

# Making an entrance

Take back control over your lobby — or overhaul it entirely — with these tips from **Katrina Burroughs**

Events are conspiring to turn hallways into grubby dumping grounds this winter. The perfect storm of zero visitors (so why do we even care?), plus 100 per cent occupancy, plus the ritual daily walk in fair weather and foul, equals hallway horror. It's time to take back control, survey the mounting detritus and restore order. Here are some ways to make your lobby a welcoming space again.

## Decor

The hallway is a supremely practical space when it comes to flooring and furniture, but the walls offer an opportunity for exuberance. Swathe them in gift-wrap wallpaper such as Bloomsbury Stripes by Ottoline, a turbo floral such as Lake August's Matilija or, for dog lovers, the new Fetch by Villa Nova.

If plain paintwork is your preference, go for a refresh in a rich green that reflects the natural world outdoors, or a golden yellow for winter sunshine. Dark hallways make quite the design statement, but remember that you need to tie your shoelaces, check your eyeliner and flip through your post there. So maybe don't.



Key Largo rattan hallway storage bench, £220.15, [mainefurniture.co.uk](http://mainefurniture.co.uk)

The inward face of the front door is a prime location for that flamboyant paint colour you might never choose for the exterior. And with heating bills mounting, let's start a drive to bring back the door curtain. Try a rich, berry-coloured velvet or a garden-themed print such as Sanderson's Birds & Berries from its A Celebration of the National Trust collection.

## Lights

Depending on the amount of space overhead, the hallway can be the place to push the boat out with a spectacular ceiling light. Overscale can work well as long as the rest of the decor is simple. Rather than a traditional lantern, try a vintage piece, such as the Sixties amethyst-coloured glass chandelier in the hallway of Owen Pacey, the founder of Renaissance London.

Wall lights will be a better bet if the ceiling is low. In a small corridor-like entrance choose designs that sit snugly against the wall, such as the 9cm-wide brass diffusers from Houseof.



Fetch wallpaper, £56.50 a roll, Walkies seat upholstery, £30 a metre, and bag made with Bark Life fabric, £30 a metre, [villanova.co.uk](http://villanova.co.uk)

Combine with mirrors to make the most of any natural light filtering through from landing windows and glass panels next to the door.

## Furniture

Hallway furniture is the ultimate test of designers' ingenuity and skill. Think compact living, cubed. Every piece should do at least two jobs, be super-slim, or have storage built in. Those are the rules. Bench Studio's elegant hallway mirror-shelf in a handsome walnut frame scores top marks for form and function. Urbansize is a splendid source for smart ideas for hallways — look out for its two-legged leaning consoles and low-profile U-shaped shelves. Made.com's Parvell is a 34cm-deep hallway storage cabinet with backward-slanted shelves designed for shoes. Shoe storage

merits an entire feature to itself ([here's one I made earlier](#)).

In brief, this is the burning hallway issue, particularly in winter, and has given rise to a multitude of admirable solutions, including the four-drawer shoe bench from the Costwold Co (a cushioned seat plus shoe store) and the Mayan Walnut Monks Bench from Wooden Furniture Store. Ikea's Pinnig combined coat rack and shoe shelves does a cracking job on a budget.

### Pegs

Pegs are our superpower in the fight against the nemesis of hallway clutter. Avoid the temptation of freestanding coat racks: even though they are often gorgeous sculptural shapes, they are space hogs.

If a coat rack does not sit flush against the wall, with bench and shoe storage beneath, the best solution is the oldest in the interior designer's book: a row of pegs or hooks. Great examples (proceeding from budget to "blast it, I've saved on holidays this year") include Rowen & Wren's Brana wall hook, the Hemnes hat rack from Ikea, Garden Trading's Melcombe peg rail, Store's Hambleton three-peg hook rack, the Organised Home's stylish contemporary designs and Neptune's Suffolk coat rack, an oak and painted-wood peg rail with a ledge above.

### Flooring

The traditional flooring solution to this super-high-traffic area is a hard floor, in timber or tile.



Four-drawer shoe bench, with cushion, in Sussex Storm Grey, £399, [cotswoldco.com](http://cotswoldco.com)

For a contemporary take on the classic black-and-white chequerboard try a design such as Ca' Pietra's Adam Grey encaustic tile. Moorish-style patterns such as Petra by Otto are also well suited to narrow hallways. Both of these popular patterns are lively enough to hide dirt and the motifs trick the eye to create the feeling of a larger space. Once treated with sealant, they are robust and moppable, although grout can be a mud trap.

For something smoother and cosier underfoot — and easily washable — there's Harvey Maria's pretty patterned luxury vinyl, which will also soften hallway acoustics.

### Rugs and runners

Decorative runners absorb noise and a striped runner can take the eye right from the front door to the top of the stairs, creating a pleasant sensation of flow. Among the most attractive options are wool flatweaves



Edinburgh coat rack, in oak with bronze hooks, £110, [neptune.com](http://neptune.com)

from Roger Oates and tufted loop carpets from Crucial Trading (the latter's Audrey Sunrise will light up a dark lobby), as well as Ella Doran's new limited edition Waterlake runner, a painterly pattern in wool, from Alternative Flooring. Fibre's new herringbone sisal runner and Kersaint Cobb's ones in herringbone or stripe offer hardwearing options. But do be aware that wool and sisal are natural fibres and should be cleaned by dry methods (vacuuming). And how much sense does that make in your hallway?

Weaver Green's textiles, made from plastic bottles, can be machine-washed. They now come in extra-long lengths of up to 8m. Final mud-busting tip: instead of a welcome mat, have coir matting cut to fit and laid wall-to-wall for the first couple of metres of the entryway. You're welcome. ■