

THESE DAYS
A VACATION
CAN LEAVE
DAILY LIFE
BEHIND, BUT
NOT OUR
ELECTRONIC
TETHERS.
UNLESS WE
WANT TO BE

UNPLUGGED PLUGGED



GETTY IMAGES

Places where pleasure is the plug-in and only boats need a port

BY NECEE REGIS | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

We love our gadgets, gizmos, and high-speed connections. It is heady stuff: We sign in, link in, tweet, post, and Google. But all this technology makes it difficult to relax, especially when we are expected to be connected 24/7.

A trend is emerging to free us from this constant communication: the unplugged vacation. Many hotels and resorts are offering outdoor activities, yoga classes, and even old-fashioned board games as ways to relax. Some boast of rooms with no phones, TV, or Wi-Fi.

So step away from the keyboard. Power down your phone. At the following destinations, getting unplugged has never been easier. (Prices are for two people per night in June unless noted.)

ANSE CHASTANET BEACH, ST. LUCIA What do you call a resort that advertises “do nothing” as an activity? We call it heaven. On St. Lucia’s quiet southwestern



Hilltop yoga at Carmel Valley Ranch in the Santa Lucia Mountains south of San Francisco.

coast, the Anse Chastanet Resort offers an old-time Caribbean experience. Air conditioning? Cable TV? You will not find them in the 49 hillside or beach-level rooms on this lush 600-acre estate. Instead, louvered windows and — in some rooms — an open-air-style missing fourth wall allow for cooling trade winds, and views of both the Petit and Gros Piton mountains. The resort borders two pristine bays, part of a marine reserve protecting miles of colorful coral reefs 10 yards beyond the water’s edge. Enjoy complimentary snorkel gear, windsurfers, kayaks, and sunfish sailing. Also available: tennis, scuba diving, hiking, and bird-watching. If you must — there’s Wi-Fi in the library. 800-223-1108, www.ansechastanet.com, from \$330

SALAR DE UYUNI, BOLIVIA You have heard about ice hotels — but what about salt hotels? The Luna Salada Hotel (Salt Moon Hotel) is constructed of blocks cut

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WeMo keeps you connected to your home by smartphone.



Thrive tablet has two USB ports, uploads photos, connects to TV.



GoFlex can store all sorts of files and create its own Wi-Fi signal.



Android based nabi tablet lets kids read, color, puzzle, listen, watch, connect to Wi-Fi.



4G-V signal booster improves voice service and data transfer speeds.



SpareOne has a battery that can stay charged for 15 years.



VoyagerPRO lets you use voice commands to hear, transmit e-mail.

Gadgets with cool, connectivity, and powers we can call our own

BY KARI BODNARCHUK | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

We live in a wonderful wireless world. You can store your entire entertainment system, from your movie collection to your e-book library, in a virtual cloud that is accessible from anywhere in the world. You can talk into a little headphone and have your words suddenly appear in someone’s inbox. You can even control devices in your home using your smartphone and a few electrical gadgets while sunning yourself on the other side of the globe.

How cool is that?

Technology continues to evolve. Duracell Powermat is working to incorporate its wireless charging units into airports, restaurants, coffee shops, and even places like Fenway Park. By June, tables at New York’s Madison Square Garden will have coaster-size charging pads built into them, so people can refuel their devices while watching a Knicks game, for instance.

A growing number of hotels now provide guests

with tablets (on loan during their stay) or smartphone apps that enable them to remain connected to the property. Stay at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, for example, and you can order room service or extra towels, book spa treatments or shows, or make restaurant reservations through a smartphone app, whether you are at a casino at the other end of town or a trailhead in Red Rock Canyon, an hour’s drive away.

