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BROOKLYN OBSERVER

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Brooklyn New & Next

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fastest-changing
borough

FOLKING AROUND

A digital detox in Brooklyn proved more
fun than this tech-addict envisioned

BY ELIZA KRPOYAN

I WAS IN WILLIAMSBURG AND DID THE ONE THING New Yorkers fear most. I gave up my iPhone and Wi-Fi for 24 hours as a part of a digital detox. To jump ahead, it seemed simple enough, I didn't think I had a problem. (That's what all addicts believe, right?) Well, it wasn't easy. But, we'll get to that.

The tech-free retreat was the brainchild of Jess Davis, the founder of Folk Rebellion. The lifestyle brand is driven by a mission to encourage people to become more mindful of the technology they use. Through an e-commerce store and a passionate online community, Folk Rebellion incites conversation about the effects of technology and inspires a device-dependent generation to unplug. She and her business partner, Rachel Greenstein, teamed up with Williamsburg bed-and-breakfast, Urban Cowboy, for the launch. Because what better place to do this than Brooklyn? After all, Ms. Davis lived in Carroll Gardens when she first moved to NYC, and currently resides in Fort Greene. Ms. Greenstein lives in Boerum Hill.

"Urban Cowboy B&B was the perfect setting for the launch of Folk Rebellion," said Ms. Davis. "The B&B and its founder, Lyon Porter, are

all about human connection and so I tend to be a little ahead of the curve already 'getting' the need for the change trying to inspire."

I arrived at Urban Cowboy on Saturday noon. After introductions, I was given to my room. Laid out on my bed were pencils that read "take it easy," a camera and an analog alarm clock for the next morning. (My phone was not an option!) While it hadn't been long yet, I quickly snapped photos of the room since I knew time with my phone was limited, I had drafted a caption on the night read, "I hope to live to tell the story of my York Observer." (Spoiler alert: I survived.)

From downstairs came the aroma of Meatball Shop Executive Chef and Chef Daniel Holzman and Food and Beverage Vice President Chef Daniel Sharp's preparations. When you're in such a room with amazing food and drink, is it a phone, right? Wrong! The table was set with appetizers and the colorful cocktails by Ginger Warburton were the stuff of dreams. My fingers were so itchy to use that I overdid it before my phone was even out. But as the phones were called, the angst began to float away.

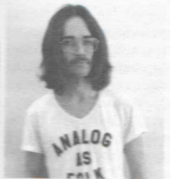
The rest of the evening was spent listening to records, making arts and crafts, and a family-style meal, playing trivia (I won an option) and even a late-night hot tub. It was one of the best evenings I've experienced.

As I got ready to turn in for the night, I found myself searching the bedcover for something my phone of course—part of my morning routine was missing. And in the morning, when I had my actual alarm clock, I woke up to find a valuable lesson: My phone was essential to my system. The retreat came to an end with breakfast, yoga and meditation led by a local teacher, Brower.

I left Urban Retreat with a big takeaway: I would try to not look at my phone first thing in the morning and the last thing at night. "Folk Rebellion is a 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. rule." Folk Rebellion is about moderation and inspiring people to live in real life," said Ms. Davis. For me, this digital detox is a work in progress.

Ms. Davis and Ms. Greenstein are in the process of planning an overnight series for digital dwellers that need a quick reboot, but they don't have the time to travel or funds for a weekend. "Think a night away in a tent, on a mountain, all sans digital distractions," said Ms. Davis. They will be announcing unplugged events soon at folkrebellion.com. "The future, for the more adventuresome, they will be hosting longer, and further, expeditions. "There will be less 'sit at home and stare into the void,' says Ms. Davis. "It's about being present in the moment."

As for another collaboration with Urban Cowboy, the owners of the bed-and-breakfast are planning a series of events for the summer, including a digital detox retreat. The retreat is a weekend-long event where participants are encouraged to unplug and enjoy the outdoors. The retreat is a weekend-long event where participants are encouraged to unplug and enjoy the outdoors.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF FOLK REBELLION

From top left: The Meatball Shop's Chef Daniel Holzman (left) and Chef Daniel Sharp cooking up a storm; Mr. Sharp unplug- gingly admiring three kinds of ceviche; the table setting; punch by Mixologist Ginger Warburton; Author Eliza Krpoyan enjoying the Urban Retreat bedroom; yoga meditation; and, finally, a room at the Urban Retreat.