



by Judi Burton

Every time you turn around these days there is a new yoga studio tucked in between an all-you-can-eat buffet and a consignment shop along the Grand Strand. Yoga used to be thought of as a fringe form of exercise, and by some, a strange religion. But the trend has caught on so much so that it is no longer a trend, but a serious player in the world of health and wellness. By now, most people have seen a video, watched a group on the beach or even done a few poses themselves. Kids are learning it in gym class and pro football players and golfers have incorporated it into their workouts. September is National Yoga Month, and in honor of that, we are going to take you on a tour of some of our favorite local studios.

B Balanced, Pawleys Island

Brittany Todd is an ex-Olympic swimmer who injured her shoulder and was out of the pool for good, until she found yoga. Now, she specializes in yoga for the injured. "Yoga helped build my strength, increase my range of motion, decrease pain, and calm my mind. I fell in love with yoga right away, and by the end of one summer, I was hooked. A few years later, I finished my RYT [Registered Yoga Teacher] training in Asheville, NC, with Stephanie Keach." Brittany wants to help her students recover from injuries both physically and mentally, and build their confidence by helping them find their body and mind connection. B Balanced also offers

nutrition plans, Zumba, boot camp and personal training.

Carolina Power Yoga, North Myrtle Beach

Tara Gurry opened up this brand new studio and is having a wonderful time incorporating her exceptional athleticism with her yoga style. Tara teaches Vinyasa yoga, which she learned from Baron Baptiste, a very popular yoga teacher and author who has helped Super Bowl champion coaches and athletes such as John Gruden, Ray Rhodes and Herschel Walker. Tara is also an elite athlete, perfecting sports like inline skating, marathon running, and TaeKwon Do. Her studio attracts football players, iron man tri-athletes, and regular people who just want an awesome work out. "I am able to challenge the people that come into my class, but am able to modify it for everyone. I can have a 220 pound tri-athlete in the same class as a 9-year-old girl and everyone will get the proper workout." Tara explains that Vinyasa yoga means flowing with the breath, or one breath-one movement. "As you inhale, you are thinking about the length and the proper alignment of your body, and as you exhale, you are thinking about the stretch," she explains. She also incorporates her creative side into the classes with a poetry reading or verse at the end of each class. Tara is also a professional photographer and offers yoga-pose portraits for her clients for an extra fee. She graduated more than 20 years ago from the University of

South Carolina where she studied photography, and has found it to be very useful in her yoga classes.

Island Wave Yoga, Pawleys Island

Hot Lava Flow is not the name of a chocolaty dessert. This is the yoga of choice for the Island Wave crew. Jodi, Ryba and Meagan turn up the heat, literally, to about 88 degrees in the room and work your body through a Vinyasa flow-style yoga class. Instead of having pauses in between, the movements are fluid. Bring a calorie counter and watch the calories burn faster than a cardio workout. Traditional hot classes are regimented with repeated poses. This is not a traditional hot class. "The Lava Flow yoga can go a little deeper into certain poses and helps detoxify the body through an excellent sweat," says Whitney Messervey, cofounder of Island Wave. "You really get connected to your body." Whitney also mentioned: "If you can't touch your toes, I'd especially like to meet you. We are very flexible with the inflexible; so don't be scared away by the Hot Lava Flow. Look at it as a class you will get to, soon enough."

Secret Lotus, Myrtle Beach

When entering Secret Lotus you may be surprised to see a woman in her third trimester doing crazy poses with an incredible amount of grace. That would be Lyndsay Bhan Trimble, owner and all-around amazing yogi. Secret Lotus follows a strict adher-

ence to the traditional 5,000-year-old, eight-limbed path of classical Ashtanga yoga, which has been handed down from generation to generation from India to the world. Something that separates her studio from the many others is her prenatal class for all stages of pregnancy. Expect to sweat and get a safe yogic workout with use of breath and movement. Many of Lyndsay's classes have been described as hard, because they are. Ashtanga is for strong, experienced students. If you are not a strong yogi yet, don't worry, she and the other teachers will get you there. If she can stand on her head with a baby in her belly, she can get you in shape for the harder classes later on. Lyndsay also offers natural birthing classes, Reiki and massage therapy.

