa, and the remaining two thirds of the mattress fold over each other to form the seat of the sofa.

Another innovative sleeper sofa from Flexsteel has an inflatable mattress with a built-in electric motor in the sofa chassis. You unfold a metal mechanism and flick a switch to inflate the mattress up to eight comfortable inches.

Sleeping on a Cloud

Speaking of inflatable mattresses, why aren't we using them in our resorts? We use them at our homes now instead of cots, trundles, or roll-away beds. Pop-up metal frames are available, and after you plug in the unit and turn on the switch, you effortlessly create an air mattress that is closest in comfort to the real thing. A second benefit of not needing a sleeper mechanism inside the sofa is better flexibility in your furniture layout. Your room may not have the space for an 84-inch wide sofa necessary to house a queen mattress. Now you can use love seats instead and have more seating options.

Air mattresses are such a popular idea, they've even infiltrated the standard inner-spring mattress. My favorite new bed is used by Radisson. It has a comfort-dial system, and a remote control on either side of the bed allows adjustment of the level of firmness to your each individual's taste. Anyone with back problems knows the horror of spending a night on a mattress that is too soft or too hard. It makes so much sense to personalize the comfort. Recently, I was looking forward to my stay at a just opened four-star hotel. I had to check out after the

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first night because the bed had such a thick and soft pillow topper on the mattress that I felt crippled by morning. I am also sure that the designer who selected this new “brand standard” tried out the mattress with topper and thought it was divine.

Hidden Pleasure

If you’re creative with unit layout, the best convertible sleeping option may be a “blast from the past.” Invented for the huge number of SRO (single room occupancy) properties put up to house returning World War II veterans, the wall bed or “Murphy bed” is a great way to sleep your guests. Tucked out of the way during the day, this pull down mechanism holds a real mattress and almost equals the comfort of a box spring/mattress set. You gain floor space by giving up wall space. All you need is a 20-inch by 66-inch “closet” in the living room to house the bed in its upright position. You can design attractive doors, make the closet look like an “armoire” and choose from a host of decorative treatments for a casework surround.

each side of the bed—a bookcase unit and a desk unit. All three pieces were 20-inches deep and together they covered the space wall to wall. A dry wall soffit was dropped down to meet the top of the cabinets and bed unit. This created a completely built-in appearance. In front of the bed unit was placed a faux sofa. The faux sofa consisted of a 36-inch deep upholstered bench with upholstered arm, just wide enough for the bed to rest in between. The bench housed removable seat cushions and back cushions rested against the wall bed. Voila! A sofa by day, and platform bed by night. None of the furniture ever needed to be moved, just a few cushions.

There are now several vendors making variations of these units.

Take a Nap

Why did we ever think we needed to cover the bed with a spread? In hindsight, it seems silly. The greatest pleasure on vacation is sleeping late or napping. Typically, guests spend much more time on vacation sleeping (and not sleeping) than at home. If housekeeping is not daily, the bedspread and all those annoying throw pillows are tossed on the floor, where they remain for the rest of the stay—completely in the way. Hooray for Starwood’s Heavenly Bed, which caused the death of the Treveira bedspread and the rise of the duvet. Their package of

five sleeping pillows stacked on the bed (not the closet shelf) with small decorator pillows and a scarf across the foot of the bed for a splash of color against the luxury linens was a very fresh approach and sparked a trend that swept throughout the industry.

Take It Home

Providing the best for your guests’ sleeping comfort creates a memorable stay. It can also become a profit center. Several chains now offer the opportunity to purchase their branded beds and bedding packages. Choosing room elements that make a guest fall in love with your product and want to take it home is the “Academy Award” of guest satisfaction. **R+R**



The main living area in this unit at the Villas at Polo Towers in Las Vegas features a specially designed Murphy bed that, when not in use, is hidden away behind an attractively finished wood panel.



The beds resorts are putting their guests’ heads in have more pillows and decorative linens, such as bed scarves.

When I designed the studio unit for the Polo Towers project in Las Vegas, I faced a real space challenge. It was a very small room. As a stand-alone unit, the only sleeping option was a fold out sofa. If a wall bed were used, there was nowhere to put the furniture when the bed was down. The design solution was to give the wall bed a built-in appearance, flanked by an equally tall case piece on

RESOURCE BOX:

Merilee Elliott is president and founder of Merilee Elliott Interiors, now celebrating two decades of service to the resort industry. Her Chicago, Ill.-based firm has provided designs for projects by some of the nation’s leading timeshare developers and hotel companies, including Marcus Corp., Hilton Grand Vacations Co., Lawrence Welk Resorts, and Diamond International Resorts. Contact Merilee with your design questions at (312) 222-1313 or at merilee@merilee.com.

