

Feeling hot!

Heidi Dore went along to **Bikram Yoga Brighton** to see what all the celebrities are bending over backwards to try

Although I had been a keen yogi for years I was nervous when I took my first step into the steamy world of Bikram, where glamour model Jordan is a regular visitor. Firstly, I feared looking a prat in my shabby tracksuit bottoms alongside an army of slender toned bodies in bikinis and hot pants.

Secondly, I wondered how on earth I would survive a punishing 90-minute workout in sweltering 40 degree heat. Curiosity and the promise of a bargain got the better of me. A £20 deal giving unlimited classes for 10 days lured me to find out about the regime that has addicted the likes of Madonna and George Clooney.

I first turned up at the Portslade-based studio on a dismal grey day last November. I felt immediately at ease as I stepped from the autumnal gloom into the warm and funky inner world of flaming orange suns. Soon I was stretched on my mat in a darkened room. The session had not even begun but already I was sweating buckets. The lights snapped on and in seconds the class was on its feet with hands clutched under chins, breathing and bellowing, their elbows up to the ceiling. I managed to grasp the basics by sneaking glances at the woman beside me but barely had a chance to put it into practice before the class moved on. Time waits for no man in a Bikram studio.

The first session was relentless. My butt strained skyward, chin to chest, nose to knee, toe to face, heel to groin. At the end my face burned, my head spun and my body was quivering from the loss of 500 plus calories. I was destroyed. "You'll never forget your first class," says Bikram director Carolyn Jikiemi-Roberts, known to most as 'CJ'.

With a ratio of 45/55 males to females, Bikram has a reputation as the place where single men go to find fit women. But given the red-faced, sweat-sodden state of me and my fellow yogis, it seems doubtful romance could blossom here.

At the end of my introductory offer I was surprised to find myself hooked. I noticed new powers of concentration, shiny eyes, clear skin and an

added spring to my step. The steamy temperatures barely bother me now and, weirdly, I delight in the cooling sensation of sweat. Bikram is repetitive, following 26 asanas without variation. Yet each session gives me a dramatically different experience as I discover why small details such as where you put my thumb or chin make a powerful difference.

Miraculously, the stiff upper back and knitting needle pains between my shoulders are beginning to ease. I have spent a small fortune on chiropractic and massage treatments and despaired of being able to shift them.

You do not need to be a celebrity or have a perfect body to feel at home at Bikram. Senior citizens and sufferers of debilitating conditions such as ME and arthritis are raving about the dramatic improvements to their health



since they started coming to the studio, when it opened in January 2009. People do not need any previous experience to take part. "The classes are geared for beginners. You do not need to be fit or flexible. You get fit once you are here," says CJ. Find out more from www.bikramyogabrighton.com Telephone 01273 420279

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