



Paris Yoga Tour

Inspirez et expirez your way around the city famous for love, fashion, and food.

IN PARIS THE CONCEPT of "well-being" is usually associated with a good bottle of wine. But that doesn't stop its inhabitants from flocking to yoga classes. The Parisian Yellow Pages lists some 80 teachers and centers offering classes in all manner of styles and approaches, so the traveling yogi need not worry about finding a place to unwind after a long day at the Louvre. Some studios even offer classes in English.

"In the United States, many people take yoga to become strong and get in shape," says Claire Bornstain Petit, secretary general of the Fédération Inter-Enseignements de Hatha Yoga, an association of yoga teachers. "Here in France, it is mostly for stress reduction and relaxation."

That said, Power Yoga practitioners need not throw in the sticky mat when visiting the City of Lights. Ashtanga Yoga has arrived in Paris in the person of Caroline Boulinguez, who teaches in a studio within shouting distance of the Place de la Bastille. Boulinguez agrees that French people do not share the American passion for physical exertion. "It takes a lot of courage for a French person to take Ashtanga," she admits. "Their bodies are not prepared. I am sure that it will catch on, but it will take longer here than in the U.S." Boulinguez has been teaching in Paris for eight years, and breaking ground is hard work. But there are signs that the Ashtanga mes-

sage is being heard. Boulinguez has recently been interviewed by magazines such as *Elle*, *Marie Claire*, and *Madame Figaro*, who are clamoring over the yoga of Sting, Madonna, and other famous "boule-bistomaniaques"—Parisian slang for a lover of all things Buddhist.

For those still in the throws of jet lag, a kinder, gentler yoga workout is available at the Association Viniyoga Ile de France. Tucked into a lofty building around the corner from the Palais Royal, the organization offers a range of classes in this traditional, low-key style. "The idea is to adapt yoga to each person's abilities," says Bernadette Pajot, president of the association. "You cannot ask a Western person



Clockwise from left: Parisians turn to yoga to *déstresser*; La Tour Eiffel; gargoyles surveying the view from Notre Dame.

who spends all day in a chair to have hips as flexible as someone from India." The small, four-person classes are particularly well-suited to people with injuries or specific needs. Each teacher organizes classes independently, and since classes are small, it's essential to call ahead. There are a few English-speaking teachers at the Viniyoga center. One of them, Evelyn Figueroa, will schedule a special class for you and your yoga troupe if you're traveling in a group.

If the grandeur of the Arc de Triomphe has left you saturated with a feeling of Napoleonic excess, a good dose of Iyengar might be just the thing to straighten yourself out. The Centre de Yoga Iyengar de Paris is located just a few blocks away from the monument in a beautiful Belle Epoque building on the swanky Avenue Victor Hugo. Founded in 1980 by Faq Biriya, the center was the first Iyengar school in the nation. "It was a desert," says his wife Corine, who codirects and teaches at the center. "There has been a lot of development since then. There are now 100 certified Iyengar teachers in France." The Biriya have studied extensively with B.K.S. Iyengar, making trips to India every year. The center offers a full schedule of classes, including special courses for injuries and stress reduction. Be sure to check out the cherubs dancing around the ceiling moldings when you are stretched out in Corpse Pose.

Located in a far more meat-and-potatoes neighborhood, the

Centre Sivananda de Yoga Vedanta looks out over the humble Boulevard Sebastopol, not far from the Pompidou Center. As the only government-recognized Hindu congregation in the country, the center's saffron-clad staff offers hatha classes based on the teachings of Swami Sivananda. The abundant schedule includes two classes in English, which have been quite a hit, according to Swami Kailasananda, the director of the center. "Now even the French students want to take the English classes," she says. For a study in karmic contrasts, walk one block west after class to Rue St. Denis to peek at one of Paris's more flamboyant red light districts.

For a more secular approach, head over to the Rue de Rome and Institut Eva Ruchpaul—the haute couture of Parisian yoga. A few blocks from Gare St. Lazare, the train station immortalized by Monet, this elegantly serene yoga studio offers classes in small, plush-carpeted rooms with vestiges of marble mantle pieces. New students are required to take a private lesson so the teacher can become familiar with each person's individual needs. The technique is hatha yoga as interpreted by Eva Ruchpaul, one of France's yoga pioneers. "We try to achieve a balance between dynamic energy and letting go, on the level of postures and respiration," explains Françoise Blanc, manager of the institute. "Each person's evolution comes from within," says Blanc, who notes that yoga gives you everything you need to become conscious. "Yoga gives you *goût à vivre*—a taste for life." —Margie Ryan

WHERE TO PRACTICE

**Association Viniyoga
île de France**
2 Rue Valois
75001 Paris
01-42-96-44-55
Evelyn Figueroa
01-43-22-60-50
evelyn@club-internet.fr

**Centre Sivananda
de Yoga Vedanta**
123 Boulevard de
Sebastopol
Paris 75052
01-40-26-77-49
Fax: 01-42-51-33-97
www.sivananda.org/paris
paris@sivananda.org

**Centre de Yoga
Iyengar de Paris**
35 Avenue Victor Hugo
75116 Paris
01-45-00-28-48
Fax: 01-45-00-28-88
Institut Eva Ruchpaul
69 Rue de Rome
75008 Paris
01-44-90-06-70
Fax: 01-44-90-06-72
www.evaruchpaul.asso
fr/ier@evanruchpaul.asso.fr
Samasthiti (Ashtanga)
27 Boulevard Henri IV
75004 Paris
01-44-07-31-33
www.chiz.com/samasthiti

WHERE TO EAT

Aquarius 1 (vegetarian)
54 rue Ste-Croix-de-la-
Bretonnerie
01-48-87-48-71
**Au Grain de Folie
(vegetarian)**
24 rue La Vieuville
01-42-58-15-57

**Les Quatres et Une Saveurs
(vegetarian)**
72 rue due Cardinal Lemoine
01-43-26-88-80
**Piccolo Teatro
(vegetarian)**
6 rue des Ecouffes
01-42-72-17-79

WHERE TO GO

Arc de Triomphe
01-44-09-89-94
Centre Pompidou
01-44-78-12-33
Institute du Monde Arabe
01-40-51-38-38
www.imsarabe.org
Jardin des Plantes
01-40-79-30-00
The Louvre
01-40-20-51-51
www.louvre.fr
Musée d'Orsay

01-45-49-11-11
www.musee-orsay.fr
Musée Rodin
01-44-18-61-10
www.musee-rodin.fr
**Opéra-Garnier/Opéra
Bastille**
01-836-69-78-68
www.opera-de-paris.fr
Sainte-Chapelle
01-53-73-78-50
Tour Eiffel
01-44-11-23-23

RESOURCES

**Fédération Française de
Hatha Yoga**
01-45-44-02-59
Fax: 01-42-84-28-30
www.yoga-federation.com
cfcshad@club-internet.fr
**Fédération Inter-Enseigne-
ments de Hatha Yoga**

01-42-60-32-10
Fax: 01-42-92-04-92
perso.club-internet.fr/fidhy
fidhy@club-internet.fr
**Fédération Nationale
des Enseignants du Yoga**
01-42-78-03-05
Fax: 01-42-78-06-27