

How To Set the Standard for Sleep Wellness: The Ultimate Guide for Optimizing Restorative Sleep in Hotels

The hospitality industry is known for creating memorable experiences for guests whether they are staying in a hotel for work, vacation, or simply enjoying a sweet escape. But more than ever, guests have shown an increased desire to prioritize sleep wellness when traveling.

According to Hilton's 2024 Trends report, "regardless of generation, the No. 1 reason people want to travel in 2024 is to rest and recharge."¹

It should come as no surprise, in our fast-paced, stress-filled world that hotel go-ers across the globe are looking for an opportunity to restore their well-being. But there are a few major obstacles in the way, including "The First Night Effect."

According to an article published in Travel Daily Media, "Four in five (80%) [travelers] stated they have trouble sleeping when traveling away from home. The research also found that business travelers lose around 58 minutes of sleep each night when staying away from home, averaging just five hours and 17 minutes of sleep."²

Recognizing the pivotal role that restorative sleep plays in guest satisfaction, hotels are focused on defining a gold standard for sleep excellence. That means taking a look at the many factors that contribute to a positive sleeping experience including guest room design, amenities, operational standards, and education to achieve this coveted standard.

In this guide, you'll discover:

- The best practices for ensuring your guests get restorative sleep during their stay
- How to implement more impactful sleep environments to enhance sleep wellness and promote restorative sleep.
- The importance of guest room design and hotel amenities.

¹ <https://stories.hilton.com/2024trends-sleep>

² <https://www.traveldailymedia.com/sleep-hygiene-ihg-tips/>

- Hotel operational standards that put sleep wellness at the center of your operations.
- How to educate guests about sleep hygiene and promote good sleep habits.

Read on to unlock the strategy for setting the gold standard in sleep wellness and learn how to prioritize the holistic well-being of every guest.

SETTING THE FOUNDATION FOR RESTORATIVE SLEEP

The Importance of Guest Room Design

Guest experience significantly impacts the success and reputation of a hotel, affecting everything from brand loyalty and guest retention to revenue and growth. And with a new wave of travelers prioritizing their sleep, it's important to ensure that each night in your hotel provides a restful oasis that supports their holistic health goals.

A well-designed guest room serves as the foundation for restful and restorative sleep. Thoughtful design choices such as dimmable lighting and reading lights offer guests control over their environment. But the impact goes beyond just comfort and customization, lighting plays a central role in regulating circadian rhythm and the body's internal clock, and can greatly impact the quality of sleep guests experience.

Installing blackout shades in each room is also important to ensure complete darkness, while soundproofing materials create a tranquil oasis by mitigating noise disturbances.

Room temperature is another important factor in designing your guest rooms. To optimize restorative sleep, in-room temperature controls should be within the optimal range of 60 to 67 degrees Fahrenheit. This grants guests personalized comfort while ensuring they don't overheat, which can be detrimental to restorative sleep.

According to an article published by the [Sleep Foundation](#), "High humidity can increase wakefulness and reduce the amount of time you spend in both slow-wave NREM and REM sleep. Since both of these stages are crucial for your overall health, sleepers may experience additional issues related to bodily recovery and memory consolidation."

According to the [Sleep Foundation](#), the best relative humidity for sleeping falls between 30% and 50%, and it should never exceed 60%. Additionally, the incorporation of air purifiers is essential for creating a refreshing sleep atmosphere devoid of allergens and pollutants.

For business travelers, a functional workspace that is separate from the sleeping area is optimal for supporting good sleep hygiene. However, this amenity is reliant on the size and overall design of the room. If rooms do not allow for a workspace that is separate from the sleeping area, we suggest dedicating a space where business travelers can work outside of the sleeping space.

Finally, a soothing design style, characterized by relaxing color palettes and minimalist aesthetics, fosters an ambiance of calm and tranquility. Avoid elements that interfere with sleep at night, such as devices that may generate lights, noises, smells, and distractions.

A note on the importance of accessibility and Inclusivity.

The restorative sleep standard should be accessible to guests with different abilities, allergies, or sensitivities. Hypoallergenic bedding, scent-free amenities, and wheelchair accessibility are just some of the ways your hotel can contribute to a comprehensive sleep experience for everyone.

PRIORITIZING GUEST COMFORT

Amenities that create a superior sleep environment.

