

SPECIAL SECTION

TRAVEL+
LEISURE

Guide to Wellness Travel

33 Experiences to Improve Your Body, Mind, and Soul

Poolside at
Canyon Ranch in
Tucson, Arizona.

The Digital Detox, 2.0

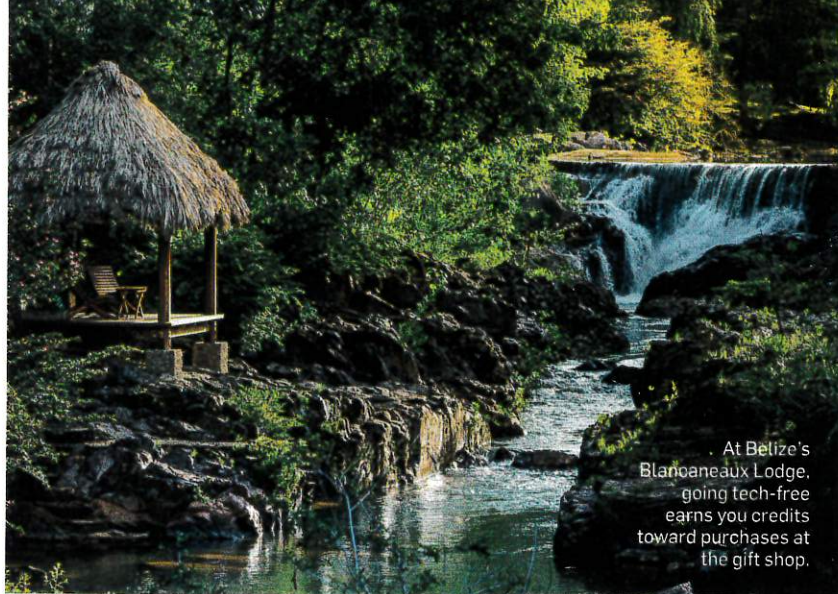
With screen addiction on the rise, hotels are rolling out packages to help guests disconnect from their devices.

GIVEN THE NEWS LATELY, the case for unplugging from our smartphones and tablets has never been stronger. While a screenless existence might not be realistic over the long run, a digital-detox vacation can offer a temporary escape from constant connectivity. For years, hotels have lured travelers with the promise of a respite from chaotic daily life. But now they're courting guests with full-fledged "recovery" programs that overtly address digital dependency through techniques like mindfulness meditation, short-term silence, and forest bathing (see opposite page for a definition).

At Mexico's **Grand Velas Riviera Maya** (grandvelas.com; doubles from \$868, all-inclusive), taking the plunge is an exercise in fun. Families that opt in

Rediscover the pleasure of a great beach read—of an actual printed book—on a digital-free vacation.

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At Belize's Blancoaneaux Lodge, going tech-free earns you credits toward purchases at the gift shop.

to the four-day digital-detox program can trade in their electronics for complimentary activities like snorkeling excursions and bike tours. If those perks don't motivate you, the resort's rule stipulating that guests complete the four-day program before getting their devices back will.

The **Blancoaneaux Lodge** (*thefamilycoppolahideaways.com*; doubles from \$289), in Belize, offers a similar incentive structure. As part of the lodge's Family Face Time Package, travelers who check in their devices during family mealtimes will earn \$10 each hour toward a purchase at the gift shop, where they can pick up souvenirs like colorful huipils and hand-carved wooden masks.

Those who are more serious about their experiment in tech-free living might consider **Eremito** (*eremito.com*; doubles from \$420, all-inclusive), an ascetic retreat in Umbria, Italy, that's designed to mimic the experience of living in a monastery—albeit one in the rolling hills of the Italian

countryside. What the 21-room property lacks in TVs, phones, and Wi-Fi, it makes up for with its pastoral setting and spare but beautiful stone accommodations. The minimalist retreat goes even further with its well-being programming, offering meals from ingredients grown in the hotel's organic garden, restorative treatments at the hewn-stone spa, and dinners taken in complete silence.

If you favor a more cutting-edge approach, a stay at the **Villa Stéphanie** spa resort at **Brenners Park-Hotel & Spa** (*brenners.com*; doubles from \$765) is just the ticket. The German medical spa, which is renowned for its weight-loss and detox program, has installed an Internet "kill switch" in each of its 15 guest rooms, giving guests the option to completely disconnect during their stays. Flicking the switch activates the copper grid in the walls, which in turn blocks out 96 percent of the surrounding radio waves and Wi-Fi signals. It's the next best thing to self-control. — *Siobhan Reid*

WHAT EXACTLY IS...

Forest bathing? Part of Japan's national health program since the 1980s, *shinrin-yoku*, or forest bathing, is all about slow walks in nature, proven to decrease stress hormones. In recent years, forest bathing has caught on in the U.S., particularly at rural resorts. At the **Lodge at Woodloch** (*lodgeatwoodloch.com*; doubles from \$578) in Pennsylvania's Poconos, instructors demonstrate deep-breathing techniques on hikes. **Blackberry Farm** (*blackberryfarm.com*; doubles from \$895), a culinary and wellness retreat in Walland, Tennessee, has a Deep Healing Woods program focusing on meditation, yoga, and hiking in the Smoky Mountains. And at **Mohonk Mountain House** (*mohonk.com*; doubles from \$660) in New Paltz, New York, naturalist Michael Ridolfo shows guests how to track animals, identify medicinal plants, and adjust their posture to mimic how our ancestors walked.

PRINCIPLES OF WELLNESS



THE PIONEER

Deborah Szekely

In 1940, Szekely founded **Rancho La Puerta** (*rancholapuerta.com*; eight-day retreats from \$3,900 per person), one of North America's earliest destination spas, as a simple campsite in the hills outside Tecate, Mexico. Here, she shares what keeps her strong at age 96.

1

Keep It All in Perspective

"I define wellness as being complete—a complete person. Body, mind, lifestyle, spirit, happiness. Live in harmony with the laws of nature. If you do that, you're not likely to go astray."

2

Mindfulness Matters

"It's being in the moment, and that's where Zen comes in. You have a choice. Years ago, when something came up that I just couldn't handle, I started thinking about that chain that goes round and round at the dry cleaner. I'd picture hanging up whatever was bothering me and I'd send it off. I'd think, 'It'll stay there, and I can bring it forward when I have time to properly take care of it.' Sometimes by that time the problem solves itself."

3

Maintain a

Mind-Body Connection

"I still practice Pilates five days a week, fifty minutes each time. Even the drive to the studio is part of unwinding. I feel flexibility, which is important."