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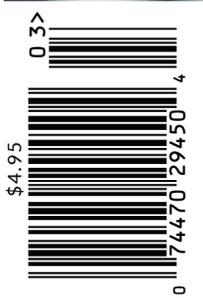
ENTREPRENEUR
ISSUE



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JULY 2016 | FOCUSMAG.US



The Ranch

Finding ME at a Wellness Retreat, right in my own backyard.

STORY AND IMAGES BY WENDY BROKAW KRETCHMER

“Hell, No!” I said to myself when I woke up in the middle of the night a few months ago. This waking up in the middle of the night was a new nasty habit. The stress of the last 2 years had taken over and trampled me with no remorse. In that time I’d experienced: the death of my best friend, the failing health of my father, one daughter suffered a horrific burn accident, another daughter broke her neck [thank you traumatic car accident], my house flooded, and my identity was stolen. So my “Hell No” declaration was that fighting spirit re-emerging as I decided to take my life back and to start taking care of ME, the person that got lost while dealing with these problems and caring for others. Taking care of myself by working out and eating well has been a lifelong priority, but with no time for

anything except keeping my head above water, I found myself in a deep, dark hole. And I wanted out, only I didn’t have the ladder! I needed a reboot. Enter the hero of my story: *The*

Ranch 4.0. On that defiant, fateful night when I awoke, I googled health and wellness retreats. Up popped *The Ranch at Live Oak* in Malibu CA.

My bleary eyes twinkled at the thought of getting away to a luxurious bootcamp retreat. *The Ranch at Live Oak Malibu*, just above the beaches of Malibu, and it’s sister property, *The Ranch 4.0*, located further inland within the walls of The Four Seasons Hotel in Westlake, CA, is the brainchild of Sue and Alex



Sue and Alex Glasscock, owners, *The Ranch at Live Oak*.

Glasscock. It’s an intensive endurance, wellness and nutrition program that kicks your a\$\$ but recalibrates your life with a very structured, one size fits all, bootcamp style health and wellness program.

Both facilities programs offer: a 5:30am [ouch!!!] wake-up call, 4-5 hours of daily hiking, workout classes and yoga, 1 hour daily massages [my favorite indulgence, included!!!], and a 1400 calorie uber clean, vegetarian, no dairy, no soy, no refined sugar, no alcohol, no caffeine meal plan. No fun, right? Not so fast, this food was surprisingly delicious and satisfying!

The basic differences:

Ranch at Live Oak: A 7-day all-inclusive program from Sunday-Saturday, \$6800, completely unplugging (no cell or wi-fi service).

Ranch 4.0: A 4-day all-inclusive program from Thursday-Monday, \$4100, unplugging is done voluntarily.

So as I lay awake that evening, insomnia in full swing, I felt inspired and knew I had to get to The Ranch and fast! I signed up for the *The Ranch 4.0* (R4.0)! This jump-start was the right fit for right now!!! And, spoiler alert, two weeks later, I went! I survived! I loved it! It was everything I had hoped it would be, only better but way more challenging! I am now officially rebooted. After 4 days, I’m completely revitalized and several pounds slimmer. I’m motivated and inspired to keep this ball rolling. This was the kick in my a\$\$ I needed to get back on track. On my journey at *The Ranch 4.0*, I was on autopilot for four days, hiking and working out hardcore, feeling the burn and eating super clean and lean along with the most lovely group of men and women with whom I bonded as we conquered this amazing feat together.

Your stay at *The Ranch* really begins one month before you arrive. You are sent a 30 day pre-arrival packet which makes strong week-by-week recommendations of changes you should make to your exercise, food, sleep, awareness and meditation habits. For instance, you are asked to detox from caffeine, alcohol, diet drinks, processed food, unnatural sweeteners, sugar, tobacco, to name a few, ahead of time, to make the transition into the program easier.

MY DIARY

THURSDAY – ARRIVAL/ DAY 1

I'm feeling excited mixed with nervousness about my adventure at *The Ranch 4.0*. I think my biggest fear is about the food: Will I be starving? Will I be able to get up at 5:30 every morning and fulfill 8 hours of exercise?

