

ASK THE DESIGNER: Home for the Holidays

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?I have recently moved to Aurora from Ottawa, and my family is coming to stay for a few nights during the holidays. I'd like to make the space feel like home but I'm not sure how to create that homey and inviting feel?

It's that time of year when friends and family pack their bags and head off to visit loved ones. Many of us have extra space in our homes to accommodate these guests but these are usually the last rooms we decorate. Most of us use the guest room to store our old furniture and to house seasonal clothing or belongings that we can't bring ourselves to get rid of. It's easy for your guest room to end up looking like a storage locker, which is hardly inviting or relaxing for your guests. Below are some creative ideas to get your space feeling like an Oasis for your guests!

The first bit of advice I have is to clear that clutter! When you have visitors its important that they feel at home, so do your best to remove your paperwork, your stack of unopened bills (is that just me?) or that pile of clothing that you've been meaning to donate for months now from the space. Now that you've de-cluttered, give some thought to the things you love most about staying in a hotel. Is it the comfortable bed? The desk in the corner? The little shampoo bottles? Making a mental note of what makes YOU feel at home when you're sleeping away will help you create a thoughtfully appointed guest bedroom.

1. Sweet Dreams

There's nothing more inviting than a nice bed made up hotel style- white sheets, a fluffy duvet, comfortable pillows and a luxurious throw. Adding these things to your guest room will help your guests feel like they can relax and unwind at the end of their day. After a long trip to see you, this will definitely be appreciated. Bonus: white bedding can be thrown in the wash with some bleach for easy cleanup after they've left! If you're converting a communal area into a temporary guest room, think about investing in a quality sofa bed. We have some amazing ones in our showroom- they are extremely comfortable and can even accommodate a tempur-pedic mattress!

2. Thoughtful Furnishings

I love having a spot to put my luggage when I'm travelling. This could be a bench at the end of the bed, a sofa in the corner or a practical luggage stand. It's nice to be able to look through your bags without having to get down on your hands and knees. You want your guests to feel like they're in a retreat, not a youth hostel. On the topic of luggage, make sure that you leave some empty hangers in the closet and free up some hooks for wet towels.

Another thing I love about staying in a hotel is being able to pull a chair out on to the balcony, or curl up in front of a window and read a book. If you have space in your guest room, invest in a comfortable occasional chair for your visitors to relax and unwind in.

3. Here Comes the Sun!

Nothing ensures a good night's sleep like black out drapery. It's incredibly easy to create window panels with a black out or light filtering lining. This will keep early morning sun as well as street lamps and the beam of headlights from shining in on your guests and disrupting their sleep. You can even line existing drapes with a liner if you don't want to get a brand new window treatment. Tending to artificial lighting is just as important as natural light. Make sure you have a bedside light or a reading lamp so that your guest can see in their room after hours.

4. Bring Your ?A' Game

A well outfitted night stand is the icing on the cake for a nice guest retreat. Make sure the bedside table has an alarm clock, some tissues and a bottle of water or snacks just in case your guest wakes up in the night. Some magazines and fresh flowers will brighten up the room and make your guest feel well looked after.

Don't forget, a guest room doesn't only have to be for visitors. It can be an oasis for you too. Enjoy the beautiful surroundings you've created and put that new chair and magazines to use!