

Fitness



An aerial yoga class at Trium Fitness, with student Ong Li Wen, 22, displaying the candy cane pose. This form of yoga was introduced to Singapore in 2011. ST PHOTO: DAVE LIM

YOGA AIR FORCE IS TAKING FLIGHT

Created by an American, aerial yoga with its hammocks has found its niche in Singapore

Nicholas De Silva

To the uninitiated, stepping into the Trium Fitness studio at Aperia Mall on a Friday afternoon might seem as if one has entered a casting call for Cirque du Soleil.

"Trust the hammock," instructor and founder Dawn Sim reminds her students in preparation for the next pose. She reassures them that each silk hammock can support a 250kg load.

Moments later, the class of 18 people is in midair, a metre above the ground, legs outstretched, bodies parallel to the ground, imitating Superman in flight.

The move dubbed the "rocket" is one of many poses unique to aerial yoga, made possible by the hammock suspended from the ceiling. Trium boasts 20 such hammocks, making it Singapore's largest aerial yoga studio.

Aerial yoga or anti-gravity yoga is one of the later iterations of the ancient practice to hit Singapore's shores.

The brainchild of an American, former competitive gymnast and acrobatic dancer Christopher Harrison, aerial yoga was a way to combine his two loves – aerial performances and yoga – and their union created a new form of exercise.

The regimen draws inspiration from various fields aside from yoga such as Pilates, ballet barre, calisthenics as well as strength and con-

ditioning exercises. Together with the effects of gravity and body weight, which are emphasised by the hammock, a full-body workout is achieved.

First introduced to Singapore in 2011, the exercise has since gained considerable traction, with several studios offering classes.

To cater to the growing demand, Trium has scheduled more classes and has also created an advanced aerial class.

Prices for a single group session at local studios range from \$30 to \$55.

Julian Poh, who practises at Trium multiple times a week, credits the exercise for whipping him into shape.

"Just doing it (aerial yoga) has proven effective... I've lost 10kg since I started (in January)," noted the 38-year-old sales executive.

Besides providing a good workout, aerial yoga is also regarded by some as alternative pain-relief therapy for those suffering from musculoskeletal problems.

Practitioners to whom The Sunday Times spoke acknowledged that they notice the effects from aerial yoga rather quickly.

Michele Ong, who recently tried it for the first time, noticed the effects straight away. The 36-year-old portfolio manager has been plagued by back pain due to the nature of her job which involves constant travelling and long hours sitting.

She said: "After just one session, I could feel that my hip flexors were not so tight and my back pain disappeared."

Sera Tan, 38, who has been practising at Platinum Yoga weekly for about a year, explained: "You feel it (the effects) immediately."

"You don't ache that much (compared to other forms of yoga) if you do it properly. You'll sleep much better too."

The demographic of both studios is diverse, with people from different backgrounds and age groups, although Carolina Lee, Trium's studio manager, says most of its clients are PMETs (professionals, managers, executives and technicians).

At Sim's class, it is also evident that age is just a number.

Montessori educator Chiara De Silva, who is in her early 50s, was at her sixth aerial class, having attended regularly every week for the past month.

"Aerial is just so good for my body, it really stretches the muscles and relaxes me. It switches up my exercise routine and challenges my body," she said.

The exercise with a lift also attracted Sumedha Hore, who was so delighted with her first experience that she signed up for a 10-session package thereafter.

The 18-year-old communications and new media undergraduate at the National University of Singapore said: "I used to find other types of yoga boring because they require a lot of patience but this (aerial yoga) was really fun as I got to hang in the air."

Fun was not something Emmanuel Pelingon, a 31-year-old healthcare professional who practises aerial yoga once a week at Platinum, initially had in mind. He was apprehensive about aerial yoga at first because of his fear of heights but eventually managed to overcome it. He now uses it to complement his gym training.

"Building and strengthening muscle are two different things. You cannot get both at the gym," he said.

He also refuted the claim that aerial yoga is easy, saying: "Once you're up there and inverted, you don't know where your legs are."

ndesilva@sph.com.sg

AERIAL YOGA: BASIC POSES

CANDY CANE (ABOVE)

Heavier use of arm strength and the core allows the participant to wrap his or her legs and body through the centre of the hammock. Balance is required once in the pose, so he or she does not tip over to one side.



FLOATING TREE

Using leg power and some upper body strength, the practitioner pulls himself or herself up to stand in the centre of the hammock on just one foot, while the other foot rests on the opposite thigh. Balance is required and if a fear of heights exists, that needs to be overcome as well.



BUTTERFLY

This pose is achieved by manoeuvring the silk hammock so that the fabric covers both feet at each end. The participant stands upright on the fabric and using each arm to press apart the sides on the fabric, opens it up to look like the wings of a butterfly. This is a really good stretch for the inner thighs and requires a certain level of confidence and arm strength.

HotBods

Text and pictures by Lim Yaohui



Leon Bosco, 26
Air steward

Height: 1.68m Weight: 60.3kg

Exercise regimen: I work out mainly for strength and try to hit the gym at least three times a week for a good 1½ hours each time. My workout routine varies from chest and triceps to biceps and shoulders to back and legs. I try to steer clear of cardio, as I am hoping to gain as much mass as I can.

Diet: Chicken breast for sure, along with any style of beef and to end the day, I like to indulge in some Indian-style lamb or fish. I try my best to stay away from sugar, for health and for bulking reasons. I also stay away from poorly cooked pork as I had a very bad experience once. Seafood to me is fine, but I would rather have red meat any day.



Jamie Victoria Guna, 25
Ex-stewardess

Height: 1.58m Weight: 48kg

Exercise regimen: I practise yoga, rock climbing, muay thai and play badminton every now and then. I do something almost every day, sometimes twice, depending on my schedule. I do listen to my body and take a day off when I need it.

Diet: I do not have a specific one but I have been cutting down on meat, even though I love it. I follow the old adage of "everything in moderation" when it comes to my diet.

Aerial yoga
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