I arrive and walk into the California Health & Longevity Institute where we are cheerfully greeted by Rick, the program manager, and the rest of the staff. After filling out a few forms, I'm escorted by staffers Matt & Peter, to the greenhouse to have our first group meeting. We are told that this is where all meals and gatherings will take place. The greenhouse,



located on The Four Seasons property, was taken over by The Ranch and transformed by Sue Glasscock to mimic The Ranch's rustically zen aesthetic. It is beautiful and serene. Rick gives us a brief overview and then we go

around the group of 16, [3 of whom are men], and introduce ourselves and to tell the group one thing about us. This group is comprised of a lawyer, an accountant, a retired ER doctor, entrepreneurs, bankers, actresses, some dot.commers, financial advisors, to name a few. Next, we are split into 2 groups. Half of us will take a 1 ½ hour hike at Los Robles Trail which is a few minutes drive from the hotel, while the other half gets VO2 tested on the treadmill. "VO2 testing" is the single best measure of cardiovascular fitness and maximal aerobic power.

My group gets V02 tested first. Not going to lie, the VO2 testing was a little claustrophobic. You are fitted with something that replicates an oxygen mask but a little more intimidating looking. Your breath is being measured while you're huffing and puffing on the treadmill. The speed and incline start off slow and as each minute passes, your incline and speed go up. I made it to 7 minutes and 30 seconds – I was told that was good for my age, but we would get the results on Saturday night.

While others are being tested, each of us has a one-on-one chat with Rick, a little get-to-know-you session. Then our group heads out for our first hike. Before the hike begins,



we are asked to put our arms around each other in a huddle hug. Rick then provides us with the quote of the day, "Don't limit your challenge. Challenge your limits." And we were off. It was a great moderate "break-you-in" hike--one that was mildly hard, but designed to give you the confidence to come back for more the next day.

We were offered hiking poles and told it was optional, but when I heard that you burn more calories using them because you are using your arms, I was in. After our hike we rewarded with chilled lavender scented towels to refresh us ~ nice touch.

When we get back to the hotel, we head straight into a yoga

class. Upon entering, we were handed tiny "energy bites" that were parceled out: 2 to each person. It was a mash of healthy "stuff" but it gave the illusion you were eating a brownie bite – I was game. Like a dutiful dog, I took mine happily! It tasted great! I could get used to being handed my food, being told where and when to exercise, and twist my arm, when to get my daily massage!



After yoga class, we headed to our rooms to unpack, shower and unwind. On the desk is our schedule for the week. Essentially, the structure of

everyday is the same and looks like this:

- 5:30 am: Wake Up
- 6 am: Morning Stretch
- 7:10 am: Breakfast
- 7:30 am: Departure
- 8 am: Hike
- 12:30pm: Lunch
- 2 pm: Break (or scheduled massage)
- 3 pm: Workout Class (or scheduled massage)
- 4 pm: Workout Class (or scheduled massage)
- 5 pm: Yoga (or scheduled massage)
- 6 pm: Break (or scheduled massage)
- 7 pm: Dinner

After unpacking and relaxing, I headed to dinner. The group ate at a long rectangular table. Our meal for the night was a bowl of dressed butter lettuce, followed by roasted eggplant with lentils & tahini. We went around the table



and reintroduced ourselves. This time we had to share something we were grateful for. I think our whole group was in agreement that we were grateful to be at *R4.0*.

FRIDAY – FIRST FULL DAY

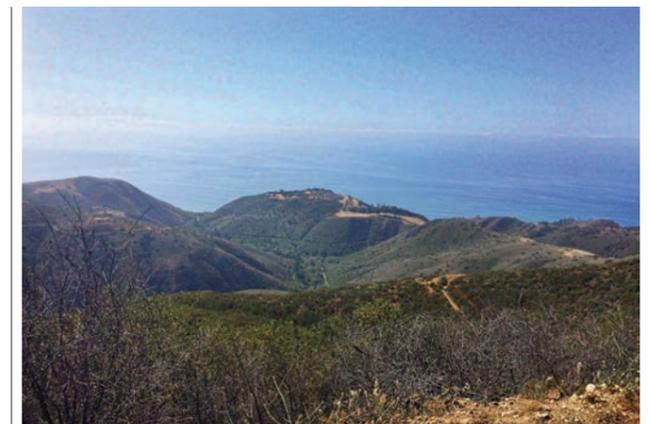
The doorbell rang right on time at 5:30 a.m. I was surprised that I was actually okay with getting out of my super luxurious bed (The Four Seasons has the best bedding!)

