



## Guest Privileges

*23 tips for designing visitor-friendly homes by Country's Best Cabins editorial staff*

Whether your idea of the perfect getaway is a four-star hotel or a quaint bed and breakfast, you can incorporate some of those characteristics into your cabin — creating the ideal retreat for you and your guests.

### **Start Early.**

To build a guest-friendly abode, think about your future visitors during the initial design stage. Start by asking the big questions: How often will you host guests? How many people will visit at a time? Will that include children or older folks? How long will they stay? There's a big difference between inviting a couple for the weekend and hosting your parents, college-aged kids or grandchildren for the summer.

### **Part Time.**

If you only plan to host visitors a few times a year, you can probably get away with a smaller guest room — perhaps something that doubles as a sewing room or home office. Just be sure to incorporate plenty of storage, so you can keep the room uncluttered and comfortable. Otherwise, your guests will feel like they're sleeping in a closet.

### **Think Ahead.**

Hosts with frequent visitors will benefit from carefully planning the size and location of their guest spaces. One simple tactic is to clone your master suite and place it on the ground level. This way, your guests will enjoy the same amenities and privacy that you do. And if you plan on retiring in this home, you may later decide to give your knees a break and move into the ground-floor suite. Oversized dimensions and sleeper capabilities double the functionality of this furniture piece. Credit: Storehouse photo.

### **Extended Stays.**

To accommodate long-term guests — say, for the summer or winter holidays — consider a walkout basement, complete with a full bath, lots of closet space and maybe even a kitchenette or a fireplace. If there's a teenager involved, don't forget the cable hookup!

### **New Parents.**

If you have guests with young children, aim for a room that's big enough for a crib and changing table — or, for toddlers, a kiddie cot or twin-sized air mattress. To host multiple families at once, design a bunkroom where all the kids can “crash” together — that is, if they decide to sleep. (Our advice: Place this room away from the master suite, or invest in some trusty earplugs.) Also plan for a “potty” close by.

### **Small Fries.**

If your home is on the smaller side, this may be too grand a plan. Not to worry. Most kids love “camping” in the living room or on an enclosed porch. Just give them sleeping bags, flashlights and a midnight snack — they'll think it's a treat.

### **Drop It!**

One thing's certain: Guests come with stuff — and then some. When designing your log home, plan for various “drop-off zones” in the foyer, kitchen and guest rooms. Take advantage of closets, cubbies and furniture with built in storage. Even better, tack on a mudroom with durable flooring (such as “pre-scuffed” reclaimed timber) to accommodate those wet ski boots or inflatable rafts.

### **Curb Appeal.**

Even if no one came to visit, you'd want your cabin to have a beautiful entryway with easy access, good lighting and wonderful landscaping. To go the extra mile, add a separate driveway or garage bay to clarify where guests should park. In rainy or snowy climates, an overhang above the door is a must. If it works with your design, a portico provides cover for unloading luggage, skis or groceries.

### **Open-Minded.**

The most guest-friendly floor plans are open ones, which offer plenty of room for traffic flow and conversation areas. Divide the main level into major “activity zones” (areas for dining, watching TV, playing games and so forth), so everyone can do their own thing while staying in the same vicinity. Use furniture groupings anchored by area rugs to create these separate spaces.

### **Smart Seats.**

Providing enough seating for guests requires more than an oversized sectional. Plan your space to accommodate a comfortable array of everyday seating (couch, loveseat, chair-and-a-half or recliner) and several tables for placing beverages and small plates. Instead of putting an extra bookshelf or a carved bear statue in the corner, add a decorative armchair or a stack of Asian-inspired floor cushions. For extra flexibility, consider a rolling bar, sleep sofa, ottomans with built-in storage and nesting tables.

### **Kitchen Talk.**

In the kitchen, an island or peninsula with extra seating allows guests to hang out with the chef during

meal prep. They're also great for serving buffet-style dinners. For longer-term guests, reserve pantry space for them so they feel comfortable buying and preparing some of their own food. Don't forget staples such as paper plates and napkins, which make snacking a breeze.

**Privacy, Please.** Although an open floor plan is designed to bring people together, it's also nice to give your guests a little independence. Think creatively about where doors are really needed. For example, you may design a bathroom with two doors — one to the hallway and another to the guest bedroom. When visitors are in town, keep the hallway door locked. Also give guests keys to the house in case they go out for a private walk or trip to the coffee shop.

### **Visitor's Center.**

The dos and don'ts of great guest rooms:

- Do provide a luggage rack, bench, small table or a sturdy chair for unpacking.
- Don't clutter your room with knickknacks or heirlooms that guests may worry about moving.
- Leave bedside tables clear (except for a lamp and an alarm clock) for personal items.
- Do offer plenty of closet and drawer space, a hair dryer, a hamper, an iron and a small ironing board.
- Do make the bed inviting with super-soft linens, seasonable blankets, a selection of down and foam pillows, and a featherbed or comfy mattress pad. ☑ Do choose window coverings that offer privacy and block early morning sunlight.
- Don't make your guests sweat. Design a space with easy-to-open windows (bonus points for cross ventilation) and a ceiling fan. ☑ Do include a reading chair, floor lamp and telephone. If your space and budget allow, add a small desk for checking email or writing postcards.
- Don't skimp on towels. Plush sets in a variety of sizes impress guests — and last longer.
- Do offer respite for insomniacs in the form of playing cards, a small TV or easy reading (think magazines or a book of short stories).
- = Don't forget the little touches like a nightlight, a glass pitcher with water glasses and maybe even a chocolate mint at bedtime.

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