



# Embracing A Digital Detox At Rancho La Puerta

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## A Peaceful Place For A Digital Detox



Sitting just a stone's throw from the San Diego border crossing into Mexico, tucked away in the Tecate Mountains, are 4,000 acres of tranquility. With its lush landscape and marble yogi statues gracing the manicured lawn, the Rancho La Puerta wellness spa is the optimal place to unwind and unplug. In fact, that's the entire purpose of this retreat, rated among the top five international destination spas by *Travel+Leisure*—the casitas don't even include televisions.

I had the enviable opportunity to spend three days at “The Ranch,” which has dozens of fitness classes and workshops, more than 50 miles of hiking and running trails and the best farm-to-table fare you'll ever taste in your life. I went with two intentions: to unplug and to reignite my interest in the great outdoors. Prior to arriving, I considered those objectives to be mutually exclusive, one having little (or nothing) to do with the other. However, I quickly learned that avoiding screens and climbing up winding trails do have a lot in common.

Since its inception in 1940, this family-owned, all-inclusive fitness destination has stayed true to its goal of helping visitors renew, reset and reclaim their lives from the grips of their bustling schedules and accompanying demands. Obviously much has changed digitally since 1940, and The Ranch has evolved with the times by encouraging a “device-free” policy in communal areas around the property. However, the staff remains realistic in regards to how difficult it can be to unplug for an entire seven-day stay, or even the three- or four-day offerings.

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For starters, none of the casitas come with a television, encouraging guests to get outside to create their own entertainment. Second, Wi-Fi is only available in designated rooms and areas around the property. Third, each guest is greeted with a tote bag to carry their belongings in as they scamper off to classes, hikes, workouts and meals—and with the bag comes a small drawstring “cell phone sleeping bag,” encouraging guests to put connections to rest for a bit.

For someone whose job essentially depends on what the Internet and social media throw my way on any given day (#WebEditorLife), separating from my pocket lifeline proved to be harder than I anticipated. However, the benefits of being unconnected became obvious once I opened my eyes and took in the surroundings along the winding walkways stretching from the entrance to the mountains, and relaxed in one of the hammocks swaying in pockets of shade. Plus, the trail-running options were tremendous and beautiful. Spending 72 hours striding up 600-foot climbs to catch the sunset made me wonder, *What the heck am I missing at home when I choose to thumb through other people’s filtered lives instead of creating my own real-life adventures?*

I came home with a newfound desire for more dirt lines around my ankles and perfecting that sports bra tan—two runner parts of me that would have been overlooked had I not taken a moment to just look up. And to be surrounded by like-minded visitors with a similar goal—where literally everyone respected the “no cell rule”—suggested that there is something healing about a digital ditch.