



Jungle Fervor

Twice-daily sessions of yoga and hard-core hiking at a retreat in Brazil catapult an author out of writer's block.

I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HERE. If all were right with the world I'd be back in my New York apartment, clacking away at my computer and finishing the book I'm supposed to be writing, which is due in a month. But in the grip of a terrifying, mind-numbing writer's block, I somehow convinced myself I needed to commune with nature, work my body, rest my mind, and take a break from editors and deadlines.

So, I booked a trip to Body & Soul Adventures, a yoga and fitness retreat on Ilha Grande, a remote island—no cars, no paved roads, no billboards—about a three-hour drive and 45-minute boat ride south of Rio.

And now here I am hiking Parrot's Peak, groping my way up an eight-mile, 45-degree slope, over fallen tree limbs, around craters the size of Volkswagens, and through thick jungle vegetation. It's

rained every night, and the earth is sodden and muddy. My shins are caked with dirt, my hair is plastered to my head, and my heart is pounding so painfully I'm sure I'll need a triple bypass right here on this mountain. It doesn't help that the air feels as thick as oatmeal: 85 degrees with 90 percent humidity.

But I guess I'm not as fit as I'd thought. Back home in New York I spin, practice yoga, and kickbox, but I don't hike. Besides, 45 minutes on a stationary bike isn't quite the same as three hours up a 3,000-foot wall. And then, of course, I've spent the past five days kayaking two to three hours a day, hiking three to four (over less tricky