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Pól Ó Conghaile: What is 'sleep tourism', and can the new holiday trend help my exhaustion?

From pillow sprays to spa rituals and a 'Director of Sleep', hotels are stepping up their efforts to sell a good night's sleep...

The Sleep Suite at The Alpina Gstaad

Emma will soon sell 'sleep holidays'

The Thomand Suite at [Dromoland](#) Castle

A 'Sleep Spray' at the Pembroke in Kilkenny

Emma 'sleep holidays' will offer rest and relaxation

The Sleep Suite at The Alpina Gstaad

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Pól Ó Conghaile

I travel a lot. I also find it difficult to sleep in hotels.

First World problem, I know. But the disruption of different rooms, the absence of blackout curtains and smart soundproofing (and the presence of door-slamming neighbours and noisy elevators) often leaves me wide awake.

And that's not even starting on laser-like red lights from TVs or smoke alarms, fluctuating room temperatures, or the psychedelic ceiling stare-downs of jet lag.

If I sleep well in a hotel, I remember it. That's why I'm not surprised to see sleep tourism on the rise.

"Sleep tourism helps people step away from daily stressors and rediscover the essential need for restful sleep," says Theresa Schnorbach of sleep and mattress company Emma.

It plans to launch its own sleep holidays after conducting a survey that found 98pc of us consider good sleep essential to a holiday, but 41pc say the item we miss most is our own bed. Prioritising relaxation helps everything from wellbeing to cognitive function, says Schnorbach.

A 'Sleep Spray' at the Pembroke in Kilkenny

I don't need science (or a mattress company) to tell me that — my puffy eyes talk loudly enough. And bazillions of books on wellbeing and insomnia say I'm not alone.

Though 'sleep tourism' is a new buzz-phrase, it hasn't come out of the blue. Hotels already had their pillow menus and super-duper scratchers (Westin famously sells its Heavenly Beds), but things are definitely going up a gear.

[Dromoland](#) Castle has introduced a director of sleep, for example. Ryan Logue can advise on everything from sleep-aiding scents like lavender and chamomile to room temperatures (see his tips for a good night's sleep below), and the hotel's new spa has developed a 'Sleep Well Smoothie' said to be "packed with nutrients to optimise sleep". The Co Clare five-star was named TripAdvisor's Best Hotel for Sleep in 2023.

Staying at The Regency in Belfast, I found tubes of cooling eye cream and pillow spray by my bed. In Switzerland, The Alpina Gstaad is addressing "one of the biggest health issues of our time" with new Sleep Suites, including climate-controlled beds and extras like "blue light-blocking glasses".

'Sleep Suite' - inside a luxury hotel room with climate-controlled beds

The Cadogan in London has worked with Harley Street hypnotherapist and sleep expert Malminder Gill on a "sleep-inducing" meditation for its app. Dublin's Shelbourne has a 'Ground Sleep Ritual' at its spa that combines gentle breathwork, hands-on rhythmical pressures and aromatherapy oils "to create a mindful moment in time customised just for you".

It's not just posh stays. Budget chain REZz promises "a really comfy bed" amid its industrial-style hotels in Cork and Dublin. Small rooms in Galway's The Snug have king-sized beds "for the amazing Zzzzzz's". This week, I checked into the Pembroke in Kilkenny to find a little bottle of Gaia 'Sleep Spray' and a little soy candle on the table in my room.

Or what about checking into the Buddhist temple of Ishikawa in Natadera, Japan? "Sleep like a monk" surrounded by snow or cherry blossoms from €85? Don't mind if I do.

Hotels were created to provide sleep. In an exhausted world, however, offering to supercharge our shut-eye makes for a great new marketing wheeze, a clever way to catch attention, burnish the brand, create loyal customers and to sell sprays, scents, bathroom products and even mattresses.

Although, most of the time, I'd happily settle for a decent bed and blackout blind.

Five tips for a tranquil night

The Thomand Suite at [Dromoland](#) Castle

Ryan Logue, [Dromoland](#) Castle's 'Director of Sleep', shares five of his top tips for achieving a good night's sleep.

1. Wake, Eat, Sleep, Repeat

Establishing a consistent sleep schedule is essential for regulating your body's internal clock and reinforcing a natural sleep-wake cycle. Aim to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.

2. Heaven Scent

Natural scents such as lavender, valerian and chamomile are well-known for their calming properties. Drift off on an aromatic cloud by spritzing your sleep space with sprays or room scents infused with these soothing extracts.

3. Keep Your Cool

A cooler temperature is the ideal environment to remain asleep throughout the night as our body temperature naturally peaks and declines. At [Dromoland](#), we feature adjustable thermostats in each room so guests can personalise their sleep environment.

4. Ban Blue Light

It is important to minimise the blue light emitted by digital devices such as smartphones and laptops before bed, as this suppresses the production of the sleep hormone, melatonin. Aim to turn off electronic devices at least an hour before bedtime.

5. Create Your Calm

Make sure your bedroom is cool, quiet and dark. Invest in comfortable bedding, pillows and a supportive mattress. Each evening, our housekeeping team prepares rooms for sleep by adjusting the lighting, drawing the curtains, tidying up the space as well as offering guests turn-down gifts before sleep. These efforts create a cosy atmosphere for a peaceful night's sleep.