Shanti Yoga, Myrtle Beach

You can study yoga from a yogi who learned from two of the most famous gurus in the world. Dawn Yager is a direct student of New York City-based Sri Charma Mitra, who is world renowned for his "headstand-with-no-hands" technique. There is an awesome picture of this on his website, *DharmaYogaCenter.com*. Being very traditional, the only way to be certified by him is by going directly to him and learning. Her other famous teacher is Sri Goswami Kriyananda, who lives in Chicago. Dawn will be graduating in October from both schools, and Sri Goswami will ordain her with a Kriya lineage Swami title. Shanti Yoga studio focuses quite a bit on the philosophical aspect of yoga as well as the physical. "Shanti is not just about twisting into a pretzel; it's about philosophy and becoming the best person you can be," says Dawn. Her specialty is working with small groups and individuals who want to train very deeply in the yoga traditions. "The process of yoga is a redirection to your true self." Out of gratitude for the great amount of support she and her other teachers have received, she is offering three full days of classes for free from Sept. 9 through 11.



Surf the Earth, Pawleys Island

Paddleboard yoga is an outdoor class for the adventurous at heart. Join Andrea and Deanna on a beautiful early morning paddle out to the lonely southernmost point of Litchfield Beach, where the only ones watching your class are the pelicans. Enjoy water-and nature-themed poses such as The Dolphin, The Swaying Palm Tree, and The Fish as you gaze



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out into the vast blue ocean. Don't like to do yoga in the sand? No worries, they do it on the board for better balance and less mess. This class is perfect for water babies, as it will strengthen and lengthen and tone the muscles you will need for swimming, surfing, kayaking and paddleboarding. "It is a full-body workout, but the upper body gets special attention," says Andrea. This excursion is two hours long and is not an everyday class. If you are not familiar with paddleboarding, you will get an expert tutorial before launching. "The journey there and back has just as much to do with balance as when we get to the beach and actually do yoga," says Andrea.

Yoga in Common, The Market Common in Myrtle Beach

Delightfully dubbed "the Mothership" of several offspring and sibling studios, Yoga in Common has created an entire yoga community by training teachers and inspiring students to open their own studios. "Yoga is really waking up in Myrtle Beach," says owner Linda Phillips. "One of the things that makes us different

is we have something for everybody. Our calendar is so full of very different classes [that] anyone can go to our studio. We attract people from Murrells Inlet, Surfside, Myrtle, even Conway," adds Linda. Many of the classes are Vinyasa flow style, which require a certain amount of experience, but other interesting classes range from gentle, restorative, beginners, and even yoga for golfers. "I have so many people that come here for a while and then tell us later on that they were going through a rough patch in their lives and yoga brought them peace from all of their problems." Yoga in Common is a full-service studio, which is open from early until late. "You don't have an excuse not to come with our time schedule."

Yoga in the Forest, Carolina Forest in Myrtle Beach

This is the sister studio of Yoga in Common and shares the same format as its counterpart, but it has one special twist: Plus-size yoga is being offered for those who are curious and would like to participate, but are not as limber or as confident as the, shall we say, smaller, more flexible people. This is a great class for those who do not want to have to compete with other students who are smaller than them, and will ease the pressure of trying to hit a pose that would seem otherwise impossible. "Anyone, with any body type, can do any yoga pose; they just don't know it yet," says owner Linda Phillips. "This class was requested by some of our students who said, 'I'm not a string or a pretzel, but I really want to do this.' It wasn't very hard to make the decision; we thought it was a fantastic idea." Of course, many other classes are available as well, but watch out for this class. It is going to get really popular very quickly.

For more info on B Balanced, call 843-833-1998; Carolina Power Yoga, 843-877-5839; Island Wave, 843-314-3206; Secret Lotus, 843-333-2656; Shanti, 843-467-5444; Surf the Earth, 843-235-3500; Yoga in Common, 843-839-9636; and Yoga in the Forest, 843-236-6634.