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At home

Beds fit for a king — or the Queen Mother

Some choose to sleep like royalty, for \$5,000-plus

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USATODAY

We spend a couple of hours a day in our cars, on which we might lavish \$20,000 or \$30,000. We spend eight hours a day in bed, and most of us pay \$600 for a mattress. What are we thinking?

As it happens, more of us are thinking about spending more — a lot more. In a retail market in which the best-selling beds cost \$599 and any bed costing more than \$1,500 is considered "luxury," a tiny but growing number of consumers are spending \$5,000, \$15,000 and even as much as \$20,000 for a mattress made of luxury materials like cashmere and Belgian silk.

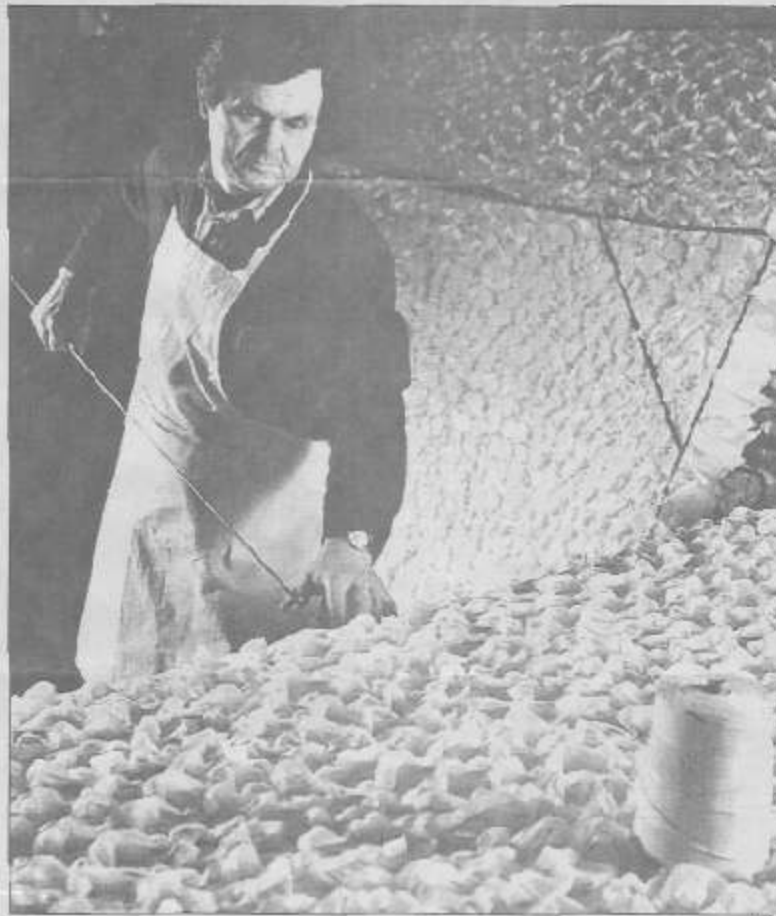
"The idea of a luxurious night's sleep does command a premium. What price would you put on an incredible night's sleep?" says David Perry, bedding editor of *FurnitureToday*, a weekly trade magazine following the trend.

Once again, aging baby boomers — and their aching backs discriminating tastes and overstuffed wallets — are driving the trend.

"There's increased recognition that a mattress does play an important role in the quality of sleep, so it's possible to buy the best bed one can afford," says David Evans of American giant Sealy, the largest bedding manufacturer in the world. It sells the luxury Stearns & Foster brand.

Naturally, the super-rich have always been willing to spend a lot, says Roger Magowitz, owner of Bedroom First in Scottsdale, Ariz., where sales of Vi-Spring mattresses (\$10,000-\$20,000) imported from Plymouth, England, have increased tenfold since he started selling them four years ago. "Where does someone who's putting up a \$10 million home buy a mattress? He's not going to go into a local furniture store," he says.

