

4 of the best digital retreats

It's time to switch off, literally. By Suzanne Duckett and Jasmine Contomichalos

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[Restival](#)

The hipster one...



You love festivals, right? But maybe you feel you're getting on a bit. Or you're just a little frayed around the edges. And you need a break. A spa would really help, but fluffy gowns are a bit too chi-chi. You still yearn for a little glitter and some funky leggings. The answer? Restival, a 'spiritual retreat' deep in the Sahara Desert, seven hours from Marrakesh (this time round - the plan is to pitch up somewhere new each year), because the founder of this 'anti-festival', Caroline Jones, knows just what you're after. She's done Glastonbury and she's partied hard. But now she's chilling out and going off the grid - literally. This five-day escape is not just about yoga classes, meditation and a beautiful sandy setting. It's a full-on digital detox. Yep - no signal, no wi-fi, only the hum of the Om. Except, sssshhh, there are hotspots where a text can sneak through, and you'll spy people taking selfies as they bump around on camels. But, just as you don't leave fag butts on the Playa at Burning Man, most people respect the concept and keep their phones under wraps - even if they're still secretly InstaSlamming under the covers in their eco-luxury tents. Or just keeping tabs on the real world, because Restival is a step out of it. Yes, you can get a top-notch manicure, facial or massage in the spa, and yes, you have running water, flushing loos and actual beds - but this desert exodus may prove too much for some. So if the pampering is what lures you in, don't go, because you can find that in any good retreat. But if you want to escape, if you prefer almond milk these days to an amaretto sour, if

festival vibes still run (ok, stroll) through your veins - then turn off, tune out and drop in on this alternative adventure.

BOOK IT: Five nights, all inclusive, from £1,200, including transfers (restival.global; 020 7351 2111).

Grace Santorini's Digital Detox

The scenic one...



This vast, immaculate villa, clinging to Santorini's caldera, has taken escapism to a new level. First there's the view - that glittering deep blue, that searingly bright white - to clear your head (which it does: POOF). And then there's your host, who makes sure it stays that way by inviting you to leave your damned digital devices at the door. Welcome to Grace Santorini's three-night Digital Detox - hell for some, Hellenic heaven for others. The two-bedroom villa that hosts the retreat is weirdly Tardis-like, with a heated pool, a jacuzzi and its own massage room, where each guest can have a 90-minute Grace Royal spa treatment - a full body scrub and a massage. Or you can head out to your private terrace for a pummelling overlooking the sparkling sea. They'll keep your mind off your phone with private daily meditation sessions and yoga classes, and they take the detox one step further with menus that are nothing short of Mediterranean masterpieces. Your private chef, Spyros (a bit of a dish himself), prepares three-course healthy wonders: strawberry and fennel salad, and fish baked in a salt crust and served with Santorini fava (to die for), followed by orange and semolina pudding with hazelnuts. And a lovely touch is that you can still photograph your pretty platefuls with the retro, refreshingly slow, Polaroid camera that's thoughtfully left for you. Or go even slower and paint it with the easel and art kit. So much classier than Instagram.

BOOK IT: three-night Digital Detox retreat, from £1,855 per person, half board, based on four sharing (gracehotels.com; 00 30 22860 21300).

The leafy one...



three-day digital detox is a daunting concept, even when its been carefully crafted by Chewton Glen and yogic healer and founder of Ila, Denise Leicester. If you're worried about your willpower, all devices can be helpfully confiscated on arrival and entrusted to reception for safekeeping. Your room, though, has been swiped clean of TVs, iPads and stereos, and is naked of nanobytes. It's like it's just been burgled by the pros. Which is weird at first - empty, lonely even. Just you. Make up your mind to surrender immediately (though you will find yourself patting yourself down in search of your phone more often than you'll admit), and in a surprisingly short space of time being free from it all becomes quite glorious. With no Instagram or Twitter to distract you, you'll enjoy every aspect of the hotel's spectacular tree houses. You'll get in and out the hot tub (a LOT) without fretting about getting your phone wet, and you'll gaze at the trees in the surrounding New Forest, reminding your eyes that they still work across long distances. Then of course there's all the guided yoga, meditation and Nordic walking, plus two Ila treatments: the Kundalini massage and the Ananda facial will send you to spa limbo land, located somewhere between asleep and awake, reality and fantasy - the mark of true relaxation. Food is also restricted, and of the analogue generation (except that it's all alkaline - very much a modern phenomenon). Expect prawn and avocado cocktails, roasted heritage beets and poached fish and steamed chicken marinated in harissa. The notebook for your morning musings and a colouring book are not a gimmick, they are a necessity. When the digital cold turkey takes hold, no corner will be left uncoloured.

BOOK IT: two-night [Digital Detox Retreat](#), full board, from £1,305 (01425 282212).

The silent one...



So you're in your small, secluded room modelled on a medieval monk's cell - cool and dim, all rough-hewn stone and pewter - high in the Umbrian hills, where Francis of Assisi once wandered, and you spot two birds perched outside your window, and you think, 'Coo, I'm actually giving out some major St Francis vibes myself.' But the birds just sit there, until you eventually realise they're only replicas - a self-deprecating touch on the part of Eremito, an eco-hotel and sort of secular monastery that doesn't take itself too seriously, even though its intent is serious: to offer unadulterated time to yourself, with no digital disturbance. It's also an antidote to competitive über-luxury: just 14 identical, comfortable, single rooms with whitewashed walls and crisp white bedding. Food is simple, delicious and vegetarian, and eaten in silence at supper (self-consciousness soon dissolves as you focus on the tastes and textures) in a candlelit refectory. There's gentle yoga, a steam room, a weeny indoor pool and a meditation room, but apart from that it's up to you: long walks in the lush woods, meadows and orchards surrounding the honey-stoned property; reading; quietly chatting to other guests (cool, quirky, clever, many at some sort of personal crossroads). As wi-fi withdrawal kicks in, your mood flits between boredom and bliss, eventually bursting into giddy clarity and, after supper, pure peace as you sit around the fire on the lawn, watching fireflies dance about the olive groves.

BOOK IT: single, full board, from £130 (designhotels.com; 00 800 37 46 83 57). [British Airways](#) flies to Rome from £111.

Have you seen?