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# NETWORK WORLD



## DISRUPTOR

By Patrick Nelson, Network World  
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## About

Thought-provoking commentary on technologies that are changing the way mankind does things.

### OPINION

## Time for digital detox? Searching for Wi-Fi becomes normal vacation behavior

If you are more concerned with getting and sharing a photo of a sunset than experiencing it, you might need digital detox

Almost a quarter (21 percent) of Americans would rather give up sex than lose Wi-Fi for a month, and 10 percent would give up a friend than forego wireless connectivity.

Those are just two of the findings in a survey conducted by a travel agency that runs digital detox tours.

Digital detox vacations are trips where social media, smartphone and camera use is banned by the tour organizers. The idea is that a more in-the-moment experience is obtained when devices aren't used.

Intrepid Travel, which has four detox vacation tours lined up for this upcoming winter season, says there's a market for vacations free from technology. And to prove it, the company commissioned a study.

The survey, conducted by OnePoll, was of 1,500 cell-phone-using vacation travelers from the U.S.

As one might expect, the survey indicated that people used their mobile devices heavily while participating in recreational activities, and indeed 47 percent wouldn't go on vacation without one.

Would you be “willing to take a break for a few days” from your phone was one question the researcher asked. Forty-four percent of the respondents indicated that they would, which Intrepid Travel says is “definitely encouraging.”

“If 44 percent would take a few days, I’m sure there are at least 15 percent who could commit to a full week-long detox,” Michael Sadowski, an Intrepid marketing team member says in an article on the company's website. Hence the four upcoming tours, which include Ecuador, India, Morocco and Thailand.

## **Technology is a hindrance on vacation**

More results from the survey appear to corroborate the travel company’s opinion that technology is a hindrance on vacation.

Sunsets and sunrise photography is a big trouble item apparently. Thirty-one percent of the people surveyed said they had been “so concerned with getting a good photo they forgot to experience the moment,” Sadowski says. The “avid sunset and sunrise chasers are probably the worst offenders.”

Half of people spend more than one hour searching for a Wi-Fi hotspot at their destination, and “What’s the Wi-Fi password” is now as important a phrase to learn in a host's native language as “Hello” and “Thank you,” says Sadowski, probably only half-jokingly.

## **Giving up friends before giving up Wi-Fi**

In addition to giving up sex before giving up Wi-Fi, the survey found participants would also give up friends. Ten percent would give up their buddies, 4 percent would forego a shower and a significant 37 percent would drop wine and other alcohol rather than lose Wi-Fi for a month.

But the theme of “technology is taking over travel,” as Intrepid Travel says on its website, is the driver for the tours. In fact, 41 percent of respondents said that they choose locations when traveling based on what will look good on social media.

But “life is not meant to be lived through your phone,” Sadowski says. And indeed, the survey found that 24 percent had tripped, fallen or walked into something while looking at their phones.

Making deeper friendships, improved memory and “new perspectives” are benefits of detoxing on vacation, the Intrepid Travel website explains.

“We want to give travelers the opportunity to wake up every day and be 100 percent present in the moment,” it says.

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Patrick Nelson was editor and publisher of the music industry trade publication *Producer Report* and has written for a number of technology blogs. Nelson wrote the cult-classic novel *Sprawlism*.

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