But even ordinary affluent Americans have grown accustomed to high-end beds after staying in luxury hotels, says Larry Mil-



Old-world craftsmanship. Using a long needle, a worker hand-ties the pocket coils of a Hypnos mattress.

ler, president of Sir'n Sleep, a chain of So. Calif. stores.

"If people spend \$10,000 on a fancy TV they watch only an hour a day, why not invest in the very best where they spend a third of their lives?" he says.

Michelle Kolesky-Assatly, 51, a top Coldwell Banker real estate agent, bought two Vi-Springs from Magowitz — one for \$8,500 and one for \$10,000 — for her apartment in Fort Lee, N.J., and her summer house on Long Island. She has a bad back and arthritis, and she spends long hours in her car and

doesn't get enough sleep — and she's addicted to her beds.

"They are beyond fabulous — I love them, love them, love them," she says. "When I get in — forget it, you can't get me out."

Yes, but \$20,000 for a mattress? Are these beds made of gold?

Actually, beds such as Durdana and Hästens, imported from Sweden, and Vi-Spring and Hypnos from England are handmade from "all-natural" components like cashmere, mohair and lamb's wool. They have thousands of springs, individually wrapped in their own

cloth pockets. They have warranties that last for decades.

The claim that these beds are more hypoallergenic than ordinary, less expensive beds also is a big draw, retailers say. There are two kinds of people buying: the very rich and the very allergic. People with allergies, even if they can't afford it, they want this bed, says Mads Rytte of ABC Carpet & Home in New York, where the Hästens line is selling well.

"When we first came to the US 13 years ago, the average price of a bed was minuscule, and no one



As much as a small car: Hypnos Eminence mattress: \$12,000. "What price would you put on an incredible night's sleep?" one expert asks.

would carry our beds (because of the cost). Now every (manufacturer) has a high-priced bed," says Stefan Peters, marketing director of 77-year-old Durdana, which has 35 stores in the USA. "In the last five years, we've doubled our stores and doubled our sales."

Hypnos beds, made in Buckinghamshire, England, for more than a century, has supplied beds for Queen Elizabeth II and her late mother — not to mention Luciano Pavarotti and the Sultan of Brunei. Now Hypnos beds are being made in Tennessee and selling to Americans for prices ranging from \$2,400 to \$11,000. Soon, a \$15,000 model will be available.

"Only about 2% of the population is buying in the high-end market, but if you sell them a story they'll buy it," Hypnos sales director Adrian Jones says. "The American marketplace is infatuated with the royal family, so the endorsement of the queen is worth a lot — we could probably charge \$25,000 for the queen's bed."

In fact, marketing also plays an important role in expanding the high-end market, says *FurnitureToday's* Perry. Having a luxury bed at the top of your line establishes an "umbrella," he says. "They can sell more of the beds underneath that very top bed. It helps sell more (lower-priced) beds and justifies you as offering a Cadillac of sleep products."

It works for Kolesky-Assatly. "I'm a very conservative person and it made me totally nuts to (spend that much), but what's more important than a good night's sleep?"

What's so special about these beds?

► **Durdana:** Swedish. Unusual configuration: The "Duo 7007" has three layers of springs for a total of 3,600. Two-pair base is significantly taller than top pad. \$3,300-\$9,000.

► **Hästens:** Swedish. Claims to be made of all organic components, no chemicals. \$1,900-\$15,000.

► **Hypnos:** English. Claire royal warrants, official seals of approval from members of the royal family, which the company can use in advertising. Top-of-line "Sleepsafe" (1,440 springs) does not need to be turned. \$2,400-\$15,000.

► **Stearns & Foster:** American. The "Bonne Nuit" features mattress cover design inspired by the tracery of stained-glass windows in European cathedrals. \$5,000-\$6,000.

► **Vi-Spring:** English. Top-of-line "The Magnificence" features a mattress with 3,900 springs (lens size) nested in calico pockets, resting on a 13-inch-high "thron" (as opposed to a 10-inch-high "cushion") box spring, which itself has 300 springs. \$20,000.