The heart of the sleep experience lies in the guestroom amenities. Hotels can prioritize guest comfort by offering customizable amenities and choosing high-quality products to enhance each room. Here are the four main amenities that should be enhanced to ensure each guest's individual preferences are met.

1. **Mattress:** Mattresses are not one size fits all, in fact, the [optimal mattress depends on the sleep position, body type, and personal preference](#) of each individual. To appeal to the majority of sleepers, hotels often [select a mattress with a medium-firm](#) comfort level on a hybrid build.

However, the case for personalization in hotel rooms is strong. Statistics from adjustable mattresses in hotels indicate that the large majority of guests (96%, as reported by [Bryte](#)) choose settings different than a default medium firmness. Offering interchangeable toppers that allow for personalization or choosing a comfort-adjustable mattress are great options to provide personalization and enhance comfort.

2. **Pillow:** Similar to mattresses, the right pillow will depend on sleep position, body type, and preference. The [right pillow](#) should keep a person's head, neck, and spine all in neutral alignment and support the natural curvature of their spine. Because the optimal pillow varies so greatly per person, we suggest personalization in the form of a menu of different pillows. This widely accessible option for hotels allows visitors to choose the pillow based on their preferred primary and secondary sleep positions (back, side, or stomach). Hotels may also want to consider adding body pillows for stomach sleepers and pregnancy pillows upon request.
3. **Bed sheets or linen:** Bed sheets play a significant role in regulating temperature and managing humidity during sleep, which are both critical factors impacting sleep performance. Traditionally the recommendation is to offer organic sheets (cotton and its blends, Tencel, linen, bamboo, among others), but blends with synthetic fabrics have [proven to help thermoregulation](#). To prioritize temperature management and optimize breathability, keep the linen thread count below 600.
4. **Mattress protectors:** Mattress protectors ensure hygiene, by keeping the mattress free of insects, particles, and fluids, however some options for mattress protectors will compromise the firmness level of the mattress or thermoregulation features. Mattress protectors should be designed to allow vapor to pass through them, otherwise, you run the risk of using a protector that blocks the mattress technology designed to maximize the sleeper's comfort. Be sure to select high-quality mattress protectors that are thin and breathable.

Additional sleep-enhancing amenities that may help guests optimize their sleep include earplugs, eye masks, aromatherapy essential oils, and relaxing lotions which allow hotels to empower their guests to curate their sleep environment. Relaxing music or a white noise device can help block external disturbances and may be seen as going above and beyond for guests.

And don't overlook the mini bar – sleep-friendly drinks and snacks such as purified water, night infusions, and alcohol-free, sugar-less, and caffeine-free beverages and snacks remove the potential for dysregulated sleep.

If you want to create a best-in-class experience for guests, the amenities outlined above should be your first priority. However, once you've found the recipe for creating a sleep oasis in your hotel, you can supercharge the experience by providing unique guest experiences such as guided meditations, sleep stories, scented bath options, sleep-educating books, as well as sleep-monitoring technology such as sleep-tracking devices and apps.

Wellness and spa services are also an alluring draw that can set your hotel apart. Integrate sleep-focused treatments and therapies at spa and wellness facilities. Sleep-enhancing massages, aromatherapy sessions, meditation, and relaxation techniques can contribute to guests' overall sleep quality.

These unique offerings can help guests significantly improve their sleep mindset and performance and help your hotel stand out amongst the competition.

OPTIMIZING OPERATIONAL STANDARDS

Practices to put in place to promote consistent sleep excellence.

To craft an environment for your guest that is conducive to restorative sleep, it is imperative to set forth operational guidelines that support your mission of providing a tranquil and undisturbed sleep haven, geared towards enhancing guests' well-being and health.

Empowering your staff with comprehensive sleep awareness programs fosters a workplace that cherishes employee welfare, ultimately resulting in an elevated level of guest service.

Dedication to cleanliness guarantees guest comfort by ensuring the elimination of allergens and odors. Establish a turndown service that is designed to optimize the sleeping atmosphere, showcasing your commitment to each guest. By cultivating a culture of serenity, your hotel can proactively mitigate disturbances that could hinder your guests' ability to rest. This involves simple yet impactful measures, such as closing window shades, turning off the TV, making the bed, and adjusting room temperature. Also, consider offering personalized amenities, including aromatherapy and soothing music or white noise, tailored to each guest's unique sleep needs and preferences.

