



COULD YOU SURVIVE A DIGITAL DETOX? JOIN THE
CONVERSATION ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE



ECHO OF THE TRUTH

If you replace your wired world with the real thing,
what will you learn about yourself?
Our editor-in-chief, *Beth Thompson*, goes in search of answers.



I'M SEVERAL THOUSAND MILES FROM HOME and deep into a detox.

It's tough. I feel anxious and out of it, and the worst part is that I can't even use my phone to find out if Dr. Google thinks what I'm experiencing is normal. Did I mention it's a digital detox?

Like many of the unusual situations I find myself in, this one started with a conversation about cool ways to achieve wellness – specifically, substituting cell service and Siri with sunshine and spas. It sounded like a good idea at the time, which is how I ended up at Echo Valley Ranch & Spa in BC, sans tech toys.

But now I'm having second thoughts – about me, not the location. Echo Valley is rich in natural beauty. Situated 2½ hours north of Kamloops, the 160-acre working ranch is cradled by four distinct geographical regions: the Marble Mountains, the Fraser Canyon, the Grasslands and the Cariboo Plateau. Translation: stunning 360-degree views.

Over the past two decades, the resort has honed its hospitality in simple and unique ways. At this family-run resort, the friendly staff are unapologetically passionate about their work. Staff and guests alike mingle over meals served family-style at long harvest tables in the main lodge. It's a chance to meet new folks, hear about their adventures and discover the different activities available at the resort.

There's no shortage of things to try, whether you want to get back to nature, learn something new or just be distracted. The latter is my MO, as I'm finding it hard to not think about what's going on in my other world – the one that includes Instagram feeds and Facebook posts. Here, the only Twitter feed is watching birds search for worms and, though entertaining, it's not the brain candy I'm used to.

IF YOU GO...

RESERVATIONS

Visit evranch.com.

Rooms start at \$210 per person, based on double occupancy, with meals included.

FLIGHTS

Fly to Vancouver or Kamloops Airport.

Transfers are available to/from the ranch, starting at \$240 from Kamloops.

ACTIVITIES

Fly-fishing (and lessons), guided gold panning, 4x4 excursions, target shooting, roping lessons, hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding and cooking lessons.

FACILITIES

Spa, indoor pool, exercise room, games room, sauna and outdoor games.



HORSING AROUND

I sign up for a horseback riding session, a two-hour ride over old logging roads and gold rush trails that criss-cross field and forest as they climb to elevations that offer breathtaking views. Charlie, my horse, is patient and forgiving, and we bond immediately. My guide, Julie, reminds me how special these animals are. “Every day, a new rider jumps on, each with a different weight and energy level,” she says, “and yet the horse can adapt immediately and responds by giving riders the same experience, making them feel safe and comfortable.”

Her comments stay with me – I thought *I* was the one extending trust. While I hadn’t been looking to draw analogies from this ride, I can’t help but see one take shape. In my digital world, I am master of my domain, controlling my experiences. It’s been awhile since I’ve placed myself in the hands of another and let them take me, literally, to new heights. So today, I’ve learned something from a horse, and it’s a good day.

SAY SPA

One of the highlights I’ve been looking forward to on this trip is the chance to enjoy a Thai massage. The entire ranch is an interesting blend of Western and Asian cultural experiences – a natural extension of owners Norm and Nan, one hailing from the U.K., the other from Thailand. The Asian influence is most notable at the spa, where guests can choose from a number of Thai-inspired services, such as massage, skincare and scalp treatments.

I opt for a 90-minute massage that involves a series of assisted stretches and a pressure-point massage that follows the body’s energy lines. It’s a blissful way to surrender to the quiet of the day and the intimacy of one’s own body. I can hear the tension escap-

GIRL MEETS WORLD

I really wanted to hang on to my Echo Valley Zen when I got back to Toronto, so I incorporated these three rules into my life. They’ve made a difference for me, and I hope they do the same for you.

1 _____

POWER HOUR

When you get up in the morning, deliberately avoid checking your phone for the first hour. Use the time to talk to your kids, read the paper or do yoga. Tip: Use a real alarm clock instead of your phone and it will be one less temptation to access your wired world upon waking.

2 _____

SOLE SETTER

As much as I love to multi-task, I am beginning to understand the value of uni-tasking. The power and energy that come from focusing on a single subject are inspiring. For example, while writing this story, I disabled my apps and finished it much faster than if I had been distracted with queries, comments and incoming snaps to “heart.”

3 _____

PRESENT SENSE

Live in the moment you’re standing in. Being present in your day is the best foundation for building a future. Plus, fewer things will shake you when you have your feet firmly planted in one place.

you understand your place in it, which is a clarifying experience that influences your behaviour in really authentic ways.

Now that’s a message that should go viral. *hr*

ing my tight muscles – noisy knots softening under the therapist’s deft touch. The service ends with a cup of hot tea – a detoxifying spicy ginger blend. I leave the appointment lighter, a more alive version of myself.

As I make my way back to the cabin, I run into one of the ranch’s half-dozen border collies, a beat-up Frisbee between his teeth. I pull it from his grasp, starting an impromptu game of catch. Suddenly, all six pups have gathered around, taking turns retrieving the disc, until eventually they ignore me completely and play among themselves. The entertainer becomes entertained.

TWILIGHT TIME

This trip has been an amazing way to detangle from my wired world, but it’s not without its challenges.

Nights are hard. With no TV, telephone or Twitter, I find myself uncomfortably disconnected from the world feed by day’s end. What if something major has happened? What if some amazing discovery is just coming to light? I won’t hear about it or be able to share in its joy or sorrow.

I’m thinking about this as I make a cup of tea and settle on the balcony to watch the first stars pop into the endless sky. Truth is, I like my tech tether to the world, but I’ve come to realize that there is tremendous value in unplugging and it’s worth the effort to find ways to make that happen.

It’s not just for the Zen of it. When you stop staring at a screen, you start staring at what’s in front of you, whether that’s the people you love or the stars in the sky. The more you inhabit this physical world, the more