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# ZAP THE APP AND PULL THE PLUG

Adventures in Peace of Mind

Steve Gillick

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27 JUL 2015: Three dreaded diseases are affecting the way your clients travel. Michelle explains that she wants to relax and get away from the hustle-bustle of her daily routine, but she suffers from Nomophobia. Alan explains that he wants to do

nothing but relax on a beach and watch the waves roll off the ocean, but he's got a bad case of Macria-podia-dictuo-phobia. Lauren and Rob explain that they need some get-away time from work and want to chill out under a big sky somewhere, but they are victims of FOMO. Under the circumstances, how can you possibly assist?



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Nomophobia is the fear of being away from your cell phone. Macria-podia-dictuo-phobia is the fear of being away from the Internet. FOMO is an acronym for "Fear of Missing Out". Many travellers today suffer from one or more of these afflictions and while reaching out to Twitter and Facebook and Blackberry and Samsung, they are also desperately seeking help from their trusted travel consultants. From all accounts, the prognosis is excellent.

It's called "Unplugged" tourism and the emphasis is on just that...pulling the proverbial plug out of the cell phone and the laptop, tearing oneself away from Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or any of the hundreds of other addictive social media sites and

apps with which your clients may be obsessed (thereby giving rise to the tongue-in-cheek term for these technological wonders as “Weapons of Mass Distraction”).

Perhaps you’ve heard of ‘Wexting’ (walking and texting) where people become so engrossed in their smart phone as they walk on city streets that they bump into people, fall off sidewalks and even step into traffic. And we are victimized by computers - some as small as watches - that at one time promised a four-day work week but now demand our attention 24/7 and eight days a week. Some travellers just need to get away from it all ... and here’s where you come into the picture.

To start, it’s important to understand that the state of being ‘unplugged’ is in the mind of the beholder. One person putting away their cell phone for a few minutes in order to ride a Zip Line, may consider this to be a dramatic sacrifice of their time. Another person may demand a reservation at Camp Grounded, the digital detox experience for adults where the theme is “Disconnect to Reconnect”. You leave your technology in a locker and actually encounter novel experiences such as human interaction and outdoor fresh air activities. The closest you come to Facebook is leaving a hand written message on a central bulletin board and then checking later to see if another ‘camper’ has provided a hand written response.

In the same vein, the idea of ‘disconnect to reconnect’ has great appeal to travellers who are seeking those qualities of ‘Terroir Tourism’ that appeal to all generations. Terroir (referring to the land) plugs into the people, conversations, culture, history, geography, food, experiences, sonic landscapes (the art of listening to nature—hearing

the wind whistling through trees), visual serendipity (the discovery of beautiful things: flowers, birds, sunrise, a mountain, a path in the forest), as well as something called “sweat equity” where you do something physical and feel great afterward because you accomplished that walk or that bicycle ride or that swim—all of which ties you to the destination...the land...the terroir.

And after you qualify your clients to find out what level of “Unplugged” they wish to aspire, you can provide some suggestions.

### ***Pull the Plug - Basic to Intermediate Level***

This level allows the client to unplug for a short time to test their mettle for a more prolonged experience at some point in the future. This is where the notations you made in the client’s database file about their niche market preferences, comes in handy; the idea being that when a client is fully engaged in an activity they love, they will be able to lay the smart phone to rest - at least for a while. Examples may include...

**Faith Tourism:** Climbing hundreds of steps to visit the Batu Caves in Kuala Lumpur, walking the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, exploring Istanbul’s Blue Mosque, joining an early morning prayer service at a monastery in Tibet or temple in Japan. These and thousands of other experiences mostly require that the cell phone to be turned off. The dark lighting and the spiritual inspiration are not necessarily conducive to ‘prexting’ (praying and texting) -

**Culinary Tourism:** Savouring ceviche, nibbling nasi goreng or quaffing tuak, take the taste buds and the mind of the traveller on a separate journey

of pleasure within the travel experience. No laptops are required to fully immerse all your senses in the experience.

**Dynamic Meditation:** Sitting on the hill at Hacienda San Lucas in Honduras while gazing at the valley below in which Copan Ruinas is located; engaging in yoga during sunrise on Koh Samui in Thailand; or just day-dreaming on a sand dune in Moon Valley in Chile's Atacama Desert. Self-reflection and striving for inner peace are generally solo activities that don't require a Facebook connection.

**Shopping Therapy:** Escapism is in the form of collecting favourite designers, styles, shoes, accessories, artwork, and what have you. End-of-day pleasure equates to what was purchased and in many cases, what was paid. This 'all-in' passion may result in massive texting, emails and photo uploads after the fact, but during the process, attention is focussed and resolute.

### ***Pull the Plug - Intermediate to Advanced Level***

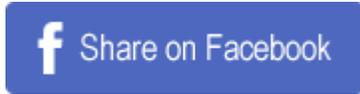
Travel strategies that escalate the level of techno-stress relief may include...

- A visit to the temple town of Koyasan, Japan where you can spend the night(s) in a temple, talk with the monks, join the morning prayer, savour vegetarian cuisine, wander amongst the giant cedar trees in the ancient cemetery and just relax.
- A Yurt (rounded tent) stay in Mongolia where facilities are minimal but the rewards are great: riding horses on the plains, sharing meals and conversation with local families, visiting historic Buddhist sites and more. It's a cultural eye opener.

- A climb to the top of Mt. Sinai (or any mountain or hill, for that matter) or a crawl through a cave or a scamper through a canyon. These activities provide that endorphin-release of accomplishment, fitness and reflection—usually with poor to non-existent cell phone access.
- Various spa and retreat programmes where accommodations exclude Wifi, computers, TV and radio...but instead provide a package of opportunities to exercise, visit and experience the beauty of nature, breathe fresh air, eat healthy food, stretch cramped cell phone muscles, rest text-stressed eyes, and provide respite from the daily grind.

As more technological innovations ‘improve’ aspects of our daily lives, people will continue to turn to travel as the great psychological leveller—something that can restore balance. It may be a great time for travel consultants to start compiling ideas on how their clients can zap that app, pull the plug on their smart phone and make the journey to ‘peace of mind’.





Steve Gillick

A tireless promoter of "infectious enthusiasm about travel", Steve delivers his wisdom once a month in his column *The Travel Coach*.

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