

## RECHARGE

## REST AND

**W**hen was the last time you had a good night's sleep? You know – the kind where you wake up feeling truly rested, full of energy, and ready to take on the world.

If your answer is “I can't remember” or “too long ago”, then it seems that, unfortunately, you're in a majority.

In a recent study by Australia's Flinders University, which tracked data from almost 68,000 adults across the world over a nine-month period, only 15 per cent were found to have slept for the recommended seven to nine hours for five or more nights per week. While the exact amount of shut-eye one needs per night can vary depending on age and various other lifestyle and health-related factors, getting too little – or poor-quality – sleep on a regular basis can lead to a whole host of other health issues, from heart problems and obesity to an increased risk of developing dementia. On a less extreme level, in the day-to-day, being sleep-deprived can leave us feeling more irritable, with less control over our emotions and slower cognitive skills, and with more trouble focusing, learning, retaining information, or reacting to things – whether that's physically or emotionally.

It's not just about the amount of sleep we need – it's also the quality. There are over 90 known sleep disorders disrupting people's ability to snooze restoratively, from sleep apnea and insomnia to parasomnia. And the Middle East region isn't immune to these issues: in a recent UAE-based sleep survey conducted by Premier Inn, more than 40 per cent of the country's residents were found to not be getting enough quality sleep. The survey, which polled more than 950 people ahead of World Sleep Day in March this year, found that 32 per cent of respondents were suffering from the effects of an irregular sleep

From pillow menus and smart beds to sleep concierges, science-backed personalised reports, and suites curated around the art of slumber, sleep tourism is on the rise, and the hospitality industry is ready to serve up five-star shut-eye

WORDS YI-HWA HANNA

schedule, while 41 per cent were getting less than six hours of sleep a night. For the study, Premier Inn consulted with Silentnight sleep expert Hannah Shore.

“We must allow our bodies the right amount of time in each stage of sleep to fully recover – five cycles of 90 minutes per night. Deep sleep repairs the body physically, whereas light sleep benefits the brain function and emotional processing,” said Shore, who described the percentage of people sleeping for less than six hours a night as alarming. “This substantial percentage questions the accuracy of self-perceived sleep quality,” Shore says. Happily for Premier Inn, a majority of their UAE guests surveyed did rate their sleep as good or excellent. But the brand is still concerned about the high number of those *not* getting enough slumber.

With every challenge, a solution-oriented trend usually ensues, and this case is no different.

The global sleep aids market – which includes pillows, mattresses, and sleep-related medications and devices – is predicted to be worth more than US\$158 billion by 2032, with a lot of this growth being accredited to the developments made possible through sleep-related technology. And the business opportunities afforded by the boom in “Sleep Tech” have spilled over into various other industries, from F&B to travel.

Sleep tourism, which began emerging as a major trend in the travel industry in 2023, is on the rise with no signs of stopping. In fact, with its intersection between the growth of wellness tourism and escapism travel – both of which have rest and relaxation at the core of their appeal – it should come as little surprise to discover that the sleep tourism market, which was valued at more than US\$640 billion in 2023, is projected to grow by almost 8 per cent, or more than US\$400 billion, within the next four years.



### Luxury hotel rooms: the ultimate haven for a good night's sleep?

Forward-thinkers in the hospitality industry are responding in kind. From Bali, Indonesia to Los Angeles in the US, hotels are rolling out offerings that go beyond the standard pillow menu. The Conrad Bali has come up with a concept called SWAY – a 60-minute session that offers a combination of well-being, meditation, and sleep therapy by suspending guests in a cocoon-like hammock, while Los Angeles's Hotel Figueroa has a dedicated “Rest and Recovery Suite” that gives guests their own customised pillows, an intelligent mattress that adjusts to your ideal sleep temperature, Gamma Light Therapy's Revive red-light lamp, cutting-edge earplugs to reduce noise pollution, Molekule air purifiers, and magnesium-infused supplements for a snooze-inducing nightcap. Upon waking – to the sunrise-stimulating

Loftie Lamp – in-room fitness options and circadian rhythm-friendly coffee alternatives are available, along with complimentary use of the Headspace meditation app. At the Park Hyatt hotel in New York City, the Bryte Balance™ smart bed provides guests with AI-powered technology that can guide and soothe them into optimal sleep conditions, combined with a “multisensory relaxation and wellness experience called Somnify™” that pairs calming sleep-inducing audio with soothing motions within the mattress to help you sleep. Over in nearby Massachusetts, the Four Seasons Hotel Boston offers a Sleep Ritual in their spa, in partnership with Ground Wellbeing – a wellness products company that has origins in the hotel spa industry. The Sleep Ritual goes beyond a standard spa treatment to help guests activate their Parasympathetic Nervous System.

