

SCENES FROM DOMESTIC LIFE LUCIA VAN DER POST

« IF YOU CAN BUY THE BATHROBES, THE CANDLES, THE OILS AND THE UNGUENTS, WHY NOT THE BEDS? »



A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

It was Colette who said she'd lost the knack of sleep and might resort to bashing herself over the head with the night-light. Perhaps she should have tried something simpler, like buying a new bed, before resorting to such desperate measures. Beds these days may not play quite so public a part in our lives as once they did (17th-century French nobles conducted their social lives from lavishly appointed beds, and Proust wrote his entire masterpiece *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* from between the sheets), but they matter. Oh, my goodness, they matter.

Those contemplating buying a new bed will find it a far from easy process, though. Mattresses here, mattresses there, bedsteads everywhere. Which to choose? Might I suggest that a bit of lateral thinking is in order. Grand hotels are above all in the business of selling a good night's sleep. If they can't do that, they might as well shut up shop. And so splendidly soothing have their customers found their stay in such hotels that they've started trying to replicate the experience at home.

It seems that it was the Savoy Group of hotels that first started making its own bespoke beds, way back in 1905, to ensure its punters had the most luxurious night's sleep possible. After a while, regular customers began asking if they could buy the beds. It's all very logical – if you can buy the bathrobes, the candles, the oils and the unguents, why not the beds? Savoir Beds, as

the company came to be known (020 7486 2222; www.savoirbeds.co.uk), makes beds which are obviously not your run-of-the-mill affair. They are handmade to order; the best that money can buy.

The secret of their comfort mostly lies in the mattress and the sprung base, but Savoir Beds (sold in 1997 to a certain Mr Alistair Hughes) will sell you as little (just the mattress) or as much as you like. Apart from the mattress and base, it can make complete bedsteads of almost any design (bateau lits, upholstered bedsteads, gilded legs) as well as four-poster hangings, duvets of silk, linen, cotton or cashmere, pillows, bolsters and valances. A specialist will come to your house to discuss your needs. The company will even – and this is perhaps the ultimate carrot – take away your old bed. Needless to say, prospective customers can test-drive the beds in the Savoy Group's own hotels. Or they could

visit the showrooms in London, Cirencester and Harrogate.

Happy owners of Savoir beds, who first enjoyed their delights in The Savoy, Claridge's or The Connaught, include Liza Minnelli, Emma Thompson and the late King Hussan of Morocco. Double beds start at £2,397, including London delivery.

When it comes to sheets – that other element of a good night's sleep – many hotels are now boasting about their thread counts and fancy linens. And from The Lowell in New York to One Aldwych in London, Frette is the name they like to utter. Their spoilt clients enjoy a minimum thread count of 250. ■

The Savoy Bed (shown in Katja fabric), from £6,644



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★ LUCIA VAN DER POST'S PERFECT BED ★