

WHAT'S YOUR WORKOUT

Road Warrior Hits Reset Button at Resort Boot Camp

Head of a Global Travel Network Gets Back on Track With a Week of Exercise and Healthy Eating



Matthew Upchurch and his wife, Jessica, practice yoga at Indigo Yoga in Fort Worth, Texas. *BRANDON THIBODEAUX FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

By **JEN MURPHY**

1 COMMENT

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When you travel 200 days a year to some of the most lavish hotels in the world, it's easy to gain weight and fall out of a routine.

As the chairman and CEO of Virtuoso, a network of luxury-travel agencies and travel providers, Matthew Upchurch has plenty of opportunities to indulge, but his work also provides him with a way to get back on track. Each year, he visits one of the resort boot camps in his company's network.

Mr. Upchurch, 52, spent years struggling with his weight. "I used to joke I have gained and lost the equivalent of a small kindergarten class, I yo-yo so much," he says.

Like many people, he'd slog away on an elliptical machine for an hour nearly every day. About 15 years ago, he had an exercise physiology consultation at Canyon Ranch in Tucson, Ariz., which is a member of Virtuoso's network. The consultation looked at his cardiovascular health and metabolic rate, among other things. There, he says, he was told, "to burn calories I needed to get my heart rate up to 130 beats a minute."

Mr. Upchurch began amping up his cardio, but for every pound he lost, he gained back two because he didn't change his diet. In June 2012, a friend suggested he try a week at the Ranch at Live Oak in Malibu, Calif., also a member of Virtuoso's network. The luxury boot camp comprises four to five hours a day of group hiking, weights, core work and yoga, plus a vegan diet of about 1,200 calories a day.



Mr. Upchurch and his wife meditate. BRANDON THIBODEAUX FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Participants receive a package with instructions to help them prepare for their time on the ranch, starting 30 days before their stay. Recommendations include walking three days a week and avoiding coffee and alcohol. Mr. Upchurch started prepping 45 days in advance and lost 8 pounds before he arrived.

During his boot-camp week, Mr. Upchurch lost 13 pounds and then another 8 pounds 30 days after. “The Ranch was like a shock to the system,” he says.

He has gone back for a week every year since, scheduling the visit before a seven-day trade show that takes place in Las Vegas each August.

“A trade show in Vegas is full of temptation so I go into it with a healthy mind-set,” says Mr. Upchurch, who has lost and kept off 60 pounds since his first boot camp in 2010.

His wife, Jessica, suggested for their 10th anniversary last year that they do the Ranch at Live Oak’s four-day jump-start program at the Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village, Calif. “At first I was like ‘How romantic—celebrating by hiking, sweating and watching cooking demos,’ but it was great and I felt so good after.”

Mr. Upchurch and his wife live in Fort Worth, Texas, and have a 9 and 6 year old. They have a second home in Seattle, where they reside from June through October. He also has two children from a previous marriage, ages 19 and 17.

The Workout

No matter where he is, he does cardio five to six days a week, aiming to log 10,000 steps a day on his fitness tracker. At his Fort Worth home, two days a week, he does a 30-minute interval workout on an elliptical machine, pedaling three minutes hard and three minutes at an easy pace.

Other days he goes keeps a long and steady pace on the elliptical for 45 minutes to an hour but at a proper heart rate for him to burn calories, between 120 and 140 beats a minute. When in Fort Worth, he walks from 30 to 90 minutes around the steep hills of Lincoln Park four to five days a week.



Mr. Upchurch uses a Jawbone Up24 fitness tracker while on the elliptical machine in his Fort Worth home. *BRANDON THIBODEAUX*

He strength trains two to three days a week. He has dumbbells and a TRX suspension strap at his home in Fort Worth. In Seattle and Fort Worth, he sees a personal trainer one to two times a week to strength train depending on his travel schedule.

Mr. Upchurch met his wife at a yoga class where she was the instructor and says she has been a major influence on his path to wellness.

He goes to yoga at least twice a week and practices Baptiste yoga, a vigorous style of power yoga created by Baron Baptiste and performed in a heated room.

He has a life coach who works with him on meditation. “He told me every hour I go to bed before midnight counts as two hours of rest,” says Mr. Upchurch, who is in bed by 9:45 p.m. He meditates 15 minutes before falling asleep.

The Diet

He estimates he eats 80% less red meat since first attending the Ranch at Live Oak, twice as much more fish, and three times more greens.

He starts mornings with a green shake made from the Ranch at Live Oak’s organic greens powder.

After a workout, he might eat boiled eggs and carrot juice or an egg white omelet with spinach and greens.

He and his wife eat dinner at home 50% of the time. “We eat a lot of fresh salads, whole-grain rices, soups and we love Mediterranean foods like tabbouleh,” he says.

The Gear

Mr. Upchurch spent around \$7,000 on his elliptical machine. He tracks his cardio with a Jawbone Up24 fitness tracker, which retails for \$130. He tracks his strength workouts using the \$1.99 Fitness Buddy app. He pays \$50 per personal-training session and between \$14 and \$17 per yoga class.



Mr. Upchurch makes a green shake. BRANDON THIBODEAUX FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

For the gym and yoga, he likes Lululemon clothing and he wears NikeFree sneakers on the elliptical, and Patagonia and Colombia hiking boots and clothing for hiking. His Ranch at Live Oak organic greens powder costs \$85 for a 35-ounce container. One week at the Ranch at Live Oak is \$6,500.

The Playlist

“When I’m on the elliptical I like to watch things that feed my mind,” he says. “I watch a lot of TED Talks on TV.”

To Get Off to a Healthy Start, Get Away From Old Habits

Paying to have someone wake you at 5 a.m. to hike and do crunches may not sound like a vacation, but it may be a way to jump-start a healthy lifestyle.

“You’re in a beautiful environment without the distraction of work or your kids and you’re just focusing on you,” says Grace DeSimone, national director of group fitness for Plus One, a New York-based network of health-care experts.

Signing up for a boot-camp vacation is like preparing for a marathon. “You don’t just show up at the starting line, you need to do your homework and prepare yourself to achieve your goal,” she says.

Look for programs that prepare participants with suggestions such as walking a few miles each day, Ms. DeSimone says. Any weight loss at a boot camp is “going to be short term if you don’t give your body a chance to adjust slowly and make gradual lifestyle changes,” she says.

She suggests running the program past your physician and looking at online reviews before committing. “

Don’t be afraid to ask for an itinerary or to speak to a past guest,” she says. “Ask if they have a medical adviser on staff and about the background of trainers and counselors. If your goal is to lose weight, make sure there is a nutritional adviser on staff.”

She cautions many people are disappointed when they return to reality.

“You need to be able to pick small slices of concepts you learn at these retreats and integrate them into your life. You wouldn’t run a marathon every week, but you can incorporate parts of the training into a lifestyle,” she says.

—Jen Murphy