

THE GREAT RESET

As the opportunity to disconnect from the digital realm becomes more appealing than ever when planning our travel, we find out how to revel in the joy of missing out

Words: Lauren Jade Hill

If there's one travel trend we've seen grow exponentially in recent times, it's the pursuit of digital disconnection. JOMO, or the 'joy of missing out', encapsulates this rising appreciation for time away from the perpetual activity of our digital lives. Increasing numbers of people are looking for destinations where they can fully switch off, which has led to more experience providers tapping into this style of travel.

Unplugged is one such operation. Launched in 2020, with a 90% increase in occupancy rate this year, Unplugged brings together more than 30 digital-disconnection cabins across the UK. The most recent addition to the collection, Elsa, was launched in a tree-lined corner of a Cornish estate this May, with amenities such as a wood-fired hot tub, where you can switch off, slow down and reconnect with yourself and the natural world. At these eco-friendly cabins, guests lock away their phones in exchange for an old-school Nokia phone, physical map, compass and a Polaroid camera.

Co-founders Hector Hughes and Ben Elliott launched Unplugged after experiencing burnout from their careers in the tech industry. "I burnt out – hard," says Hector. "In an attempt to cure that burnout, I booked a silent retreat in the Himalayas for a hard reset. The silence was great, but the most transformative part of it was locking away my phone. I realised I hadn't been away from my phone in years, and the relief I felt was incredible."

After returning feeling fully recharged, Hector reached out to Ben, and the pair decided to come up with a way netizens could find that sense of disconnection closer to home.

"When I returned, I quit my job and started Unplugged. Ben and I wanted to help other busy folk access my experience but without flying across the globe. And with the screentime epidemic getting worse year on year, there was a huge demand for an offline destination.

"Our mission is to improve collective human wellbeing and normalise going offline regularly, and we're making steps towards that every day," he says. "Our digital detoxes remind people what 'human' feels like, without the constant stress and distraction from our phones. It's simple - but it can be life-changing."

Indeed, these digital detox retreats are shown to improve both physical and mental health as they reduce stress, improve sleep and help you feel like you are truly living in the present. »



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IMMERSIVE ESCAPE

Over on the island of Saint Barthélemy in the Caribbean’s arc of Leeward Islands, Le Barth Villas has just launched its new Quiet Villas Collection in response to the increasing demand for this type of stay. While bedding down in one of eight panoramic sea-view villas, guests can opt to surrender their devices and disconnect from screens and wifi to ultimately unplug from digital noise and instead immerse themselves in the serenity of these picturesque shores. A guided yoga session helps ground the body and mind, Atma Janzu aquatic therapy provides greater restoration, and a curated collection of books and Le Barth notebook enhance quiet reflection.

Of these private luxury villas, cliffside Cap au Vent and Yellow Bird provide panoramic views from Pointe Milou, while Ginger looks out from its hilltop setting above Petite Saline. Oui, Paulista and Casa del Mar place you on the water’s edge of Petit Cul de Sac. Both found close to Gustavia, the June and Axel Rock villas pair easy access to the island’s main hub with sunset sea views and the surrounding natural elements.

Across in the equally scenic Maldives, InterContinental Maldives Maamunagau Resort is also encouraging guests to fully disconnect through serene retreats including the Hermit Days Silent Immersion stay and Digital Detox package. A wellness mentor guides you through your personalised stay encompassing yoga and meditation among its highlights. Surrender your digital devices on arrival to fully commit to your break from digital disruption.

QUALITY TIME

Of course, several stalwarts from the world of wellness have long known the benefits of cutting yourself off from the digital realm. In Hua Hin, Thailand, the legendary wellness sanctuary Chiva-Som has long promoted the profound benefits of a digital detox. By encouraging guests to take a purposeful break from technology, the resort enables guests to better restore clarity, balance and peace of mind, and to reconnect with themselves and the world around them.

Through curated digital detox retreats, both Chiva-Som and its newer sister property, Zula Wellness Resort in Qatar, bring together activities such as yoga, meditation, NSDR (Non-Sleep Deep Rest) practice, spa therapies and mindful creative activities to help guests fully benefit from their time away from the constant ping of distractions. Taking this concept a step further, Zula Wellness Resort has also begun to host a new Family Digital Detox Retreat, for children aged nine to 15, aimed at inspiring relaxation, promoting rejuvenation and strengthening family bonds.

As technology carries on dominating our daily lives, the number of retreats, and the demand for them, can only continue to grow. Whether you opt for digitally disconnected time in nature or a full wellness regime, it’s never been easier to experience the joy found in giving ourselves a much-needed break from the technological world. ①

unplugged.rest; lebarthvillas.com; chivasom.com; zula.com; maldives.intercontinental.com

Finding freedom: Unplugged’s Elsa cabin, Cornwall (previous, ©Rebecca Hope). Clockwise from right: private infinity pool at Le Barth Villas (©Laurent Benoit), and villas Yellow Bird and Casa del Mar offer serene escapism.

