

INTERIORS

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KEEP THE HOME
FIRES
BURNING

Whether it is a traditional surround or an ultra modern wood-burner, the fireplace is the ultimate symbol of home. From the crackling of a real fire to the flickering light conjured up by the latest models, there's something undeniably enticing about curling up next to a fireplace, no matter what the style. Here's how to achieve the art of cosiness

IMAGE ABOVE Dean's Croft Clearburn Slimline Stove, prices depend on installation, available at Cambridge Stoves, are handmade by craftsmen at Dean Forge in Devon and make a unique feature in any living space.



FOCUS ON THE FLAME

Ever since primeval times, fire and man have been intrinsically linked. While most of us don't rely on a fire for cooking or warmth any more, it is still an important and desirable part of a home. Whether you love a period fireplace or a contemporary installation – a fire oozes character and is a crucial architectural focal point.

Ben Pellegrini, director of Cambridge Stoves, experts in wood burning stoves, comments: "Man has an obsession with fire. There's a Danish concept – called

hygge – which is said to make homes nicer and people happier. It roughly translates as 'cosiness' and having a fire in your home is part of this concept. People also like the thought of having a fire – particularly wood burners – in their home because they are often energy efficient. Burley stoves are among the most efficient – they have a contemporary look, so they fit the style of modern houses. Dean Stoves are also popular. The Dartmoor has a huge glass window so you can see the flames and it is

also quite slim making it a practical choice as it fits into most existing hearths. We have something available to fit everyone's needs."

A must for older properties is an impressive, traditional surround that speaks volumes of cosy winter evenings indoors. If your property no longer contains its original fireplace, seek out a classic style from Haddonstone, which stocks a selection of cast-stone fireplaces, mantels and chimney-piece surrounds, from simple and stylish to ornate and decorative in design.

Get the heart-warming effect: ABOVE The Cocoon Aeris Fireplace, from £2,370, at Go Modern, is a minimalist bioethanol fire, which will give your room the wow factor. TOP RIGHT Morso's wood burning stove, from £1,183, gives focus to a living space. RIGHT Local Cambridge suppliers Cade Wood Burning Stove Installations can fit a wide range of fires, such as this modern Contura 556G with soapstone top, prices vary.



install a wood-burning stove. The trend has changed from traditional to contemporary, free-standing stoves that are a focal point."

Go Modern stocks a range of minimalist bioethanol fires from select international brands. The high-end designs – from Cocoon and Decoflame – feature flue-less designs, that don't require a connection to gas or electricity. Bioethanol is a green fuel from sustainable sources, emitting no smoke or smell, and generating only small amounts of carbon dioxide and water vapour when burning. Simple in style, they provide spaces with a superb focal point and are simple to operate, providing instant heat.

Cambridge-based Cade Wood Burning Stove Installations supplies and fits stoves throughout Cambridgeshire and the surrounding areas. Director Nigel Cade comments: "We mostly install convection Swedish Contura stoves, known for their excellent heat distribution. Considerable savings can be made on heating costs with one of these. Environmentally friendly, burning wood produces the same amount of carbon dioxide as wood decomposing. Choose a high-efficiency stove, burn fuel sourced from sustainable managed woodlands and you are contributing to a cleaner environment."

He continues: "Inexpensive, sustainable wood is generally cheaper than volatile fossil fuels. Aesthetically attractive, your wood

burner can become a stylish traditional or contemporary focal point, allowing the seductive power of the flames to enhance the overall comfort level of your home."

For more options on environmentally friendly options, Eco Installer based in Ely, can also help. It has a range of wood-burning and multi-fuel stoves on display in its showroom and can supply and install premium-space heating stoves, as well as stoves which can contribute to the central heating and hot water through either a thermal store or a heating innovations panel.

"Multi-fuel stoves burn wood, wood pellets and coal, and can be used for cooking and heating your home," Eco Installer advises. "They are a cost-effective alternative for space and water heating using renewable or fossil-fuel heat sources. Burning wood from a renewable source is an easy way of protecting the environment. Nothing is more warming than curling up snug in front of your wood burner." ➤

"IT'S NEVER BEEN MORE FASHIONABLE TO INSTALL A WOOD-BURNING STOVE"



By contrast, a wood burner can also add oodles of character. Experts in modern wood-burners, Morsø UK offers elegant styles, such as the Inserts Stove Collection. Managing director, Declan Walsh, says: "It's never been more popular or fashionable to



C O S Y C O R N E R S

Once you have chosen your style of burner or fireplace, then the next step is to create a cosy tableau around it for the perfect inviting space. Essential to the look and feel of your fireside is the seating you choose.