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INSIDE

Taking the plunge (and a long soak) in **Montana’s** hot springs. **M2**

EXPLORE NEW ENGLAND

Concierges at eight hotels share their behind-the-scenes knowledge. **M5**

In **Connecticut**, tracing African-American history and a struggle for freedom. **M5**

Take a dip, gaze at the stars, savor logging off

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from the Uyuni salt flats in southwest Bolivia. This vast salt desert, covering over 4,000 square miles at an altitude of 12,335 feet above sea level, looks something like the surface of the moon. Guests can tour the remote flats on daily excursions in 4 x 4 vehicles. The dry season, July to November, is the best time to visit. The hotel features all things salt: Sleep on a mattress on a salt block bed, dine at a salt block table. Go outside and marvel at the stars. 591-761-69888, www.lunasaladahotel.com, from \$112

IVINS, UTAH Digital Detox. That is the special package offered through May 27 at the Red Mountain Resort. Amid a stunning landscape of red rock bluffs in the high desert of southwestern Utah, the resort is challenging guests to “re-charge everything but their electronics.” Take one of several guided hikes, a fitness class, swim in one of two pools, and then relax with a 50-minute massage. Add-ons include mountain biking, rappelling, yoga, spa treatments, acupuncture, and workshops such as meditation, photography, pottery, nutrition, and more. The hardest task? Resisting the urge to turn on the Wi-Fi or TV in every room. 877-246-4453, www.redmountainresort.com, from \$235 per person

MONTEBELLO, QUEBEC How about spending a night — or week — at one of 13 solar-powered cabins set in 65,000 acres of protected wilderness in Canada? (Or, this being Quebec, a solar-powered chalet.) At the Fairmont Kenauk at Le Château Montebello Resort, you can hunt, fish, canoe, and hike from your own secluded hideaway. Each one- to six-bed-

room structure is equipped with propane lights, stove, furnace, hot water tank, and solar panels to power a high-efficiency refrigerator and water pump. There is no cellphone service or land line; guests can communicate with the entrance gate by walkie-talkie, and there is a lakeside pay phone. As a Fairmont property, the cabins have five-star chalet ratings from the Ministry of Tourism, including Le Labo toiletries, and, if you desire, a chef will prepare any fish you catch. 800-257-7544, www.fairmont.com/kenauk, from \$209

CARMEL, CALIF. Play. That is what the folks at Carmel Valley Ranch want you to do. Tucked in the forests of the Santa Lucia Mountains two hours south of San Francisco, this 500-acre property was inspired by summer camp fun. In addition to fun and games you would expect, such as 18-hole golf, tennis (hard and clay courts), Pilates classes, swimming pools, and hot tubs, there is the unexpected: bocce, hill-top yoga, basketball courts, hundreds of miles of hiking trails, S'mores around fire pits every night, and a beekeeping and honey harvesting program with 60,000-plus Italian honeybees. (Don a protective suit and visit the hives.) On-site dining features seasonal farm-to-table cuisine from the ranch's organic gardens. 831-625-9500, www.carmelvalleyranch.com, from \$400

PLAYA GIGANTE, NICARAGUA Nothing says “unplugged” like a treetop villa along a private white sand beach. The Aqua Wellness Resort, on Nicaragua's Pacific coast, is a secluded low-tech getaway with high-luxury appeal. Each villa nestled in the forest canopy features a deck with wrap-



One of the villas in the tree canopy at Aqua Wellness Resort on Nicaragua's Pacific coast.

around railings and a personal plunge pool. There is no TV, no phone, and negligible Internet connections. It is just you, an ocean view, and the occasional howling monkey. Venture down from your aerie to find a full-service spa, organic restaurant serving three meals a day, beachside bar, hearth oven bakery, oceanside yoga platform, swimming pool, and opportunities for sport fishing, surfing, sailing, kayaking, hiking, and wildlife tours. 917-512-3577, www.aquanicaragua.com, from \$250

