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Spending thousands on a good bed could be the healthiest investment of your life. Martin Plimmer explains why it makes sense to put money into your mattress.

property

Does a rich man sleep sounder than a poor man? One thing's certain – he sleeps softer. The rich man is cocooned by feather and goose-down pillows, atop a multi-layer sponge of calico-pocketed springs, hand-packed lamb's wool, silk, mohair, cotton, alpaca and long-stranded horsehair. If he has put his money wisely into his mattress, his bed will have no wrong side to get out of, and he will have no material excuse for waking up in a grump.

In fact he should have no reason to wake at all – which is good news because latest reports show that a full night's sleep throughout your life could help ward off age-related “cognitive decline” and improve general health.

We all need stoutly tender support during the third of our lives we spend in bed. Forget all that Eighties tosh about hard beds being good for the back – the bed should be firm enough not to hammock, but soft enough to fill and support our lovely and previously neglected concave curves, such as the neck, and even more importantly, the small of the back. Without that support all the weight is borne by the pelvis and middle portion of the spine, mak-

ing us wake up with aching backs and numb arms.

Quality bed-makers, most of which seem to be British, give sound advice on this and are able to provide a mattress to suit every weight of person and habit of sleep (side, back, tummy). But the variety of beds and range of prices can be confusing.

So too is the fact that almost every bed has a royal title, however cheap it is. Even Ikea has a Sultan. But nobody should be so awed by a duchess or an empress that they can't ask what she is stuffed with and how well she is put together. A crude bed will give gyp for less than 10 years; a quality bed will support soundly for 30. Spending thousands on a good bed could be the healthiest investment of our lives.

To identify the perfect bed you've got to lie on as many as possible, preferably with your partner. Department stores are handy because you can audition several brands in one session. Good shops encourage this, and display their star beds like cars in a showroom, under fierce

spotlights cleverly positioned to stop customers nodding off. (...)

Traditional bed-making styles are once more in vogue, though “modernists” still hark back to the hi-tech come-on of visco-elastic polyurethane foam, commonly known as memory foam, which became popular in the United States in the early Noughties. Its trick is to yield precisely to your shape as you sink snugly into it like a luxury chocolate in a thermoformed plastic tray. The experience is novel and luxurious, and you may discover with delight, when your partner goes to wash in the morning, that you still have a palimpsest of her body in the bed beside you.

The downside is that once enclosed in its embrace, it requires a small effort to roll out of your mould into

their sleep – some of which they may not even know themselves – Savoir will take it back and remake it.

Anyone getting into a Savoir bed will join Emma Thompson, Liza Minnelli, the Aga Khan and King Hassan of Morocco – all of whom are borne to sleep nightly on a cloud of star-lashed hourglass springs (there's a deal of poetry in those mattresses).

This isn't just the statement furniture talking. Higher tog counts and higher thread counts should result in lower sheep-counts. Just getting up in the morning may become an insuperable problem. Me? I'm saving up for a Savoir No 2, the original Savoy bed, with ticking designed by Lady D'Oyly Carte back in 1905. It costs £11,950. Sweet dreams.



Pillow talk

a new position. And being a man-made material it doesn't circulate air or wick away the three-quarters of a pint of moisture each of us emits every night, a service deftly provided by the Argentinian horsetail and cashmere-filled topper created by world-class bed-maker, Savoir. Topper pads are a response by traditional bed makers such as Savoir to create a natural version of the soft comfort layer on top of the mattress that memory foam provides, at the same time raising the feet slightly to improve the circulation. Savoir once belonged to the Savoy Hotel Group but was bought in 1977 by Alistair Hughes, who invites potential buyers to try out his beds at the Savoy and other hotels. If they place an order he picks up the hotel tab. Savoir offers a truly bespoke service, its patient, iron-fingered craftsmen finessing mattress fillings – often with different tolerances on either side to suit couples – according to each customer's idea of what is too hard, too soft, or just right; wilfully encouraging them to indulge their inner Goldilocks. If they decide they've got it wrong after they've taken the bed home and subjected it to whatever it is they do in

Bed buying tips

- Don't buy a bed without lying on it first.
- Lie on as many beds as possible.
- Try them with your partner.
- Take your coat off.
- Stop worrying about whether you look silly.
- Visit a department store, which will have a wide range of bed makes and qualities.
- Don't shop when you are tired, because everything will feel fabulous.
- If the bed you like can be found in a hotel, book yourself in for a night. Extra research is a good investment.
- Ask whether the mattress can be customised to you and your partner's weights.
- Ask to be shown inside the mattress (this is often possible). After a while you'll become expert in the relative worth of the various stuffings.