Black Orchid London's button-back and wing chairs give a traditional, refined feel, while Raft Furniture's Havana armchair is perfect for the classic gentlemen's club style.

For showstopper pieces – such as the mustard-yellow Tempo leather sofa and the dove-grey suede Marlene fireside chair – visit Natuzzi Italia. Amy Howard, marketing manager, advises: "For a truly cosy atmosphere, plan the space from the floor upwards. A soft, deep rug adds welcome texture as well as taking the chill off the floor. A lot of time is spent curled

up at home on a chilly evening, so it's wise to choose comfortable, practical seating, but this doesn't mean compromising on style. A sofa or armchair in deep rich reds or mustard yellows offer the perfect marriage of comfort and panache. Accessories are key to add to the opulent feel of a space; more is more. Decorative vases and ornamental pieces bring an instant luxe look."

Meanwhile Rick Petini, creative director and managing director of Delcor, says for maximum impact, it's all about the statement sofa.

"They carry bold patterns with aplomb and can be a great way to unify a decorating scheme," he says. "Don't be afraid of a pattern clash. Spots and stripes or mismatched florals give a contemporary feel

and work well provided the overall colour scheme is kept simple and complementary."

If budget allows choose a design classic, such as the Eames Lounge Chair available at Wharfside, or Ercol's Nest Sofa by Paola Navone, that will never go out of fashion.

Ercol's creative director Rachel Galbraith adds: "Everyone can imagine the pleasure of settling down in a favourite chair by a warm fire on a chilly night or finding a cosy corner to read a book. At Ercol we understand the need for chairs which are versatile, stylish and comfortable, whether you are relaxing in the evening or working by day. The Marino is a perfect example of a chair which offers all those ingredients, a classic style, works with all other pieces, and is beautifully made so it will last for generations."

Cuddle up: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The mustard leather Tempo sofa from Natuzzi, from £3,600, has a luxe, opulent feel. The Nest sofa designed by Paola Navone for Ercol, from £5,395, will stand the test of time. Set the tone with Raft's herringbone pure wool throw in grey, £59. Delcor's sumptuous Bliss Chair comes in a range of jewel tones, such as this burnt orange, from £954. Raft's Havana Armchair, £1,605, meanwhile, is a classic choice.



LEDGE LOVELIES

From rustic log baskets to ceramic lanterns, there's a myriad of ways of dressing your mantelpiece and hearth. Pastel Lane is a one-stop shop for tea-light holders, antique-style lanterns and lace-effect candle pots, which can all combine for a charming effect.

For a range of modern candle-holders, copper storage baskets and mirrors, check out Out There Interiors. Founder Jenny Hurren says: "Nothing says winter like a crackling, cosy fire. For the ultimate relaxed setting, place an oversized armchair next to the fireplace and layer up chunky knitted throws, indulgent faux fur cushions, and rich autumnal colourways. Add opulent metallic tones for a modern touch. My top tip is to add cinnamon sticks or essential oils to the kindling to fill the home with the most wonderful scents."

Giving her take on creating ambience is home-accessories queen Gisela Graham: "In winter, at my house, the sitting room fire is nearly always lit. It is infinitely nicer and more comforting than central heating - my cats like it, too! I always keep logs in a basket beside the fire ready to use, which look lovely and the smell reminds me of winters in Germany. And, of course, there are always lots of candles."



The AGA Ellesmere, from local wood burning stove specialists Fireplace Products. In addition to a showroom in Rayleigh in Essex, Fireplace Products are also one of the UK's largest online fireplace, cooker, flues and wood burning stove suppliers (01268 200139; www.fireplaceproducts.co.uk)



SOFTLY DOES IT

Like any interiors scheme, accessorising is key. Layer sofas and chairs with plenty of soft pillows and faux-fur throws for maximum comfort factor.

Ragged Rose's jewel-coloured velvet cushions and blankets give a feminine touch, while Dash & Albert Europe's muted linen prints are ideal for a mix-and-match effect. Bright prints, such as shown on the cushions at Hibou Home and Aspace, are perfect for an otherwise neutral room

- bringing interest and colour to a pared-back scheme.

For chic stripes, subtle patterns and soft, sheepskin finishes, stock up at Scandi Living. "A neutral colour palette is the trademark of Scandinavian interiors," says founder and director Linda Swarbrick. "I love the striking looks that can be achieved with such simplicity. Grey is so elegant and can be amazingly warm and inviting when used in the correct way."