BOULDER, COLO. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a cultural movement dubbed Chautauqua swept though the United States with the goal of sharing cultural and educational experiences on a circuit of more than 12,000 sites. (Think PBS before TV.) Sprawling across 27 acres at the foot of Boulder's Flatirons, the Colorado Chautauqua is one of a few

remaining sites and still actively hosts lectures, concerts, and films while promoting the quiet, contemplative beauty of nature. Stay in one of 60 renovated cottages, originally built in the 1880s, or at the Columbine Lodge. Each cottage has a fully equipped kitchen, screened-in front porch, and is steps away from dozens of hiking trails. Advertising “serenity in lieu of televisions,” the cottages do not have TVs or phones, but are pre-wired for both. *Colorado Chautauqua National Landmark*, 303-952-1611, www.chautauqua.com, lodge \$75-\$126; cottages \$129-\$316

CHEBEAGUE ISLAND, MAINE Take a ferry from Portland into Casco Bay, and watch the mainland — and the modern world — recede. With beaches nestled in coves along a rocky coastline, Chebeague offers simple pleasures in an understated New England manner. In keeping with this spirit, the Chebeague

Island Inn provides classic Maine hospitality in a casually elegant setting. Perched on a cliff with the view of the bay, this restored 1920s Greek Revival-style inn promotes the unplugged life with board games, lawn games, bike rides, and nature walks around the island. Or simply sit on the porch with a good book and a pot of tea. The rooms have down bedding and Italian linens but no phones or TVs. The island has a nine-hole golf course, tennis, boating, and a clam shack serving burgers, clams, and banana splits. 207-846-5155, www.chebeagueislandinn.com from \$235/shared hall bath; \$355/private bath

SDE BOKER, ISRAEL The Negev is the last place you would expect to find B&B accommodations at a winery, but the Boker Valley Vineyards Farm breaks all stereotypes. It is not only a family-run organic farm with Cabernet Sauvignon and

Merlot grapes, plus olive and pomegranate trees, it is also a perfect get-away-from-it-all desert retreat near the ancient historic Spice Trail, and a 25-mile drive from the Makhtesh Ramon Reserve, Israel's largest national park. The farm offers three lodges and one “couple's cabin,” supplied with linens, towels, a microwave, and refrigerator overlooking the Boker Valley. Truly off the grid, with no Wi-Fi, TV, or phones (a cell needs an international plan), it is the perfect place to relax when not exploring the area by jeep, bicycle, hiking tour, or horseback. 972-52-682-2930, www.israeldesertlodge.com, from \$147

FLORIDA, MASS. Strap your mountain bike to the back of your car, pack your hiking boots, and take advantage of 50 miles of multi-use trails in the Savoy Mountain State Forest. An extension of the Green Mountains of Vermont, the park is located atop the Hoosac Mountain Range in the northern Berkshires of Western Massachusetts. You can also fish, picnic, and swim, and do not miss Tannery Falls, a 50-foot cascade to a clear pool below. Camping is an option, but those who prefer a real roof above their heads should reserve one of four log cabins overlooking the 25-acre South Pond. Each rustic cabin has a woodstove with cooking surface, bunk beds, outdoor fireplace, and they share a composting toilet. You will need to bring your own sheets, towels, and utensils. Sorry, no pets in the cabins. 413-663-8469, www.mass.gov/der/parks/western/svym.htm, \$30 a night, \$210 a week

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Wherever you go, staying in touch could add to the fun

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You can still kick back and enjoy your travels even if you remain plugged in. Some of the following gadgets and technology may even make your adventures easier . . . more relaxing . . . more fun.

Belkin's WeMo system, due out in June, eliminates that panicked moment in your airport-bound taxi when you wonder, Oh, no, did I turn off the coffeemaker? This clever system lets you stay connected to your home while you are on the road with a smartphone app and a few wall-socket gadgets.

