

A warm welcome: How to turn that extra bedroom into a true haven for guests

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REAL-ESTATE

Palm Beach decorators offer advice for turning an extra bedroom into a true guest haven.

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The winter season is gearing up in Palm Beach — and with it come friends and family who are looking forward to spending some quality time renewing connections, enjoying sunny weather and soaking in the town’s upscale-and-relaxed seaside vibe.

For many, travel plans are getting back to normal after more than two years of avoiding planes out of precaution for the coronavirus.

But what will your guests find when you usher them into their room? A warm-and-welcoming haven, or simply an extra bedroom?

Here are some tips from Palm Beach interior designers to make sure your home's accommodations are ready to offer your friends and loved ones a friendly welcome they won't soon forget.

First and foremost, advises designer Kirsten Fisk, a principal at Kemble Interiors in Palm Beach, consider spending a night in your guest room yourself.

"It might sound like a cliché," she says, "but if hosts did that, they'd see what's missing for their guests to enjoy themselves."

Check to make sure dresser drawers, for instance, are cleared of household clutter and there is plenty of free space to hang clothes in the closet — with multiple empty hangers, too. Then be sure the room and guest bathroom are clutter free and spotless, especially if they haven't been used in a while.

Your main goal should be to make sure that the room is comfortable and relaxing, says Ellen Kavanaugh of Ellen Kavanaugh Interiors.

"I don't usually put a TV in the guest room, but rather I like to put a good book or two — or a stack of the most current food, travel and design magazine issues," she says.

A stash of guidebooks and brochures about local attractions also is a good idea, especially if your guests prefer to explore on their own.

Fisk and Kavanaugh — along with Joseph Pubillones of Joseph Pubillones Interiors — agree that a good-quality bed and attractive bedding, obviously, are the essential ingredients. New linens are an easy way to refresh the guest bedroom.

"Start with a comfortable bed with the very best crisp cotton sheets," Pubillones says. "Make as beautiful and fancy a bed as you can to make the room feel like a five-star hotel. Even if you don't live a posh lifestyle, you want to sprinkle some magic, so your guests feel special and welcome. That's the most minimum intervention that you can do."

For linens, Kavanaugh suggests cotton percale because it's lightweight, cool and breathes easy, especially important on humid days in Palm Beach. She suggests such brands as Matouk and Dea.

"Also, I like to put a lightweight down comforter on the bed, which is nice for Florida," Kavanaugh says.

Fisk adds: "Have a cashmere throw on the bed for napping and offer an assortment of pillows — soft, firm, hypo- allergenic and down."

Other essentials? Fisk says the room should have a good reading lamp. And while you're at it, put together a covered basket with an assortment of digital plugs, cords and chargers for different makes and models, in case a guest loses or forgets to bring something vital.

In the same way, place a list of your Wi-Fi passwords in the room.

"Because we are at a time when we are doing so many Zoom calls, it's nice to have a comfortable chaise or club chair and the desk stocked with stationery," Fisk says.

A stack of prepaid or already-stamped postcards would be a nice addition, too.

For a special extra touch, Pubillones suggests putting together a welcome kit — "a tray or some sort of box or container to hold a bottle or carafe of water, and bonbons for turn-down service. And buy them from your local shops, so that you help small businesses where you live."

Don't forget special touches for the guest bathroom

The guest bathroom should have a sense of luxury, too, Fisk says, "with amenities similar to those found at a fine hotel: luxurious towels, robes, a sewing kit and fine toiletries to give your guests the feeling that they are being spoiled."

For toiletries, Kavanaugh suggests investing in high-quality shampoos, conditioners, body wash and lotions. "The Ortigia products are nice," she says. "They all smell so delicious. And set them out on a little tray. Also, I like to put fresh flowers everywhere in the guest suite, including a bud vase in the bathroom."

You also may want to change out the bathroom's shower curtain, if there is one, and buy new towels, says Fisk. "And don't forget a beach towel for the pool."

Other ideas to make a guest feel special

And for a surprising touch, consider putting in a single-serve espresso machine, a coffeemaker or an electric tea kettle, with appropriate supplies — or even a mini-bar, Fisk says. Bottles of water also are a must.

"If your guests feel that you care about them, that's the most important thing. And I think any token of something specific to that person, like a photo album of things you've done together, is nice," Fisk adds.

Kavanaugh mentions that a luggage rack also is handy.

"We love those (clear acrylic) luggage racks — CB2 has nice ones," she says. "And on the dresser in the bedroom, I put an antique small bowl or dish," a perfect spot for your guests to corral jewelry or a watch for the night.

“And if you have framed pictures in the room, make them be something happy, peaceful and serene to look at,” she adds.

Pubillones tacks on a last caveat: “A guest bedroom should be comfortable for a guest stay of three days, but not too comfortable — otherwise your guests might stay forever.”