



Andrea Marcum,
U Studio Yoga

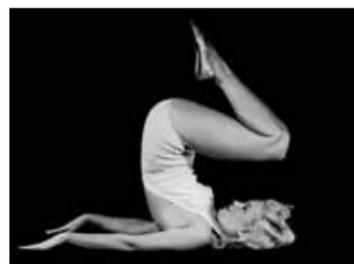
THE YOGIS OF HOLLYWOOD striking a pose

Fame, fortune and fit go together in Los Angeles, where not to strive for the body beautiful is a sin. While most Hollywood exercise fads fizzle faster than a Kardashian marriage, the ancient art of yoga endures – albeit with pumping rock anthems and signature postures. Yoga devotee **Emily Carr** salutes the sun next to Tinseltown's finest.

PHOTOGRAPHY **HUGH HAMILTON**



Marilyn Monroe in *Life*, 1948



WHEN MARILYN MONROE performed a series of yoga poses for a photo shoot with *Life* magazine in 1948, and later claimed the exercises improved her legs, Hollywood's nascent love affair with the ancient Indian discipline was thrust into the spotlight. Not by coincidence, it was also the year that Monroe's Latvian yoga teacher, Indra Devi, opened her own studio in Hollywood. A student of the renowned Indian guru Sri Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, Devi had taught in India and China

before arriving in the US. Known as "the first lady of yoga", Devi's famous followers included Gloria Swanson, Robert Ryan, Greta Garbo and Jennifer Jones.

A star of Bombay cinema in the late 1920s before discovering yoga, Devi was as colourful as her celebrity devotees. She continued to be a major presence in LA throughout the 1960s and '70s, and was close to spiritual guru Sai Baba. As one of the first yoga teachers in the West to become a celebrity in her own right, she began a tradition

that continues today. Some of the best-known yoga teachers call Los Angeles home, commanding high fees as they travel the world like rock stars, teaching yoga to ever-increasing numbers of fans.

Today, there are hundreds of yoga studios in the greater Los Angeles area, many of them attached to, or owned by, teachers almost as famous as their celebrity devotees. Actor Robert Downey Jr sings the praises of teacher Vinnie Marino, whose style of yoga - Vinyasa Flow - is set to thumping rock music at Yoga Works in Santa Monica. While Downey Jr prefers to take private lessons, the likes of Heather Graham, Kate Hudson, David Duchovny, Jeremy Piven and Adrien Brody have all been spotted posing in downward dog at Marino's premises.

Another high-profile teacher, Mandy Ingber, counts Jennifer Aniston, Kate Beckinsale, Ricki Lake, Brooke Shields and Helen Hunt among her

"THE BEST-KNOWN YOGA TEACHERS CALL LOS ANGELES HOME, COMMANDING HIGH FEES AS THEY TRAVEL THE WORLD LIKE ROCK STARS"

students; while world-famous hot yoga guru Bikram Choudhury has taught pop stars such as Madonna, Britney Spears and Beyoncé.

Of course, most of Tinseltown's A-listers prefer private classes, but some, such as Russell Brand and Miranda Kerr, have been seen taking the wildly popular classes taught by Gurmukh at Golden Bridge, LA's most renowned Kundalini studio. Orlando Bloom has been known to pull up a mat at the Hollywood YMCA.

For a drop-in class with teachers of this calibre you can expect to pay about \$US20. Without exception, all the teachers mentioned here travel for weeks at a time to attend retreats and workshops around the globe, so it pays to check websites to make sure they are "at home", and arrive early for classes, which are almost always at full capacity.



Asana addicts (clockwise from above): Mandy Ingber with Jennifer Aniston; Helen Hunt; Jeremy Piven



MARILYN MONROE PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN KOBAL FOUNDATION/GETTY IMAGES; JEREMY PIVEN & HELEN HUNT: SNAPPER MEDIA; MANDY INGBER & JENNIFER ANISTON: GETTY IMAGES

SHIVA REA Exhale Center for Sacred Movement

245 South Main Street, Venice. (310) 450 7676.

www.exhalespa.com
www.shivarea.com

With her California surfer-girl looks, Shiva Rea changes the energy of a room just by entering it. She is best known for popularising yoga Trance Dance, an energetic and fluid style that incorporates dance moves and upbeat music with traditional *asanas* (postures).

A native Californian, Rea spent a decade immersing herself in the Ashtanga school of yoga, but draws on many styles and philosophies in her classes, retreats and teacher-training courses.

Rea describes her style of yoga as "Vinyasa Flow integrating the tantric *bhakti* roots of yoga, Krishnamacharya's teachings and a universal quantum approach to the body". The term *vinyasa* refers to the alignment of movement and breath, as well as to the movements between each pose in a series.

BIKRAM CHOUDHURY Bikram Yoga World Headquarters

Suite 150, 11500 West Olympic Boulevard, Los Angeles.

(310) 854 5800.

www.bikramyoga.com

Love him or loathe him, Bikram Choudhury is a powerful global brand. Born in India, Choudhury founded the Yoga College of India, first in San Francisco, then in Beverly Hills in 1973.

