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DESIGN

Adult Bunk Beds: A Snuggly Space-Saving Option

With chic designs and queen-size mattresses, double-decker beds are being marketed to grown-ups, as our writer happily reports



LOFTY DREAMS San Clemente, Calif., designer Becki Owens layered queen-sized mattresses in the guest room of a mountain home in Woodland Hills, Utah. PHOTO: REBEKAH WESTOVER

By Lexi Mainland

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ABOUT SIX WEEKS before my daughter’s due date last year, the nesting instinct struck. We were on a family ski trip in Vermont and had just dismounted from a sleigh pulled by a draft horse named Jacques. We had clopped, quite literally, over a river and through the wood.

“We need built-in bunk beds,” I told my husband, who nodded under his parka. He looked relieved. I had finally hatched a plan to make space for the new baby. As it was, our second bedroom barely fit the toddler bed our near-4-year-old had wildly outgrown. My solution: Create a homey new bedroom with a double-decker bed to accommodate our eldest and the occasional guest. Burrowing under tartan blankets in a snowy grove had uncorked memories of every bunk bed I’d ever curled into—at sleepovers and summer camp, in cabins at national parks, in dorm rooms and far-flung hostels.

Back in Brooklyn, I hired a cabinet maker to demolish a tiny room off our foyer and build twin bunks where a closet and bookshelves stood. We lacked a proper guest room, so I included perks for grown-ups: outlets at each level, lots of head and leg room, LED lights to reduce heat in close quarters, plush foam mattresses and, most crucial, strength. After steel bolts were set into the walls, the top bunk was pronounced ready for a 350-pound adult or five jumping children.

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

Would you sleep in a bunk bed, even if it was queen-sized?

Since undertaking this project, I have discovered I am far from alone in my fondness for bunk rooms.

“The market is huge and increasing,” said Becki Owens, an interior designer in San Clemente,

Calif. Her clients request bunk-bed guest rooms, too. “If the design is elevated, they’re not just for kids.” A recent project features queen bunks painted matte black with a Deco-esque brass railing. At over 140,000 likes, a photo of the room was one of her most popular Instagram posts.

Isabel Gillies, author of “Cozy: The Art of Arranging Yourself in the World,” (*Harper Wave*), believes true comfort comes when emotional and physical conditions harmonize. Her own kids took to their bunks like creatures in the nocturnal house of a zoo. “It’s not a normal bed, it’s a habitat,” she said. “It has a roof, it has a climate. You settle into every crevice and create a cocoon.”

Retailers now offer free-standing versions in sophisticated designs, in sizes up to queen. My queen-over-queen fantasy is a rustic affair from La Lune Collection, a Wisconsin furniture maker beloved by Ralph Lauren. Handmade from gnarled poplar logs, it offers a mix of chic and nostalgia. Aesthetically opposite: Resource Furniture sells extra-long twin bunks in lustrous lacquer finishes. The company estimates 30% of their sales are for adult use.

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Given that bunk beds originated in medieval times as sleeping quarters

for the destitute, and have been fixtures in military barracks and prisons for generations, it is curious how they became a design must for the hygge home. “It’s all in the details,” said Jessica Helgerson, an interior designer in Portland, Ore. “A bunk bed can be like a crib or a cage, or it can be a peaceful and cheerful space saver.” Sans guard rails and with ladders secure but leaning, her designs skew relaxed and adult.

Marie Turner Carson of M. Elle Design in Pacific Palisades, Calif., a firm that has created bunk rooms that fit four full-size beds in stacks of two, said the ingredients for great bunks are consistent across décor styles: a niche shelf for a water glass and book, a wall sconce, the biggest mattress you can fit and luxurious, grown-up linens. She offers extra credit for privacy drapes that pull closed across each berth and stresses that versatility is key. “A kid can sleep there, grow there, and an adult can be equally comfortable.”

In our home, the popular place to ensconce oneself for sleeping, reading or snuggling is my son’s bunk bed, with its bright white paint, Baltic birch ladder and porthole windows that let in gauzy shafts of light. I took over the bottom bunk in the bed’s first few months of existence, setting up the baby bassinet next to me like a sidecar. And guests, including my septuagenarian mother, have declared it their ideal nest, gamely tolerating a 5-year-old overhead. “It’s like a capsule hotel room in Japan,” a friend observed upon his first stay, “but free.”

Recently I climbed the ladder myself to arrange a freshly washed blanket. It was a quiet, drizzly afternoon that hinted at autumn. I closed my eyes for what was meant to be a moment and fell blissfully asleep.

Fit for Queens

Roomy and sophisticated bunk beds available in the U.S.

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Clockwise from top left: Madelynn Bunk Bed, \$449 for full over full, allmodern.com; Abridged Bunk Bed, \$1,798 for twin over full, crateandbarrel.com; Rustic Bunk Bed #4526L, \$4,775 for queen over queen, lalunecollection.com; Keegan Low Bunk Bed, \$2,349 for full over full, rhhbabyandchild.com

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