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## LUXURY

# The stuff of dreams

Savoir Beds have been perfecting the science of sleep for more than a century, and shows no sign of resting on its laurels

BY NICK FOULKES

I was once told that when holidaying at a friend's estate in Spain, the late, great Mark Birley used to have his bed linen changed twice a day: once after he got up and once after his siesta. Mark lived life at such a pitch of refinement that only now can I begin to comprehend the importance of this seemingly insignificant detail. To be able to enjoy that feeling of crisp virginal linen every time one felt like a little lie down is a pretty good definition of a seemingly oxymoronic term: everyday luxury.

Even the most wakeful of us spend at least a couple of hours a day asleep and, if you are like me, a positive devotee of the deity Morpheus, any excuse for a quip will do. And yet, given that I spend more time asleep than I do engaged in any other activity, I am rather embarrassed that as luxury editor of GQ I have not pondered the subject of sleeping arrangements before now. But having visited the Savoir Beds factory in north London, I view the hours spent in the arms of Morpheus with new respect.

Seven thousand quid may sound like a lot of money for a bed, but amortise that over the 30 years or so the makers say it will last, chuck in the fact that you might conceive a child in one, add the less cheerful thought that you might die in one, and it begins to look like good value.

Savoir Beds used to be Savoy Beds, the bed-building division of the eponymous hotel. During the early 20th century, the famous hotel had an in-house division for almost everything. Naturally, as guests check in for a night's rest, the bed was a paramount concern – hence the factory. One hundred and two years after it began, Savoir Beds is still making the same sort of bed.

Of course, headboards have changed a little since Edwardian times, but other than that the basic architecture, the bed is more or less as it was. But then the human body has remained unchanged in that time: and the best bespoke tailoring, skirt-making and shoemaking rely on the same sort of skills today as a century or so ago. Indeed, the process of buying a Savoir bed is much like ordering your first bespoke suit: you visit the showroom, try a few mattresses for size and get an expert to slip his hand under your back as you recline. You also have a chance to test-rest the bed: check in to Home House or the Savoy, sleep on a Savoir bed and if you place an order for one, the cost of your stay will be refunded.

A Savoir bed is one of a small number of truly British luxury experiences left. Rather like Purdey's

gun-making workshop in Hammersmith and Dunhill's Tradition factory in Walthamstow, Savoir Beds employs a small number of skilled workers to create products that will probably outlast all the competition. Moreover, there is refreshingly little reliance on heritage: this firm has been doing what it does for more than a century, but mercifully there is none of the Hovis-ad man-and-boy stuff. Instead, what you get is a good, handmade, all-natural item. Comparing this to the sort of mass-produced bed you can buy on the High Street is a little like drawing a comparison between a cigarette and a Havana cigar. Fillings are all natural: linen, cotton, wool and horsehair (the long hair from the tail rather than the mane). The wooden elements are screwed together rather than stapled. Eight-inch springs are used rather than the customary four-inch ones, meaning a thicker gauge of spring with more convolutions can be used (Savoir is big on convolutions). These springs are then "star-lashed" with eight points of attachment to stop lateral movement, after which a hessian cover

is pulled over, hard edges are padded with horsehair and the base is covered with ticking. Unless specified, the pattern is a surprisingly contemporary looking geometric one dating from the company's foundation. Than the whole thing is hand-tufted to keep the filling in place. Building a mattress is similarly arduous process involving layers of lamb's wool, horsehair, cotton, pocket springs, more cotton, more horsehair, more lamb's wool, and than there is the ticking and tufting. Living as we do in times of preposterous pricing, £7,000 is not the most expensive bed you can get here; Savoir is working on one for £12,000 and I did lie on a prototype. Yes, it was comfortable, softer, springier, more cossetting... but was it worth another five thousand? I will withhold my verdict until this brave new edition to luxury napping is properly launched. However, even on my fleeting acquaintance with it, I fear that it will be unable to live up to a claim, made in its promotional literature, that once you become the owner of a Savoir bed you can get rid of your alarm clock and that you will spring from your bed bristling with "mental freshness and new energy". If I were to get into such a bed, you would have great difficulty getting me out of it. **GQ**

*Savoir Beds, 104 Wigmore Street, London W1.  
020-7486 2222, [www.savoirbeds.co.uk](http://www.savoirbeds.co.uk)*

## BUYING A SAVOIR BED IS LIKE ORDERING A BESPOKE SUIT