The Bikram style of yoga is what Starbucks is to coffee, and what all great franchises are founded on - students know exactly what they're going to get each and every time. With Bikram, that's 26 poses done in exactly the same order, ➤

WELLBEING



Andrea Marcum goes with the Vinyasa Flow (above and far left); U Studio Yoga class



in a room heated to 105°F (40.5°C) and with 40 per cent humidity. Choudhury says the heat “softens” the body in preparation for the poses, and flushes away toxins.

Choudhury has attracted controversy for his legally aggressive attempts to protect his style from imitators, despite freely acknowledging that the poses are derived from the ancient Hatha tradition of yoga. In person, he also bucks industry norms, driving around Los Angeles in a white

Rolls-Royce and waxing lyrical about how great it is to have “made it” in America. But for sheer entertainment and a great workout, a class with Choudhury is an only-in-LA experience.

ANDREA MARCUM
U Studio Yoga

Fifth floor, 5410 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles.
www.ustudioyoga.com

At the opposite end of the spectrum is Andrea Marcum’s

U Studio, a boutique affair that fits just 33 mats. Marcum teaches a Vinyasa Flow style of yoga, with an emphasis on alignment. Her studio, a light-filled space on the fifth floor of an art deco building that affords a clear view of the Hollywood sign to the north and downtown LA to the east, has become one of the top destinations for serious *yogis* and *yoginis* in the know.

Marcum says she likes to bring people to yoga who might not be predisposed to it, which is code for the fact that her classes are physically punishing. “I’m known for my notorious abdominal sequence, but it goes much deeper than that,” she says. “It’s really about getting to a truth and becoming more comfortable with that truth. I think we can turn our yoga into yet another distraction and I try to move

people right away from that.”
Marcum can be booked for group classes and private lessons.

GURMUKH
Golden Bridge,
1357 North Highland Avenue, Los Angeles. (323) 936 4172.
www.goldenbridgelyoga.com

Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa is the co-founder and co-director of Golden Bridge yoga, located in the heart of Hollywood. The American-born teacher began practising yoga in 1969 and has now been teaching Kundalini yoga and meditation in Los Angeles and around the world for more than four decades.

“Kundalini is like the PhD of yoga,” says Gurmukh. “People often come to it after doing many other disciplines and finding they want something more. It’s a yoga that anyone can do, no matter ➤



Bryan Kest limbers up (above); at his Power Yoga class in Santa Monica



ONLINE

SHOP LIKE A STAR

Post-yoga workout, hit the shops with LA-based celebrity stylist Sophia Banks-Coloma's guide at qantas.com/travelinsider

how old or what shape they are in. Kundalini works to clear the mind of old patterns and when you clear those patterns it gives you more creativity, less fear, better health. It also forms a community.”

More like a one-stop wellness shop than a yoga studio, Golden Bridge also offers vegan food, massage and osteopath treatments, astrology readings and even the odd celebrity sighting. Gurmukh is highly regarded and her classes are always packed to the rafters.

MEAGHAN KENNEDY TOWNSEND Up Dog Fitness

8599 Santa Monica Boulevard,
West Hollywood.
(310) 360 7200.

www.updogfitness.com

This is your best chance to rub shoulders with a Kennedy.

Meaghan Kennedy Townsend (granddaughter of the late Robert F Kennedy) won't rub your shoulders, though – she'll likely move them back towards your shoulderblades into upward dog position, or adjust your hips in triangle pose.

Townsend's Up Dog Fitness is in the heart of West Hollywood, meaning the clientele is young, beautiful and drenched in ambition. As with other classes in the upper echelons of LA's yoga studios, Townsend's yoga is physically challenging and upbeat – those who like to hear a DJ while practising their asanas will feel right at home.

She has installed a cycling studio next to the yoga space, so now students can get their “oms” and their cardio workout all in the one place. There are showers and locker-room facilities, as well as

two hours of free parking with validation, so it's popular with busy Hollywood types looking to sweat it out between meetings.

BRYAN KEST Power Yoga Studio West (studio A)

1410 2nd Street, Santa Monica.
Power Yoga Studio East
(studio B), 522 Santa Monica
Boulevard, Santa Monica.
poweryoga.com

Imagine receiving a new-age scripture lesson while sweating it out in 35°C heat. Detroit native Bryan Kest introduced Power Yoga to California more than 25 years ago, after studying in India under Pattabhi Jois, and his calling card is a physically challenging, 90-minute yoga session accompanied by teachings that focus students' attention on the mental and spiritual aspects of the poses.

“People are realising that our mental state is the largest factor in our physical wellbeing,” says Kest. “That's what the class discourse is about: reminding people to stay present, to be gentle, to think about powerful stress-reducing qualities: calmness, gentleness, humility – all the stuff we work on, on our yoga mats.”

Kest was the first to establish a large following in LA with an anonymous, donation-based payment system (classes are a recommended \$US15, but students are encouraged to simply pay what they can afford). There are also “yoga on demand” classes on his website, which cater for students who are unable to attend either of the Santa Monica studios. 🌐

✈️ For airfares call Qantas on 13 13 13 or visit qantas.com. For holiday packages to Los Angeles call Qantas Holidays on 13 14 15.