

Finding Your Zen

Sure, any vacation is pretty sweet, but sometimes a mind-clearing, body-changing trip is the only way you can truly get some R&R. And according to *Psychosomatic Medicine*, the more you engage in leisure activities, the more likely you are to have a slim waist and low body fat. (Talk about a no-brainer!) Jet off to one of these destinations and return home happier and healthier than ever before!

BY KELLY MICKLE

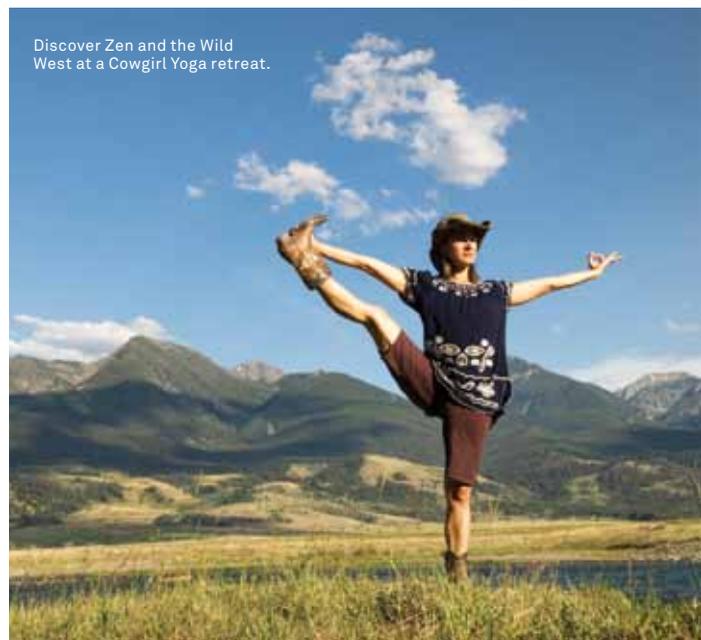
DIGITAL DETOX

Sleeping with your cell phone? It might be time to power down. Between all the tweeting, blogging, texting, Instagramming and emailing, most of us could use a respite from our tech toys. Case in point: Levi Felix, a former VP of a web start-up who found himself in the hospital thanks to the stress of the daily tech grind. The health scare prompted him to quit his job and embark on a journey to Cambodia, where he practiced yoga and meditation and worked on a farm. After a year of living off the grid, he returned to the Bay Area and started Digital Detox with his girlfriend and travel partner, Brooke Dean. They now host monthly four-day retreats in remote parts of California to help tech junkies learn to unplug and find balance in the digital age. Upon arrival you surrender phones, laptops and iPods—even your watch—and are prohibited from talking about your job. Instead of networking and texting, the weekend is spent hiking, meditating, swimming in hot springs, baking bread, making art or music and eating fresh organic food. Every guest is given a journal in which they're encouraged to write or draw whenever they're itching to tweet or text. In addition to California getaways, Digital Detox is offering a weeklong retreat to Cambodia at the end of April, and plans to expand to the East Coast and Costa Rica are in the works. Prices start at \$700 for a four-day stay.

→ thedigitaldetox.org



The scenic site of the upcoming Digital Detox retreat in Cambodia.



Discover Zen and the Wild West at a Cowgirl Yoga retreat.

COWGIRL YOGA

Discover your om *and* your inner cowgirl in Bozeman, Montana. After big-city yoga instructor Margaret Burns Vap moved to the country, she decided to combine her love for the Zen practice with her dream to ride horses and founded the Cowgirl Yoga retreat. "It sounds odd to people at first, but the work you do on the mat really does connect with your experience and confidence in the saddle," she says. Mornings start with sun salutations and a healthy breakfast before you're introduced to your horse to practice grooming and equestrian basics. Once you get acquainted, hop on for riding lessons that include breathing work and yoga poses such as twists and backbends, high up in the saddle. Wrap the day with a traditional ranch-style cookout, where you'll dine on food and wine from local organic farms. Horsing around not your thing? They also offer weekend yoga-centric retreats paired with photography, cooking, snowshoeing or hiking. "Yoga releases tension and makes you more open to experiences, so the practice helps you do anything else better," says Vap. As for accommodations, you can rough it like a real cowgirl at the basic Cowgirl Yoga Ranch Camp, or treat yourself to the Luxe Cowgirl Yoga getaway at the chic Double T River Ranch. Novice yogis and riders are welcome. Prices start at \$925 for three-night retreats. → bigskyyogaretreats.com

SWELL SURF CAMP

Surf camps have long been known for their "rustic" accommodations and mediocre food (you're there to surf anyway, right?), but thankfully sacrificing comfort and style is no longer a requirement to catch a good wave. Swell Surf Camp in the Dominican Republic offers lodging that is more chic boutique than surfer shack, with stylish rooms in a modern tropical motif and a swimming pool designed with fiber-optic lighting that glows like the stars. Don't worry, they're still serious about surfing. Located just minutes from one of the most consistent breaks in the Caribbean, Swell offers world-class surf instruction with International Surfing Association-qualified coaches. Wake up with coffee or tea and hit the beach for an hour-and-a-half surf, then fuel up with a homemade breakfast (the omelets are epic). After the meal, head back for another paddle session, or stretch out with a yoga class, take Spanish lessons, try kite surfing or simply chill by the pool. Communal lounge areas boast a self-service bar, foosball, table tennis, a video library and games such as Jenga, poker and backgammon. Never paddled out before? With foam boards and a laid-back vibe, Swell is also the perfect place to test the waters. Weekly rates start at \$790. → swellsurfcamp.com



Swell Surf Camp pairs wave-riding with chic accommodations—the perfect combo.