

The bed worth £14,000

As hotels battle to sell us the sleep of our lives, **Susan d'Arcy** snuggles up on the latest magic mattress

Sleep is the new sex, they say. Or possibly it's the new money? You get the point — quality sleep is a highly desirable commodity these days, as we search for eight hours uninterrupted by bleeping BlackBerries, creeping anxieties, wailing sirens and bawling bundles of joy.

And our hotels are becoming ever more eager to offer up the perfect slumber we crave — at a premium, of course. It started with lavender pillows and complimentary herbal teas, but now a full-blown bedding arms race seems to have broken out.

Westin was the pioneer, with its Heavenly Beds; now, New York's trendy Hotel on Rivington shouts not about Moby propping up its bar, but about its Tempur-Pedic mattresses. The old-guard stalwart Hotel Principe di Savoia, in Milan, even uses cashmere sheets these days.

And the trendy Cotswold House Hotel, in Gloucestershire, has taken the search for slumber to another level, installing a bed that costs £14,000 — and it doesn't even have a mattress. Instead, the Ammique King comprises almost 10,000 vertical rods, each topped with a plastic cap no bigger than a thumbnail and suspended, snug as sardines, in a wooden box. The rods, covered by three padded sheets, contour precisely to your body, thus providing the appropriate support for a perfect night in the land of nod. According to the hype, the Ammique King can "turn your dream of quality sleep into a reality". So, I'm dreaming about being asleep? Oh, never mind.

There's also a promised solution to the least alluring element of hotel nights — did you know that we release 87 litres of body fluids and several pounds of dead skin into our beds each year? (My dirt is one thing, but other people's ...) Fortunately, the Ammique isn't just supremely comfortable; it's also designed to be easier to clean than conventional beds.

And so to The Bed. It's fairly ordinary, with an oversized suede bedhead, crisp white linen and a gold throw. A glass panel is built into the end, so I can see the mechanism within. Hmm — very interesting.

The receptionist explains the "pronto pad", which allows me to control everything from the TV to the mood lighting while supine. But I can hardly contain my impatience. Even more than usual, behind my politely strained smile, I'm thinking: "Oh, please, shut up and go away." I want to be alone so that I can bounce on The Bed. Mistake. I've forgotten about that wooden frame and only narrowly miss causing irreversible damage to my vertebrae. I crumple rather than bounce. Oh, dear. The Bed feels surprisingly hard.

Time to explore the room. Apparently, over the course of a lifetime, we spend 25 years in the bedroom, but I wouldn't want to tarry in this particular boudoir that long. It's not very big,

and is a bit of a modernist construct: Rolf Benz leather chairs, flatscreen TV, gadget everything, including a phone that looks like a gynaecological probe, all in sleep-inducing gold tones.

The hotel employed an anthropologist for advice on how to help customers to relax. He suggested avoiding wooden bedheads (not welcoming), allowing guests to "nest" (the housekeepers resist putting your belongings into their "proper" place) and avoiding displays of "greed" (hence the complimentary minibar).

There are, nevertheless, edgy elements — the bathroom, for example, which is huge and has windows offering magnificent views of the prosperous perfection of Chipping Campden high street. My problem here was a conviction that the view went two ways, with the high street being treated to an eyeful of me ducking hurriedly into the tub.

Then there's the room rate: £350. You'd have to down a lot of nuts from that minibar to claw that back. In fact, the price could well make you lose sleep, were it not for the soporifically soft Frette sheets and sumptuously plump white goose-down pillows (chosen from a menu with six options) that adorn The Bed.

It's once you're nodding off, rather than chilling out, that Room 16 really comes into its own. The Bed now feels firm yet strangely fluid. How a water bed should feel ... but doesn't. I'm not sure how long it took me to fall asleep — it could have been as long as 60 seconds.

My slumber was so sound that I woke with a start when the room-service waitress tapped on my door at 8.30am. It took a satisfyingly long time to remember where on earth I was, before I welcomed in my breakfast with a light skip, a tra-la-la and, I swear, a bluebird on my shoulder.

‘Behind my smile, I’m thinking: ‘Please shut up and go away.’ I want to be alone so that I can bounce on The Bed’

I now find it easy to understand why an Antipodean couple who spent a single night at Cotswold House promptly ordered two beds for their home. I bet they need an internet booking system for their guest room.

The Ammique King may be essentially a gimmick — a way to sell a room that isn't nearly as impressive as others

that are similarly priced in this attractive — and expensive — hotel. But there's no question that it lives up to its hype.

If you really do have trouble sleeping, and money is no object, I suggest that you head to the Cotswolds and take up residence in Room 16 (or spend £14,000 on your own King; visit www.ammique.com). Nighty night.

■ **Cotswold House Hotel** (01386 840330, www.cotswoldhouse.com) is in Chipping Campden. Room 16, one of the new Montrose rooms, with the Ammique Super King bed, costs £350 per night, B&B.

The **Hidcote**, one of the cottage rooms, with its own hot tub, is the room that attracts the most repeat bookings; from £395, B&B. Queen rooms start at £205, B&B



4Corners Images
'Don't get crumbs in the bed, dear — it's worth more than our car': main picture, Cotswold House