to head to morning stretch at 6, then on to breakfast in the Greenhouse. Breakfast looked delicious and was served buffet style with the calorie count next to all the food choices. We were told to stick to about 300-350 calories if one of your goals was to achieve weight-loss. Those that want more than 1400 calories are free to grab extra food for later. Daily breakfast choices included: a smoothie (ingredients change

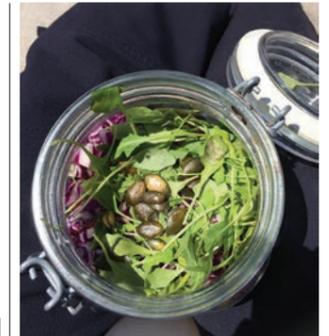


everyday), hard boiled eggs, The Ranch's famous granola, almond milk, oatmeal, mixed berries, apples, pears & bananas. After breakfast, we filled our hydration backpacks and off we went on our first serious hike! This hike was 3 ½ hours long on the scenic Solstice Canyon Trail in Malibu.

I realized real quick that not bringing along my bandana was a big mistake, I'm drenched in sweat. Um, this is some serious, real-deal hiking. I'm not so sure hiking Runyon Canyon was quite



the appropriate preparation. Ahh, but then somewhere past the halfway point, we were given a snack. Yay! Well, not so fast. "Snack" consisted of 6 almonds. Not 5, not 7, that's right, 6 almonds! Oh and a sprinkle of black or himalayan salt to replace the electrolytes our bodies were



sweating out. I gave Rick such a hard time about this 6 almond restriction, that he relented and broke the rule and gave me 1 extra almond. He was obviously feeling generous! Lucky me! Haha! I felt so accomplished when the hike was over, it was truly a challenging feat.

Today's lunch was picnic style on the beach in Malibu. There was no chatter while we ate. In fact it was so quiet that someone in the group commented, "This is the

sound of starvation." Lunch was a tasty black bean salad presented in a cute little mason jar. The only thing that topped it was our doctored coconut water that tasted like lemonade. The concoction was half coconut water, half distilled water with fresh lime and orange. This was the highlight of my day. I drank 3 glasses!

When we returned to the hotel after lunch, I collapsed on the bed wondering how in the world was I going to make it to the core class as 3pm. I took a little nap and relaxed before changing clothes and heading back down for 3 back-to-back classes: circuit, core, and yoga. My prize at the end of this physically intense day: a heavenly massage! Who can't love a place that says, you've worked hard, we demand you go get a massage!

Dinner was a brussel sprouts salad to start, then zucchini pizza. I loved every bite. And because it was Earth Day, we got a special dessert truffle. Gotta love Earth Day! After dinner, we were given an informative lecture on nutrition.



After dinner, I grabbed a bag of epsom salt they handed out with the recommendation that you soak in a hot bath to relieve muscle aches-another awesome touch! I don't think I've ever appreciated a hot bath this much! After the bath, it was straight to bed. Tomorrow is supposed to be an even tougher hike than today... Yikes!

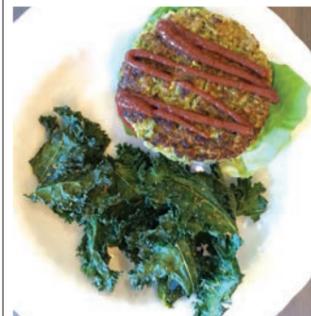
SATURDAY – 2ND FULL DAY

During today's morning stretch I got pulled out of class. It is my turn to do the "BOD POD body composition assessment". The results reveal how much body you have. It's a super cool concept minus the terror of having to find out what the actual results will be. It takes under 2 minutes, to strip down to my bikini to sit in this egg shaped machine. This machine uses air displacement technology and is considered the gold standard in body composition assessment. Our group will get our results tonight at dinner along with our results from the "V02 Metabolic Test".

Today's 4 hour hike was at Point Mugu State Park on the Fossil Canyon. And today's pre-hike huddle quote of the day was, "Our bodies are capable of amazing things, it's our minds we have to convince." Yep! That's for sure. And it was no accident that this was the quote for this hike. As I ascended this long, narrow, never-ending steep incline off the side of a cliff, I discover I have a new found fear of heights! Who knew? If it was possible to hug a cliff while hiking, I did just that. It was grueling, but, the hike was absolutely stunning, filled with beautiful wildflowers and exquisite views for those that didn't suffer from acrophobia.