Plug the Home Control Switch into a socket and then insert power cords for lights,

small appliances, or a motion sensor into the switch. Launch the WeMo app, which lists all connected devices, and you can control your home with a swipe of your finger: Turn off the iron, schedule lights to go on at random times while you are away, and program the radio to serenade your cat each night. www.belkin.com/wemo

Wilson Electronics' Sleek 4G-V helps improve one of land travel's most maddening experiences: dropped cellphone calls. This universal cell signal booster can significantly improve voice service and data transfer speeds. Plug the device into your car, a wall socket at your hotel, or a portable battery pack and bring it with you into

the great outdoors. Then slip your phone in the cradle and boost your service by two to three bars. www.wilsonelectronics.com

Save space on your mobile device, but maintain access to your books, movies, music, and other important files using **Kingston's Wi-Drive**. This portable wireless storage device holds up to 64GB and creates its own Wi-Fi signal that can be accessed by up to three people at once. That means your child can watch “Finding Nemo” on her tablet while you rock to your favorite tunes on your iPod, and another travel companion reads the latest Grisham novel on a Kindle Fire. All of these media files are stored on the iTouch-size device and accessible via a mobile app. www.kingston.com

Not enough space? **Seagate's GoFlex Satellite** portable Wi-Fi drive does the same thing, but offers 500GB of storage and access for up to eight people at once, as long as everyone is not using high-power applications. seagate.com/goflexsatellite

You can also store important information, from business files and copies of your pass-



KINGSTON

port to your music library, on **SugarSync**. This cloud-based service safely holds your songs, photos, multimedia files, and other documents in a virtual vault that you can unlock while on the road. Sync, share, and access your data through an online computer or a mobile app. Upload vacation photos as you travel, too, just in case something tragic happens to your camera or storage devices en route. www.sugarsync.com

Let's say you are driving along a winding road and you need to answer an incoming e-mail. Slip on your **Plantronics Voyager PRO HD** headset, which senses when it is on your ear, launch the company's Vocalyst app, and hit the “call” icon. Once you are connected, simply say, “Send an e-mail” and start talking. Your reply gets converted to text and transmitted. The Voyager can also stream GPS directions and weather reports from your phone, and music from any of your portable Bluetooth devices. It can even read your Facebook wall updates to you. www.plantronics.com

SpareOne can save you in a pinch, if things do not go quite as planned. This slim and lightweight cellphone runs on one AA battery that can stay charged for 15 years, if unused, and it provides up to 10 hours of talk time. Pop any SIM card into this dual band GSM phone and make a call, even if you do not have electricity. You can also dial 911 and be located by rescue crews without inserting a SIM card. Or plug your number into a speed-dial button and give it to your child while traveling, for peace of mind. www.spareone.com

Toshiba's Thrive may seem bulky compared with other tablets, but that is to accommodate several invaluable features



CHRIS CLOR/POWERBAG

without help. www.biscotti.com

Call anyone in the United States and Canada for free from wherever you are in the world with **magicJack PLUS**, which plugs into a standard phone and either your laptop or a router with high-speed Internet. You will pay reasonably inexpensive rates to call other countries. Transfer your current phone number to the magicJack or have your work, home, and cell numbers forwarded to your magicJack number while you are away. That way, people stateside can call you without paying international rates, and they won't even know you are traveling. The device offers the usual calling features, too: voice mail, call waiting, caller ID, and directory assistance, all for free. magicjack.com

Maybe you want to stream live video of your first marathon run — on the other side of the country — for all your friends and family to see, or of whales breaching near icebergs on your Alaska cruise. Link the **Contour+ video camera** to your smartphone and to **Cerevo's new LiveShell device**, and you can broadcast high-definition footage to Ustream.tv, where friends can watch your adventures in real time. The free Contour Connect app also lets you use your smartphone as a remote control to start and stop recording. contour.com, shell.cerevo.com

You cannot stay connected if your devices' batteries die en route. Keep them charged by traveling with a backpack, messenger bag, or briefcase from **Powerbag**. Each has a lightweight, built-in charging station that lets you charge up to four devices at once. You can juice up your cellphone, tablet, e-reader, and GPS, for instance, while dashing through the airport or flying home. www.my-powerbag.com

As your plane touches down or you point your headlights toward home, fire up the WeMo app on your smartphone and with a swipe of your finger, flip on a couple of fans in the house to clear out the stuffy air and turn off the motion sensor guarding your front door. Why? Because you can.

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