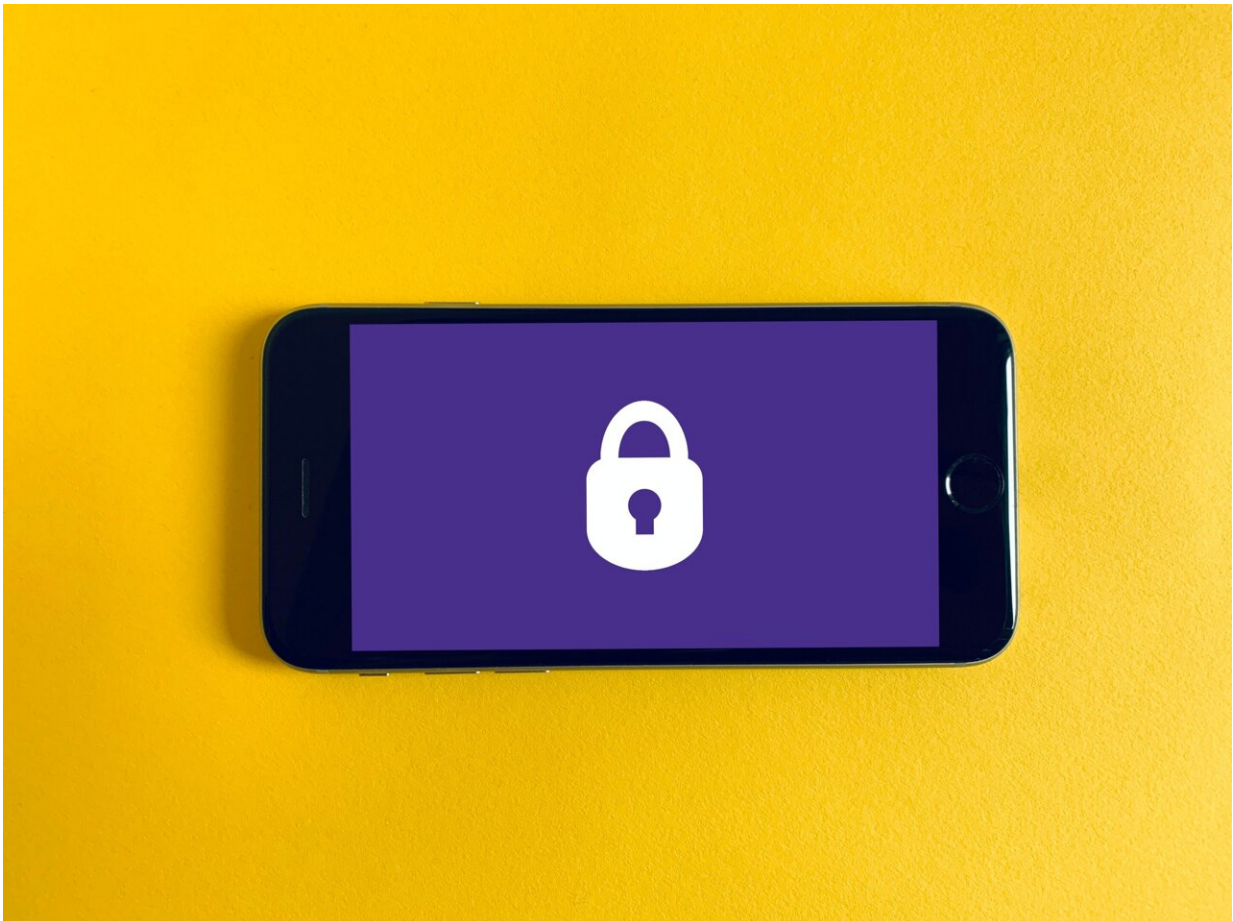


Locking your phone in a box can you help break free

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Going cold turkey without your phone on holiday may be the key to

healthier digital wellbeing, a new study from the University of East Anglia and the University of Greenwich suggests.

This study revealed how digital detox holidaymakers engage in the process of negotiating and rejecting the dominant power of [technology](#). The study also suggested partially disconnection from technology, in this case, a [phone](#), can be challenging. Knowing there is an option to use a smartphone to check information, send messages, or see what friends are up to on social media proved too much of a temptation for most people.

Instead, going '[cold turkey](#)' (full disconnection) helps digital detoxers avoid [digital technology](#)'s temptations. By turning off or putting away their mobile phones, they set a clear boundary between their [holiday](#) and everyday work and life, and fully immerse themselves in the holiday experience.

Dr. Wenjie Cai, Senior Lecturer in Tourism and Hospitality at the University of Greenwich and lead author of the study said: "We live in a society where digital technology is considered 'by default,' 'the good,' and the norm. But we should always be mindful of their impacts on our health. Finding the right balance of digital wellbeing could be challenging at first, but we encourage tech-savvy users to lock away their phones for a few days and travel back to the nostalgic days. It might open up many possibilities."

Dr. Brad McKenna, Associate Professor in Information Systems at UEA's Norwich Business School, added: "As the Christmas and New Year holiday period approaches, holidaymakers might be seeking strategies to enable them to disconnect from their phones and [social media](#), so they can engage more with their family and friends, and create more meaningful holiday experiences without the disruption of technology."

The study, published today in the *Journal of Travel Research*, suggests that the punishment of not being able to use digital technology should be considered as reward in digital-free travel. For example, not being able to use Google Maps or TripAdvisor to navigate and find highly-rated restaurants can be frustrating, but it can also create a sense of excitement of exploring the unknown and the possibility to have unexpected encounters.

Part of the study was conducted at the unique holiday cabin, Unplugged. Guests at Unplugged stay in remote cabins and, on-arrival, voluntarily hand over their phones to be kept in a locked box for the duration of the stay.

Unplugged emphasizes the importance of self-reflection in digital detox trips and the study suggests the more digital-free holidaymaker engage in the process, the more benefits they will get out of this experience. This includes the reflections of the bodily joy of reconnecting with nature and surroundings, re-evaluations of the relationship between self and digital technology, and future vision of digital wellbeing.

"Power and Resistance: Digital-Free Tourism in a Connected World" is published in the *Journal of Travel Research* on November 30.

More information: Power and Resistance: Digital-Free Tourism in a Connected World. *Journal of Travel Research*. [DOI: 10.1177/00472875211061208](https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875211061208)

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