

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Mandarin Oriental helps travelers disconnect in comfort

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Mandarin Oriental helps guests disconnect. Image courtesy of Mandarin Oriental

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Hospitality group Mandarin Oriental is continuing to embrace the trend of tech-free vacation experiences with a program that offers guests a chance to get away from the digital grind.

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With technology encroaching on nearly every aspect of people's lives, more affluent are looking for ways to unplug and rejuvenate. While social media and technology remain key components of the travel planning process, guests are also hoping that a digital detox such as Mandarin Oriental's annual Silent Night allows them to better enjoy their experiences.

"Silent Night is a part of Mandarin Oriental's Digital Wellness philosophy," said Osa Mallo, director of spa and wellness at Mandarin Oriental Miami. "We believe that although technology is needed, it is equally important to set technology boundaries and not lose the art of being present.

"Digital disconnection gives us the opportunity to use our senses more acutely, and to spend time alone, or with others, and be in the moment," she said.

Silence is golden

Held annually in December, the Spas at Mandarin Oriental offer one night of silence at all of locations around the world. This year's Silent Night was held on the evening of Dec. 12.

Spas offered their usual treatment options but no noise, including music, was permitted. All communication between staff and guests took place before the beginning of the spa treatments.



Staff from the Spas at Mandarin Oriental. Image credit: Mandarin Oriental

Select locations also offered additional silent activities, including meditation and yoga.

For guests who want to immerse themselves in silence, Mandarin Oriental also offers more in-depth experiences that promote digital wellness.

A Digital Wellness Escape treatment lasts for 80 minutes and emphasizes human touch. Mandarin Oriental's Digital Wellness initiative also arms interested guests with tips and advice for managing digital tools and boundaries.

"This night was created to give our guests a chance to experience and benefit from temporary disconnection," Ms. Mallo said. "In a very stressful and high-tech world, where availability is expected around the clock, it is so important to disconnect and spend an evening in silence, dedicated to contemplation and mindfulness."

Across its properties, Mandarin Oriental is emphasizing the importance of disconnecting from technology from time to time.

For example, The Mandarin Oriental, Las Vegas helped consumers reshape their relationship with their mobile devices with its first Digital Detox Weekend Retreat.

Those who participated got guidance from spa therapists, with a regimented time spent away from their smartphones. In today's increasingly connected society, providing a reprieve from technology may be just what guests need ([see story](#)).

Upscale unplugging

Mandarin Oriental is not alone in encouraging guests to embrace silence and technology-free, or technology-limited, travel.

"Time is one of the greatest luxuries for people," said Tiffany Dowd, founder and president of [Luxe Social Media](#), Boston. "Tech-free vacations are becoming more popular with affluent people because there is a need to disconnect to reconnect."

With affluent travelers' interest in health and wellness becoming an important feature in selecting their next trip, high-end hospitality brands have been forced to embrace it. However, in the past brands and consumers were more focused on fitness, but now digital detoxes and mental health are becoming more popular in catering to today's overly connected affluent.

Luxury travel destinations are now offering consumers ways to unplug from the technology-focused aspects of their busy day-to-day lives for better mental health ([see story](#)).

Bespoke travel company Black Tomato also helps affluent consumers get away from it all with a service that provides travel with a touch of the unknown.

Travelers who participate in the agency's Get Lost program will not know where they are venturing until their arrive at their destination, requiring them to give up a level of control over their travel plans. Offering a taste of adventure and disconnection, the service revolves around remote points on the map, allowing a vacation to be a holistic physical and mental journey ([see more](#)).

"We live in a world of digital and social media overload," Ms. Dowd said. "An unplugged holiday can be rejuvenating, however, for some it can be more stressful not to be able to stay connected while on a holiday.

"There's a fine balance," she said. "Many people prefer a limited tech vacation than fully going off the grid."

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