In your pursuit of a tranquil environment, it's vital to train your staff to uphold a quiet atmosphere at all times, discouraging the use of loud radios, cell phones, and door knocks that could disrupt guests' tranquility.

To ensure a peaceful experience during room inspections, pay close attention to alarm clocks and other devices that could create noise disturbances.

Dimming lights in hallways, public areas, and guest rooms during nighttime hours fosters an environment of quietude for your guests. Additionally, be sure to encourage

your guests to customize their room environment according to their sleep preferences, offering options for lighting, temperature, mattress comfort, pillow selection, and the use of optional amenities such as masks and earplugs.

Create your own Sleep Standard and prominently feature it on a card or the TV screen. Additionally, consider offering personalized sleep concierge services tailored to each guest's stay type and chronotype.

Continuous improvement and feedback help establish a culture of continuously monitoring and improving the hotel offerings based on guest feedback and evolving research. Regular surveys and reviews can provide insights into areas for enhancement. This commitment to refinement demonstrates the hotel's dedication to maintaining the gold standard in restorative sleep.

The Importance of Continued Improvement and Education

Gold standard guidelines every hotel should follow.

As mentioned in previous pages, creating a superior guest experience is essential for the growth and success of your hotel. Regular guest feedback and ongoing research ensure that sleep offerings remain aligned with evolving expectations.

While staying on top of wellness trends and receiving continued feedback is important, it's equally critical to share your knowledge with your guests to ensure they're aware of the value of the amenities and services you offer.

Education plays a pivotal role in fostering healthy sleep practices among guests, encompassing two primary areas: sleep well-being and jet lag mitigation.

Sleep Wellness

Prioritizing sleep wellness involves maintaining a consistent sleep schedule, creating a comfortable sleep environment, and adopting relaxation techniques to ensure restorative and uninterrupted slumber. When combined with a proactive approach to jet lag management, you can empower your guests to achieve optimal sleep quality. Here are a few recommendations to motivate your overnight guests.

Top 10 tips for optimizing sleep

1. Start by setting attainable goals for your sleep and rest.
2. Go to bed at the **same time** every night. Avoid **naps** longer than 20 minutes during the day.
3. Avoid **caffeine**, alcohol, and tobacco before bed (at least 6 hours).

4. **Exercise** during the day and make use of hotel fitness and recreation facilities.
5. Take a warm **bath** or shower before bed.
6. Create **sleep rituals**, such as listening to calming music or drinking camomile tea
7. Stay away from **screens**, instead read print books or magazines.
8. Avoid bringing **work** or any stressful activity to bed.
9. Don't worry or **overthink** things you cannot control– instead practice gratitude or use a journal to get your worries out on paper.
10. If you cannot get to sleep in 20 minutes, get out of bed and do something **relaxing**.

Jet Lag Management

Frequent travelers, globetrotters, or any guests who embarked on a long-haul journey know the sleep-depriving effects of jet lag. This is a common traveler's woe, affecting everyone from business professionals crossing time zones for meetings to adventurers exploring new destinations. By providing your guests with the tools they need to combat jet lag you can elevate their travel experience, ensuring they can make the most of their time away. Here are just a few of the tips you can share with anyone crossing multiple time zones.

1. **Plan ahead** - Keep your jet lag and biorhythm in mind when scheduling anything pre- and post-flight. Avoid dinner meetings when flying West to avoid exhaustion, instead go to bed early and start to acclimate to the time zone. Vice versa when flying East.
2. **Don't try to adjust if you don't need to** - On short trips, stick to your original schedule as much as possible to minimize jet lag both ways. While this requires you to plan ahead and stick to a more strict schedule, it helps ensure your internal clock isn't thrown off course.
3. **Schedule exercise breaks** - Exercise is a vital tool for adjusting to the local time zone more quickly. To stay energized and healthy while traveling, try to get at least 30 minutes of exercise daily. Be sure to pack your running shoes, swimsuit, and/or cycling pants.
4. **Optimize your at-home sleep routine** - If you're not sleeping well at home, don't expect to feel rested and recharged after sleeping on a plane or in a hotel. To avoid built-up sleep debt that will compound on the jet lag, make sure you're prioritizing your sleep wellness at home.
5. **Book flights at reasonable times** - This will help you accomplish #4 more easily, or stay at an airport hotel the night before your early morning flight if your commute is long.
6. **Let it be** - Studies have shown that our anticipation of jet lag symptoms is a reliable predictor of actually experiencing them (basically it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy!). So on your trip, try to accept that there will be jet lag, but that you will be OK. This mindset can significantly reduce anxiety and stress.

