

At-Home Guest Rooms Rate Five-Star Raves

(NAPSA)—Today's guest room is getting a wake-up call as savvy travelers bypass luxury hotels and quaint bed and breakfasts for the homes of relatives and friends.

According to the U.S. Travel Data Center, over a third of the traveling public opts to make their stop-over reservations with pals and kin. It's a growing trend, with builders and architects reporting an increase in guest room designs for residences, and upscale home accessory retailers offering guest room sets with such niceties as loofah sponge, shoe-shine kit and butler's tray for late-night reading.

Whether guest quarters command a separate cottage or a corner in the den, homeowners are upgrading this sleep-over space into a five-star suite with high-tech accoutrements and luxurious extras alike. Hosts and hostesses are catering to visitors' 21st century expectations with digital must-haves like high-speed Internet access and large-scaled TV's as well as indulgent extras such as imported soaps and plush bathrobes.

"Today's guest rooms are havens with a connection to the outside world, offering both luxury shelter and state-of-the-art communication components," says Mike Short, design director for Sauder Woodworking.

It's never been easier to create a posh yet practical guest suite, thanks to today's wide range of furnishings designed for relaxation and technology alike. Short and his staff suggest several tips for creating a deluxe, digitally attuned guest sanctuary.

- Start with a soothing color scheme, a comfortable bed and classic furniture designs. "A neutral background with low-key



Create a guest room corner that provides relaxation and work space alike for visiting friends and family.

splashes of color creates a restive atmosphere," Short says, "and clean-lined furnishings contribute a timeless look."

- Take care not to over-accessorize. "Leave dresser surfaces clutter free for guests' belongings," Short notes, "and add pictures and accessories sparingly for clarity and calm."

- Look for high-tech components that mesh with the room's pampered atmosphere. "From corner units to wall-spanning configurations, desks and entertainment centers are scaled for a full range of room dimensions," Short says. Sauder's slim, sophisticated Camden County computer desk with hutch, for example, creates a sleek guest room work corner where visitors can check their e-mail, fine-tune a business proposal or phone home. And the collection's compact entertainment center provides a welcome relaxation oasis.

- Don't forget the basics: Include

a dresser, luggage rack, iron and ironing board, alarm clock, and night stand. "It's these just-like-home details that put guests at ease," Short notes.

- Pamper your visitors with luxuries such as the latest best-selling novel and a bouquet of fresh flowers. Or prepare a basket of amenities, with necessities like toothbrush, hair dryer and sewing kit.

- Stock the entertainment center and bookcase with CD's, videos, books and magazines, and outfit the desk with mouse pad, desk light, paper and pens.

- And finally, spend a night in your own guest room. "There's no better way to discover what might be missing," Short says. "One hostess added a full-length mirror and a night light after visiting her guest room."

With the well-designed range of furnishings available for today's guest rooms, hosts and hostesses can welcome their near and dear without reservations.