Meanwhile, the InterContinental

Hotels Group – following a global survey they conducted, which found that business travellers lose about an hour of sleep for every night they're travelling – introduced a mobile sleep aid called Journi Mobile Task Light, designed to help regulate the body's circadian rhythm and, in doing so, eliminate some of the stressors affecting one's ability to sleep well.

Brands including Premier Inn, The Mandarin Oriental, and Hyatt Hotels have partnered with sleep experts to curate higher-quality slumber-related offerings. In Japan, the home of the capsule hotel – conceived as a solution to help sleep-deprived workers to get more shut-eye around long weekday commutes – the 9h ninehours hotel chain has grown from one location in 2009 to 10 across the country by 2024. Their entire philosophy has been built around sleep, down to the name – one hour to shower, seven hours to sleep, →

**ABOVE:** Experts claim that at least one-third of the world's population suffers from sleep disorders

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** According to a 2019 survey by InterContinental Hotels, business travellers face a number of unique sleep challenges during trips, from long work hours and unfamiliar noises to adjusting to a new environment, jet lag, and more



and one to get dressed – and at some of their locations, guests can opt to receive a post-stay “sleep measurement report” that will tell them how well they slept, assessed with data on movement, respiratory status, noises made, and more, all gleaned from sensors built into the capsule unit.

The Rosewood Hotels & Resorts has launched a collection of rest-promoting retreats called the Alchemy of Sleep; London now boasts three Zedwell Hotels – “the hotel you check-in to tune out”, where the promotion of sleep and well-being is a core focus of the brand identity; and in Portugal, the luxurious 15-room Coimbra-based Hästens Sleep Spa – CBR Boutique Hotel is the “first and only hotel in the world where you can fully enjoy the Hästens Sleep Spa experience.”

In the Middle East, at the Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som in Qatar – the largest wellness resort in the Middle East – a unique take on blending modern holistic health treatments with Traditional Arabic and Islamic Medicine (TAIM) has resulted in sleep-promoting rituals like no other. Through TAIM healing

practices and herbal remedies, the resort weaves these philosophies into a 360-degree approach that aims to treat the problems from every angle: through great movement, quality nutrition, and both inner and outer healing that can lead to educated, sustained lifestyle changes for guests. They even offer a specific “Stress Reset & Burnout Recovery” retreat that aims to nix fatigue and exhaustion.

**CREATING A BED OF ROSES**

One of the first hotels to take note of the benefits of sleep-focused offerings for guests was the Westin Hotels & Resorts. The brand first launched their Heavenly® Beds back in 1999, and with that, kicked off a worldwide reputation for being “Best in Bed”. These original beds were conceived by Barry Sternlicht, the former chairman and CEO of the Westin’s parent company at the time, Starwood Hotels & Resorts. When Sternlicht saw data suggesting that guests were feeling tired and uncomfortable after a stay at his Westin hotels, they began exploring mattresses from across the world, and testing every single one out. The result? The bed that was,



essentially, the pioneer of the “dreamy hotel bed” becoming a part of a hotel brand’s key offerings – and in doing so, waking up the rest of the industry to its potential. Since then, the Westin – part of Marriott International, including Marriott Bonvoy – has developed a following so loyal to their beds that when they offered guests the chance to buy their own for their homes, people jumped at the chance. More than 500,000 of the Westin’s Heavenly® Beds have since been sold from their online store, and the range even includes a Heavenly® Dog Bed for four-legged friends.

This spring, the Westin unveiled the next generation of their Heavenly® Bed. With plush-top mattresses with innovative silver fibre weave, layers of temperature-regulating gel-infused memory foam, high-quality hypoallergenic materials, biophilic design principles, and fresh charcoal blankets, sateen linens, and a cloud-like feel, the new beds are sure to reinvigorate guests. But the Westin isn’t stopping there. Recognising that bad sleep is also keenly related to one’s environment and wider habits, the brand is on a mission to help guests enhance their overall well-being in the pursuit of better sleep wherever they go, and really listen to their feedback.

