



Basmati

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While yoga has its roots in ancient India, today there are a variety of branches of yoga that are popular around the world, and not all of them have a lot in common with traditional yoga outside of some classic poses.

I'm not here to debate whether these things should be called yoga or not – really, anything that gets people moving more makes me pretty darn happy – but if you're interested in some modern twists on a yoga class, check out these innovative approaches. These classes can also be a great way to introduce someone to yoga –one thing they all have in common (besides yoga, of course) is a predilection for FUN!

Aerial Yoga

In aerial yoga, you perform various poses while maneuvering in a sturdy silk ribbon that hangs from the ceiling. The ribbon serves multiple purposes: it can help stabilize you during challenging poses, and it supports you when you hang upside down in creative inversions. Doing inversions while suspended from the silk minimizes the compression on your spine and neck – and let's face it: it's also pretty fun and gives you the chance to live out those fantasies of being a trapeze artist in the circus. In aerial yoga, you'll get all the benefits of regular yoga, plus increased lengthening of ligaments (you'll feel stretchier!), and by encouraging blood flow

to your head, you'll see some temporary benefits such as better color in your face and a minimization of varicose veins and fine lines (you'll glow!). Check out video of a class [here](#).

Perfect for you if:

Inversions are your favorite part of yoga class

You've always wanted to be in the circus

You're not afraid of heights

Avoid if you have heart failure, spinal problems, or glaucoma

AcroYoga/Couples Yoga/Partner Yoga/Tandem Yoga

Often, yoga is thought of as a solitary practice, even if you join a class: it's you, your mat, and your breath. Increasingly, however, people are flocking to yoga that embraces connecting with a partner. AcroYoga (and sometimes variations such as couples yoga, partner yoga, or tandem yoga) involves yoga poses that require three people: a *base*, a *flyer*, and a *spotter*. The base is the person connected to the ground, serving as a source of support and stability for the flyer, who is elevated and balancing on the base, letting gravity do most of the work. (The spotter makes sure the flyer lands safely and may make adjustments and suggestions to improve the pose.) A strong core is a must for some of the complicated dynamic poses a flyer contorts into. There are also static poses you can do, which are a great entry point if you're looking to try AcroYoga. Couples yoga and partner yoga may be less physically intense, focusing more on shared breathing, or featuring poses with less "flying" where both people are firmly on the ground. Couples or partner yoga may not require the same yoga experience (balance, coordination, core strength) that AcroYoga does, so if you're new to yoga, start there. (And don't worry if you don't have a partner – most AcroYoga classes welcome individuals and will team up people accordingly...bonus: you get to meet new people!)

Perfect for you if:

You want to build trust with someone

You want to be able to work out with your Significant Other

You're a kid at heart – these sessions can be playful

You're ready to up your yoga game – the balance and strength required are no joke

You've always wanted to be an acrobat

Snowga

I'm a sucker for a fun portmanteau, and snowga doesn't disappoint: you guessed it – it's yoga in the snow. Skeptical? You're not alone – Bikram yoga, or hot yoga, has surged in popularity in part due to the idea that the warmer room loosens muscles and facilitates

stretching. But snow yogis say that you sometimes get so heated during a snowga practice that you take off your gloves and unzip your coat, despite the frosty setting. It's also a great way to combine the cardio of snow sports with the zen of yoga – often, classes will ski or snowshoe to a remote location for the yoga session. Bonus: the beautiful scenery you get to soak in while you're downward dogging in the snow. Interestingly enough, skiing and yoga aren't so different: the chair pose you do in yoga class helps you with your standard ski tuck, and improving balance and increasing flexibility in the hips are super important in both sports. And who needs special yoga props when you've got ski poles and snowshoes to help with those difficult poses?

Perfect for you if:

You're on the mountain all winter anyway

You like outdoors yoga and want a change from “warrior pose on a beach”

You like doing yoga with lots of clothes on

You want yoga that helps tone muscles you use in snow sports

Salty Yoga

If you want a yoga practice that emphasizes opening up and cleansing your lungs and diaphragm, salty yoga may be the one for you. The class meets in a room covered with pink Himalayan salt and often salt is also aerated into the room. You may notice the taste of it on your lips a bit, as if you just spent the day at the beach. But the therapeutic benefits are obvious: salt is anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antifungal, and antiviral, so breathing it in during a yoga practice gives your lungs a healthy, detoxing scrub! Often, the asanas focus on opening up the lungs and thoracic cavity, making this practice a great choice for those with respiratory challenges or anyone looking to improve their fourth chakra (heart). It can also improve skin conditions such as eczema, boost immunity, and soothe allergies. After practice, expect to feel detoxed and refreshed. Check out a short video of salty yoga here.

Perfect for you if:

You want to feel totally detoxed after yoga

You want to feel the sinus-clearing joy of a day at the beach, but you're nowhere near the beach

You want to really focus on breathing during your yoga practice

You want yoga that works on the fourth chakra

You want your yoga to also improve your skin

Animal Yoga (Goat Yoga/Cat Yoga/Dog Yoga)

It's no surprise that animals enhance our lives every day – and we're well aware of the therapeutic benefits of animals, whether a companion pet or service animal. Pets help you live longer, can help with allergies, and lower blood pressure, just to name a few ways they're awesome. If you don't have your own pet – or you're itching to try a new critter out – give one of the types of animal yoga a shot. There's goat yoga, cat yoga, dog yoga, horse yoga, bunny yoga. In some instances, the animals may be trained therapy animals, which can add another level of benefit – especially for, say, children with autism or those suffering from depression and/or anxiety. Sometimes, classes have the added mission of featuring animals that need homes – and if you want to practice yoga with the dog you've already got at home, check out these tips for building the bond between you while you get your yoga on. While animal yoga may not deepen your yoga practice (our furry friends can be distracting), it can be a fun change-up to your usual yoga routine that fosters your connection to the wonderful animals on this planet.

Perfect for you if:

You love animals

You're trying to convince an animal loving friend to go on a yoga retreat with you

You want to spend more time with your dog

Yoga is about relaxing and having fun for you, not so much a vigorous workout

Underwater Yoga

Maybe you've seen the breathtaking pictures of yogis in impressive poses while hovering underwater. Underwater yoga isn't just for the photo opportunity, though – the natural buoyancy of the water helps you balance and achieve positions you might not otherwise be able to – there's less gravity (your body bears about 20% of its weight when you're in chest-deep water), so you don't feel the resistance you normally do in yoga and can really focus on your stretching and breathing. Some people like to practice difficult poses underwater first, before taking them to the traditional mat. Underwater yoga can also make the practice accessible to people with bone and joint problems, like arthritis or the elderly. The props are more fun than traditional yoga props, too – bust out that water noodle to help you keep your balance while you're figuring it out! And while I wouldn't recommend underwater yoga for someone who doesn't know how to swim at all or feels uncomfortable in the water, you don't need to be Michael Phelps since you can do plenty of poses in chest-deep water.

Perfect for you if:

You love being in the water

You want to do yoga, but need less stress on your joints and bones

You've always fancied yourself a mermaid (or merman)

Photo by Kristen Carter www.kristencarterphotography.com for Arizona Goat Yoga
www.azgoatyoga.com

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