

Should you put a bath in your bedroom?



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Perspectives

You might say the bath belongs in the bathroom. It's in the name. But what about a claw-foot at the foot of your bed? Among the ideas increasingly drifting from boutique hotels into private homes, few are as divisive as the bedroom bath.

For some, the idea feels impractical, even messy, for a space designated for sleep. "The thought of soap and puddles dripping on to a beautiful bedroom rug just doesn't do it for me," says British-American designer Lauren Carlucci.

But is it the ultimate home indulgence, one where experience joyfully trumps practicality?

Bedrooms and bathrooms were not always devolved spaces. "Bathing was often something that came to you, rather than somewhere you went," says Keeley Sutcliffe, design manager at British design company BC Designs, pointing to wealthy medieval homes where servants brought tubs of water directly into private chambers. As plumbing evolved, the bathroom emerged as a dedicated room, and the idea of bathing in the bedroom fell out of favour.

But the hospitality industry — particularly boutique hotels in the US, France and the UK — has embraced the roll-top bath at the

Watkins. "It encourages us to pause, unwind and enjoy the space in a way that a traditional bathroom never quite could."

Relaxing as a couple was also motivation for Tanya Selway; in her bedroom in west London, the co-principal of interior design studio Stelly Selway installed a vintage cast-iron bath in the corner beneath a skylight. A bath before bed has long been part of her routine to decompress — but she could easily spend an hour locked in the bathroom, missing an entire evening with her partner. Now, "he can be reading or watching something while I'm in the bath, and we're still together".

Selway makes me wonder if I should love my own husband a little more — when it comes time for a soak, I firmly shut the bathroom door to signal "me" time. More practically, it's hard to imagine squeezing a freestanding bath into our shoebox bedroom in Manhattan.

The question, then, is how to make it work. While designers often describe today's baths as pieces of furniture, a sofa doesn't need to be plumbed.

"Drainage needs to ensure an adequate fall is achieved and service runs aren't too tricky," says John Law, creative director of interiors at Bath-based interior and garden design studio Woodhouse & Law. He points to other factors — ventilation, moisture-resistant flooring, proper distance from electrical sockets and load-bearing requirements — which require consulting with experts.

Faff aside, for me, aesthetics are where the idea can go awry. "A feeling of being anchored is paramount," insists Selway. She chose bluestone flooring to define the territory around the bath without enclosing it; interior designer Tala Fustok recently set a bath on a raised platform. "We wanted the tub to feel like a destination within the room rather than an object sitting beside the bed," says Fustok. I find bedroom baths more convincing when they're nestled into a canted bay or some form of niche, allowing the architecture to cradle the bath, almost like a room within a room.

At the foot of the bed in a rustic guest cabin in Idaho, Studio Mountain founder Sierra Fox hung a disco ball above a brass Penhaglion bath, making it a complete vignette; interior designer Jess Cooney placed a Catchpole & Rye bath against windows in a primary bedroom, framing it with curtains and attaching an oil painting to the window frames to bring "coziness, where someone would feel a little bit exposed", as the bath faces on to the street. But the finishes in the bathing area "shouldn't feel like they belong in a different room", says Selway. It's relatively easy to match your bath with your bedroom, says Law. "Many cast baths can also be repainted; we love to cover the bathtub in fabric as a playful twist." Concludes Sutcliffe: "The bath itself has to have enough character and proportion to hold its own."

Such tried-and-tested techniques may help make the fusion of bed and bathroom land, but it remains a tricky task. Tyler Marshall, a principal at New York's Workshop/APD, delivers a crushing blow: "When it's done badly, I get casino hotel vibes."



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foot of the bed and reintroduced the idea to those designing their own homes. "You are not thinking about children splashing, wet towels, electrical items or whether the flooring is suitable," says Sutcliffe. "You are thinking about the view and the sheer pleasure of the experience."

Still, "what feels indulgent for a weekend away doesn't always translate into a room you use every day", says Lucy Sear-Barlow, founder of London's Barlow & Barlow.

Devotees see it differently. A stay at The Pig Hotel inspired Jamie Watkins and Tom Kennedy, co-founders of wallpaper company Divine Savages, to install a roll-top Penny bath from BC Designs, painted in Farrow & Ball's Naperon, in their principal bedroom (coincidentally located in Bath). It was a workaround — their home's main bathroom is accessed through another bedroom, making guest stays awkward. They loved the idea of a bath surrounded by warmer furnishings instead of the usual tiled environment.

"Visually, it acts as a focal point, but its greatest value is the atmosphere it creates," says



Top: a BC Designs Penny bath for Divine Savages. Above: Catchpole & Rye bath in Jess Cooney's Massachusetts home — Divine Savages; Kelly Marshall