“In a culture that has long glorified busyness and productivity, Westin knows that a good night’s sleep is paramount to guests’ overall well-being, which is why our iconic Heavenly® Bed has resonated with travellers for decades. Understanding

**TOP RIGHT:** The 9h ninehours woman Shinjuku capsule hotel in Tokyo, Japan

**BELOW:** A room at Premier Inn, where the brand is so dedicated to ensuring guests get quality sleep that they’ve enlisted the help of a sleep expert

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Excess blue light from screens, or “doomscrolling”, before bed has been linked to poorer sleep quality



IMAGES: YHWA HANNA; PREMIER INN

**DREAMY DESTINATIONS PUTTING QUALITY SLEEP FIRST**

Looking for a great spot in which to rest your head, or a retreat that’ll help you leave feeling restored and well-rested? Here are some of the Middle East locations that can help you do that.

**1.) Rosewood Abu Dhabi**

The property has recently launched “Revive in Retreat” – a three-day experience that includes a dream-catcher massage, sound healing session, and Antidote Sleep Journey treatment, with the choice of an IV Therapy Booster or a one-hour personal training session to help boost energy.

**2.) Six Senses Zighy Bay**

The five-star brand boasts a “Sleep with Six Senses programme”. The resort’s eco-friendly Oman location, an integrated holistic haven, has recently appointed a new director of well-being, alongside the launch of a new Beach Sanctuary.

**3.) Westin Hotels & Resorts**

The newly-upgraded Heavenly® Bed can be enjoyed at The Westin Dubai Mina Seyahi, which recently completed an extensive three-year refurbishment project that has resulted in a soothing aesthetic, intended to make you feel like you’re in a cozy yet luxurious mansion.

**4.) Banyan Tree AlUla**

One of Saudi Arabia’s best places for astro-tourism, AlUla offers visitors the chance to switch off from the noise of the city with some star-gazing – a perfect night-time activity to wind down with, before a peaceful sleep in this unique and quiet desert oasis.

**5.) Sha Emirates**

Set to open in 2026, SHA Wellness Clinic’s second-ever international location and the first in the Middle East will be the “world’s first healthy-living island”.

The renowned Spanish brand’s expertise on sleep issues fuses technology and pathology for a curative approach.

**6.) Premier Inn Middle East**

The brand’s Premier Inn Beds, famous for their comfort, have been revamped, and can be enjoyed in any of their seven hotels in Dubai, two in Abu Dhabi, or two in Doha.

**7.) Zulal Wellness Resort**

Guests seeking extra peace, quiet, and reflection can book a Serenity Grand Deluxe Room distanced from the body of the resort for more quiet, with pyjamas, special bedding, and a journal provided.

**7.) Sleep ‘n fly**

Need a quick snooze while in transit at Dubai International Airport’s Terminal 3? These sleep pods and cabins can be rented per hour, and have showers too.

the devoted fanbase the legacy bed has garnered over the years, our goal was to listen and carefully review every aspect of the guest and associate experience, ensuring each update was both intentional and impactful,” said Brian Povinelli, Marriott International’s senior vice president and global head of marketing and brand.

**Getting into bed with a holistic, lifestyle-centered approach**

Indeed, going beyond the bed seems to be the key to getting better shut-eye, whether we’re in a hotel or at home. With the demands of a busy modern lifestyle, and the increasingly blurred boundaries exacerbated by our increasing use of and dependence on technology, many people fail to maintain good “sleep hygiene”: a term developed as far back as the 1970s to refer to the behavioural and environmental practices one can follow to create better conditions for sleep.

“People are ‘too busy’ to prioritise sleep. In a bid to get everything done, the last thing a lot of us do before bed is tidy the kitchen, or send one last

email. These are things which will tell our bodies it isn’t time for bed yet,” says Shore. “As children, we have good bedtime routines that involve going to bed and waking up at a similar time every day, with a wind-down routine before bed. As adults, we [tend to] forget the importance of this. A good routine should allow the mind and body to calm down from the day, and prompt the body that it is time for sleep. A 30-minute wind-down routine could be reading a book, doing breathing exercises, or simply watching some TV so long as it is nothing too engaging – re-runs of shows you’ve already seen are good,” she explains. “This should be done in a cooler, darker room that will prompt your body to start producing the right hormones to help you drift off to sleep easier. By keeping the same sleep/wake time, this also helps to regulate the production of the right sleep/wake hormones at the right time,” she says. Shore explains that doing so can help the body repair itself physically, mentally, and emotionally. Among the