Two thirds of the way done, we got a snack break. Today's delicacy was a whole apple and some himalayan salt.

Today's lunch was a green pea and millet burger, which, despite description, was delicious.



After lunch we were treated to a cooking demonstration by our incredibly talented chef, Meredith Haaz. We also were each given our own copy of the "The Ranch at Live Oak Cookbook."

It was a little bit of groundhog's day for me: nap, class, massage,

dinner. I don't want this experience to end!



Dinner was a teriyaki portobello mushroom with green curry sauce and black rice. Gasp! I hate mushrooms! I hate curry! Or do I? I ate and loved the whole darn thing. I just might be capable of this vegan lifestyle.

After dinner, we received our VO2 & BOD POD results. They were expertly explained along with how best to maximize our optimal training based on our results. This was one of the best aspects of being a Ranch guest.

SUNDAY – LAST FULL DAY

I'm feeling it in my shins today thanks to all of the accumulated trail miles and wonder how am I going to make it through today's hike. We were warned last night that this hike would be our hardest and longest at 4-4 1/2 hours and would have lots of



ups and downs that would eventually lead us to the site where the tv show MASH was



Text **focus** to 313131 to watch this focusmag.us/tv/theranch



filmed. Stretch class, breakfast, and then off we went to the Phantom trail. Our huddle hug quote of the day is: "We are changed when we are challenged." And yes we were, but despite it being our longest hike, it was my favorite hike of the week. Much like interval training, this provided very challenging uphill and then the fun and fabulous downhill reprieves. As for today's snack, we feasted on 4 carrot sticks and, you guessed it, salt. I'm learning that my body doesn't need that much food to feel satisfied.



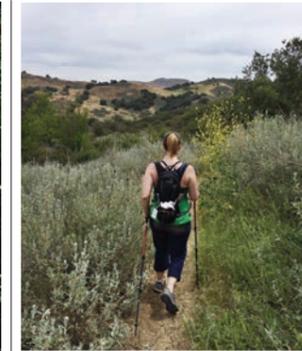
Speaking of food, after the hike, we headed back for lunch, which is my fav of the week, a quinoa and garbanzo salad. I head back to the room for my usual afternoon siesta and decided upon waking to skip the afternoon trio of classes. I was way too

sore and groggy. Oh wait, no, scratch that. I realize that



snacks are given out at 4pm in between classes and I'm slightly ashamed at myself for how quickly I can motivate for a very small container of mixed nuts! Yoga sounds like a nice stretch right about now anyways, haha.

Our final dinner is cauliflower steak and green bean salad. At this point I'm just hoping I can find these super yummy vegan recipes in my new Ranch cookbook when I get back home! It's that or I kidnap our amazing chef, Meredith Haaz. Towards the end of dinner, we have another nutritional conversation about transitioning from R4.0 food into real life. The group is now relaxed, and knowing it's our last night together, most people lingered a little longer



than any other night. We have grown closer and we know the end is near.

MONDAY – LAST MORNING

During morning stretch, we all get called out one by one for the final weigh in. It's a bit like waiting to get your report card. I'm feeling anxious because I think I did well but didn't want to feel too overly confident and then feel disappointed. I think that 2-3 pounds sounds realistic so I'll be happy with that news. Hold the presses, what's that I hear? Did you say 6 pounds? Yes! And 8 inches mostly in my upper body! Let's celebrate people!!!

After breakfast, we have a short (1 hour) good-bye hike! On this final hike, someone in the group asks, "What's your biggest take-away from all this?" I have more than one...

TAKEAWAYS:

I thought that the hardest part of this program would be the food, both the taste and the quantity. I was in fear that I'd be starving with only 1400 calories a day. But 2 things: First, the food was absolutely delicious! Second, I was hungry, but appropriately so. I was hungry when it was time for each meal. I can do this and now I have the visual of what 1400 calories a day looks like.

The hiking was the hardest part. I thought I was conditioned because I regularly hike Fryman and Runyon Canyons. I had no idea how challenging it would be. I had to dig deep. This was hard-core transform-your-body mountain hiking. The staff is incredible, not to mention, very attractive, but more importantly, kind, knowledgeable and encouraging. There was such a positive vibe and spirit from start to finish.

I feel so good, so accomplished, so energized, so challenged, so strong, and so happy! As we were leaving, we were offered a discount if we'd wanted to sign up to come again, umm, "HELL, YES!"

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