Softly does it. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Aspace has a range of primary-coloured bright cushions, blankets and throws for the home, from £25. Dash & Albert's Petit Diamond Rug, prices vary, in platinum gives a sophisticated touch. Scandi Living's wool Style Throw, £119, is just the thing to get you through the winter nights. Add the comfort factor with Ragged Rose's velvet floral cushions, £25 each.



FANCY FOOT WORK



Whether you opt for sleek wood or carpet, the flooring you choose is fundamental to bringing an intimate fireside look together. Kersaint Cobb is renowned for its sisal, jute and coir carpets. Its new Caribbean Days' 100% wool collection is based on natural, earthy tones and complements neutral palettes.

Wood flooring, such as the new parquet wood collection from Bisazza adds a sophisticated touch. Warm it up with a statement rug, like the new vibrant Ted Baker collection available at Modern Rugs.

Ben Dale, managing director, gives his insight: "When choosing a rug, go for the largest size and the best-quality rug you can afford. Avoid 'the floating rug' look in which you have a small rug touching no furniture. As well as adding colour or pattern, a good rug will create an



area to bring your furniture together, so it should always reach or go under furniture."

Urbane Living has glamorous pieces, such as its Fading World Blue Night Rug and Vanilla Dream. Managing director Adam Robertson comments: "Think about the choice of material and its suitability for the space. Area rugs are a great way to finish a room as they bring colours and styles together whilst adding comfort and warmth. Consider the impact you want from your rug then choose colours that either blend seamlessly to unify a room or create a statement to define your space. Sumptuous deep piles will add a sense of luxury, too."

Barker & Barker's bright graphic patterns and deep pile rugs will give the wow factor to any fireside. Janet Dixon, chief designer,

"GO FOR THE LARGEST AND BEST QUALITY YOU CAN AFFORD"

suggests choosing a hand-knotted rug for its longevity and says that planning your room in advance is key. "Think about how you want to use the rug. Is it going to make a statement or does it need to blend into the space?" she says. "Whatever you decide, make sure you love the colour and design. Neutral colours make a space feel relaxed, while vibrant colours create a focal point."



LIGHT IT UP

Lighting is central to creating the right atmosphere for the ultimate comfortable fireside space. Add in variations, such as table lamps, pendants and wall lights, so you can create differing effects depending on the time of day or night.

Simon Wallis-Smith, director of Fritz Fryer, agrees: "It's important to have multiple layers of light in areas such as the living room, with the principle source being dimmable. This enables you to set the right mood for the room."

Meanwhile the lighting collection from new brand J Adams & Co draws inspiration from England's historic design archives. Box wall lights and lantern-style pieces are imbued with antique styling and age-old surface techniques, all sympathetically combined with the latest lighting technology to suit the modern home.

Quirky chandeliers, like those available at Besselink and Jones, and the overhanging Arco lamp at Flos, give immediate impact to a room, while stylish side lamps – check out the range available at Dar Lighting – are essential for evening reading.

Finally, make sure your colour palette is on-trend to create the perfect backdrop to your fireside. Combine dark and light shades and consider painting the chimney breast

or alcoves either side of a fireplace in a bold, statement colour.

Helen Shaw, marketing director of paint specialist Benjamin Moore UK lends her expertise: "Paint has the power to change the feel of a room more than any other element. With fireplaces often being the focal point of the room, you can create a wonderful effect by using paint colour to accentuate the feature. For a subtle scheme, use a colour a few tones darker than your main wall colour.

"Sticking to muted, greyed-off shades will help to keep the scheme feeling cosy and inviting. For a more adventurous pop of colour, select a complementary shade (complementary colours are adjacent to each other on the colour wheel, such as blue and green). The cleaner the colour, the more vibrant the effect will be – more muted shades will create a more subtle and sophisticated combination." ✘

QUIRKY CHANDELIERS GIVE IMMEDIATE IMPACT TO A ROOM



From the bottom up. TOP LEFT You can't beat soft carpet for a cosy feel, such as Kersaint Cobb's new Caribbean Days wool collection, from £34.50 per metre. TOP RIGHT Bisazza's new wood collection is just as stylish and is a sleek, modern take on classic parquet, prices vary. LEFT Sink your feet into Ted Baker's Plush Sand Rug at Modern Rugs, from £114.

Light and shade. TOP LEFT Paint specialist Benjamin Moore advises using contrasting tones around your fireplace, such as the Dark Lilac and Lavender Mist shades used here, from £17 for 0.94L. TOP RIGHT Add glamour to your space with this Osler Design Crystal Chandelier from Fritz Fryer, £7885. RIGHT The Michael Anastassiades lighting at Flos gives an architectural look, from £300.