Educating your guests about sleep hygiene and advocating good sleep practices shows your dedication to your mission of supporting the health and well-being of guests.

Hotel Restorative Sleep Standard Checklist

Setting the gold standard for restorative sleep in hotels takes time, resources, and strategic planning. Follow this checklist to ensure you are making valuable changes to implement a more conducive sleep environment for your guests.

Guest Room Design Considerations

- Implement dimmable lighting with reading lights and warm hues.
- Install blackout shades that fully block windows for optimal darkness.
- Use soundproofing materials to ensure low noise levels
- Provide in-room temperature controls allowing a 60-67°F range.
- Maintain humidity levels below 35%.
- Incorporate air purifiers to remove allergens and pollutants.
- Create a functional workspace (separate from the sleeping area when possible).
- Opt for relaxing color schemes and minimalistic designs.
- Ensure accessibility and inclusivity with hypoallergenic bedding, scent-free amenities, and wheelchair accessibility.

Guest Room and Hotel Amenities:

- Offer a comfortable mattress with customizable firmness options.
- Provide a pillow menu catering to firmness and size preferences.
- Offer quality linens with breathable and temperature-regulating properties.
- Select mattress protectors that maintain hygiene without compromising comfort.
- Include sleep-enhancing amenities like earplugs, eye masks, and aromatherapy essential oils.
- Offer sleep-inducing experiences such as guided meditations and sleep-educating books.
- Provide relaxing music or white noise devices for a soothing sleep environment.
- Incorporate sleep-monitoring technology for insights into guests' sleep patterns.
- Integrate sleep-focused treatments and therapies at spa and wellness facilities.

Hotel Operational Standards

- Implement staff sleep awareness programs and designated rest areas.
- Ensure room and bed cleanliness for guest comfort.
- Focus turndown service on optimizing the sleep environment.
- Train staff to create a culture of quiet operation.
- Prevent noise disturbances during room inspections.

- Offer a food menu with healthy and light options, especially at night.
- Dim lights in hallways, public areas, and guest rooms during nighttime.
- Encourage personalization of the room environment.
- Provide alcohol-free and sugar-free cocktails in bars and minibars.
- Maintain quiet guest room floors during nap times and accommodate check-in times for naps.
- Educate guests about sleep hygiene and promote good sleep habits.
- Offer sleep retreat packages for guests interested in improving sleep performance.
- Adopt sustainable practices in room design and amenities.
- Establish a culture of continuous improvement based on guest feedback and research.

Hotel Restorative Sleep Standard Rating

To determine if your hotel is equipped to provide guests with an enhanced sleeping experience, count the number of checkboxes ticked, divide by 32, and multiply by 100 to get a percentage score.

The higher the percentage, the closer you are to attaining the gold standard in sleep wellness for your guests.

90-100%: Sleep Sanctuary Status - Congratulations! Your hotel exemplifies the highest commitment to promoting guest sleep quality. Adhering to all or nearly all of the criteria outlined in the Restorative Sleep Checklist showcases your commitment to providing guests with the finest amenities and accommodations to support restorative sleep.

70-89%: Sleep Advanced Status - This rating shows a high level of commitment to guest sleep quality. Your hotel amenities provide guests with an exemplary experience that encourages quality sleep.

50-69%: Sleep Conscious Status - Sleep Conscious Status demonstrates an understanding of the importance of quality sleep and shows a dedication towards enhancing guest sleep quality.

30-49%: Sleep Aware Status - These hotels have started their journey towards better guest sleep quality but have more work to do to ensure guests can rest and recharge effectively. They meet less than half of the checklist items.

Below 30%: Sleep Beginner Status - These hotels have significant opportunities for improvement in promoting better guest sleep. They fulfill a small portion of the checklist criteria.

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