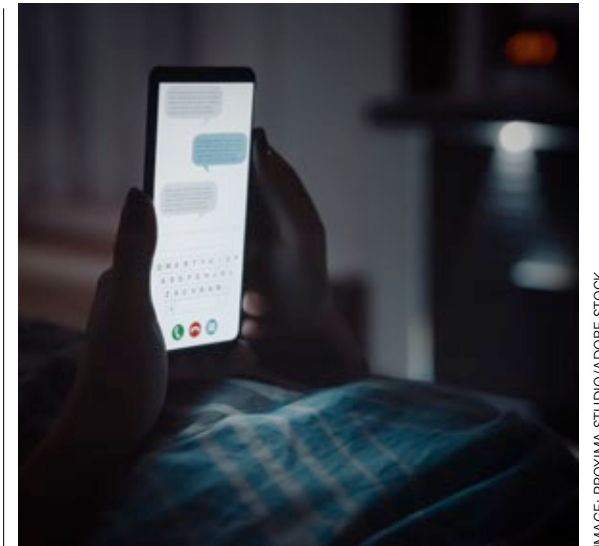


IMAGE: PROXIMA STUDIO/ADOBE STOCK

factors we should consider in creating a good sleep environment – including maintaining the right temperature and light, and not exercising too close to bedtime – we should also take into consideration our night-time content consumption habits. “There are many articles which say we shouldn’t be using our devices before bed due to →



**QUICK TIPS FOR FIVE-STAR SHUT-EYE**

- If there were a recipe for a great night's sleep, these are the key ingredients that Shore would add:
1. A solid sleep/wake routine, with little change in time.
  2. A 30-minute wind-down ritual.
  3. Keeping the room cool enough to not disturb your body temperature.
  4. Exposing yourself to bright natural light in the morning, and sticking to dark, dull light at night-time.
  5. A comfy bed!

**TOP RIGHT:** Hannah Shore, sleep expert for Silentnight and sleep consultant for Premier Inn

**BELOW:** Hotel brands are working to ensure premium conditions for sleep

blue light. However, so long as we are using the eye comfort mode setting, which swaps out the harsh blue tones for subtle yellow tones, that blue light has very little impact on our sleep. What we should be concentrating on is the *type* of content we are consuming. If we are watching something very stimulating – with action that can make you jump, or with loud noises, or that is very addictive that makes you want to watch just one more episode – this will keep the brain engaged, and will produce wake-promoting hormones. However, watching reruns of your favourites – where you know exactly what happens – or listening to music at low levels, or reading something you have read before, can help you shut off all those thoughts that can be running around your head.”

It is perhaps within this idea that the magic of a luxurious hotel stay can truly emerge. When we travel, whether for business or leisure, we tend to shake up our routines and be so focused on the new experiences around us that we don't fall to our regular habits. While for some, this can mean more discomfort due to being exposed to a bad bed, noisy environment, or the lack of our home conveniences, in the *right* environment, it can mean giving ourselves the chance to put our daily stressors aside and feel taken care of.



“Many guests have expressed their appreciation for the relaxing ambiance of our rooms,” says Jon Leonard, director of property for Premier Inn Middle East. “This, along with the quietness within the hotel – attributed to the efforts we've made to minimise noise disturbances – creates an environment where guests can get good quality sleep. [We have also found] that staying in a hotel can mitigate external disruptions from partners and children (by 22 per cent), or environmental factors such as climate control (by 36 per cent). And surely, the best part about a

hotel stay is our sumptuous breakfasts the next morning!” Leonard adds.

Premier Inn has made the effort to line their AC ducts and add in vibration isolators to dampen air noise in guest rooms, insulate drainage pipes to muffle water sounds, ensure doorways have good seals to block sound and light to the corridors, and incorporate special acoustic walls into some rooms to reduce the noise between them. In May 2024, they also introduced their new Premier Inn Bed in their hotel rooms, working with Silentnight to do so. It's a dreamy partnership: Premier Inn is the UK's largest hotel brand, and Silentnight is the UK's most trusted bed brand – and this new bedding has been rolled out across their Middle East properties as well. Their new mattress has been crafted with breathable materials to help keep people cooler during sleep (and in doing so, aligning with the body's natural temperature changes during sleep), special foam to give extra comfort, and a 1,000 pocket-

**Staying in a quiet hotel can help to mitigate external disruptions that can affect sleep**

zoned spring system to support all body shapes, as well as the option to choose between firm and soft pillows to find the perfect support for each individual.

With poor sleep having been linked to a change in social behaviours – sleep-deprived individuals are more likely to struggle with social interactions, leading to other issues caused by loneliness, a lack of healthy relationships, and increased workplace stress – it's clear that being conscious about improving our sleep habits, whether at home or while we travel, is an important priority. And with so many hotels making the effort to help us do so, in ways we can experience both in their rooms and beyond, perhaps a happier, healthier, more well-rested future for more of us needn't be just a dream. **BT**



IMAGES: LIGHTFIELD STUDIOS, PAULAPHOTO/ADOBE STOCK, PREMIER INN