

Can a bed be worth £100,000?

Olivia Palamountain flies to Sweden to test out the Rolex of beds, which promises nights of unbridled pleasure

Sorry to break it to you, but Brits just aren't that great in bed. According to the National Sleep Survey more than half of the UK population has trouble nodding off and four in five complain of disturbed sleep. The accumulated impact of dodgy sleep on our waking hours is a real issue, affecting everything from health and productivity to weight and longevity.

Before you start downloading whale sounds or furiously counting sheep, a man in central Sweden has an altogether more practical solution. Marcus Ryde is the sixth generation director of Hästens, a company that has been making beds since 1852, marrying traditional craftsmanship with science and covering it in its signature blue and white check.

Ryde believes in starting with the basics. "A bed is the most important piece of furniture you will ever buy," he explains with frank Swedish gravitas, "and the right one will change your life."

I should hope so, with an entry-level price of more than £5,000, spiralling into six figures at the top end. The latest model, Vividus, rings in at £100,000, which is more than three times the UK average income. This beast is a world first, a triumph of engineering and design, owned by rock stars, royalty and the Hollywood elite. ▶







► “Vividus started life as a creative experiment, one that was never supposed to take-off,” admits Ryde. “We removed all boundaries and let imagination take flight in a challenge to make the best bed in the world.”

The magic happens inside the Hästens factory in Köping, home to some 150 craftsmen who produce every one of the 11 models by hand. In one room a gigantic mound of tightly coiled horsehair lies waiting to be tufted into layers. Another section sees carpenters join planes of slow-growing pine together with beautiful

dovetail joints, while mattresses are precisely stuffed full with endless layers of cotton, horsehair and flax. Upstairs women with nimble fingers stitch and snip all day long, stopping every so often to give each other a well-deserved massage.

But even these artisans don’t come close to getting down with the Vividus. Only the most skilled employees are invited to work on this bed, with training lasting more than a year under master craftsman Jan-Erik Leander. He spent more than three years fine-tuning this ►



Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, and his sleep was interrupted

► bed, which he says was the ultimate test of “patience, practice and discipline.”

The Vividus is something of a Hästens celebrity, treated with reverence and designated its own section within the atelier, where Leander and his elite force spend more than 320 man hours on each one – the equivalent of four months’ labour. Built entirely to spec (following personal consultation) from 210 kilos of natural materials, each bed is a work of art (and not the Tracey kind). Let me give you an idea of the obsessive attention to detail: the fabric that covers each Vividus must come from the same roll, hung for exactly three days to allow the weave to breathe; springs are hand-knotted seven times, and the finished product is signed with a flourish by the craftsman who finished it. If even a minute error is made, the entire process is started from scratch.

“You don’t see things being built in such a way very often,” Leander says fondly. I’m sold: the level of passion, skill and integrity is awesome. If the thought of spending £100,000 on a bed is enough to give you sleepless nights, consider this: in an average lifetime we spend 229,961 hours snoozing, which equates to 26 years or basically one third of our lives. Take this into account and the ROI starts to look slightly less absurd. After seeing the crafting process, I started to become convinced the Vividus would give me superpowers. I’m ready to sell my parents just to get my hands on one; that’s what a factory full of obsessive craftsmen will do to a girl.

Over at the Hästens flagship store in Stockholm, it’s

finally time to experience the bed for myself. Vividus is by far the most expensive model, but according to Ryde, that “doesn’t mean it is the best for you” (despite having the pick of the bunch, he sleeps on a “Superior”).

Customers are recommended to trial each of the models before making a final decision, starting from the bottom up. Tempting as it is to spin a Linda Evangelista moment and declare that I won’t get into bed unless it costs at least £100,000, I follow orders. Under custom lighting and a curated sleep playlist designed by “audio architects”, I hop from one bed to the next, getting horizontal on different mattress designs (firm, medium, soft) while staff observe the rhythm of my body in repose, suggesting the most appropriate combinations for me. Each bed is divine in its own way, eliciting the kind of sounds usually reserved for alternative bedroom activities. Then I hit the jackpot.

Cocooned in the 2000T on a medium mattress, it’s as if my soulmate has been incarnated as a divan. With a sigh I leave to make my final resting stop in the Vividus. Believe me, this bed has an energy of its own. Like an embrace that embodies strength, seduction and style, it’s one hell of a Casanova. Writhing and wriggling, I want this bed to be the one for me. After all, I have expensive tastes. After 10 minutes of soul-searching I make the call. Vividus, you are beautiful, but my heart belongs to the 2000T (a snip at £30,000). Diving straight back into the arms of my darling, I’m struck with a new problem: Hästens might have found my perfect bed, but I suspect it’ll be a harder task getting me to leave it. B