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Bend me, shape me

Even though you're barefoot, you can burn hundreds of calories practicing vinyasa yoga.

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I stink. No, really. I smell. And I put on deodorant. I swear.

Not that it matters. I think I've sweated more in the past two hours doing yoga than I usually do running.

I'm not a big runner -- bad knees, weak ankles -- so I usually prefer the elliptical machine. But when Invoke Yoga and Pilates Owner Amy Peddycord told me you could burn up to 540 calories per hour doing yoga, I was all ears.

I'd taken some yoga classes before, but they were more like a sustained set of stretches that made me feel unbalanced, uncoordinated and, overall, clumsy. And I rarely felt as if I'd worked out afterward. I knew yoga could be intense. Heck, Madonna credits much of her amazing physique to yoga. I'd just never experienced it.

Well, today was the day.

FEEL THE BURN

I arrived at Invoke just a few minutes before the 10 a.m. session. On this particular Saturday, instructor Gina Radice was also holding her once-per-month three-hour class. But since it'd been well over a year since I'd taken a yoga class, I wasn't about to tackle that monster.

I had a hard enough time the previous day when Peddycord gave me a refresher lesson. I was sure I'd either a.) fall over and make a fool of myself or b.) keel over and die. I did lose my balance once or twice, but overall I didn't do nearly as badly as I'd expected.

When I get situated, I quickly realize I'm the only female in



Bend it like Kimiko: INTake reporter Kimiko Martinez leans backward into a pose at Invoke Yoga and Pilates, located at 970 Fort Wayne Ave. -- Tom Klubens / For INTake

VINYASA INTENSIVE

Interested in trying an invigorating, powerful style of yoga that can burn up to 540 calories per hour?

• **Where:** Invoke Studio, 970 Fort Wayne Ave., Suite C.



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the class. Two men are sitting on the bleached hardwood floors as Radice walks in and begins tinkering with the stereo.

I set up and begin some light stretching as she tinkers with the sound system. The two men do the same.

Finally we get the music going, Radice turns down the lights, lights some candles and the four of us begin. We quickly work from some basic warming up and stretching types of poses to a series of sun salutations. Two more women sneak in a couple minutes after class begins, and we all move from standing to poses with names like chataranga, plank, cobra and downward dog.

I'm breathing heavily but steadily as we continue in constant movement.

Next, we add a sequence of warrior poses, which always makes me feel powerful. I envision myself out on some acropolis or grassy hill at sunrise like a mighty Trojan as I lunge forward, arms out in a T. The more we do, though, the more I realize just how much my quads are burning. Sweat is dripping down my face. But warriors don't wobble, so I just keep powering through.

We're a good hour into the class by the time Radice transitions us into some stretching poses and balance work. My legs are already a little bit shaky as we hold in prolonged, deep lunges.

And plank, where I have to hold myself in the upright position of a push-up, is my ultimate enemy. I know plenty of people who have cores like the Earth's rocky crust. But my core is more like the planet's immense mass of molten magma -- devoid of shape or definition.

There are muscles there somewhere. I know there are, but they're hiding beneath that layer of lava.

SORE, BUT LOOSER

Aside from plank, anything that requires balancing on one foot, or heaven forbid, on two hands, is even worse. I get up into a backbend with some help from Radice. But I think I slightly strained my hamstring in the process.

Tree (balancing on one foot) isn't too bad if I can keep my eyes focused.

But there's no way I can even attempt crow. (Just think of sitting in a low crouching squat, balancing your knees on your shoulders with your hands between your legs.) Ain't gonna happen.

Radice and a couple of the others are fine doing the twisting and turning and balancing that many people envision when they think of yoga.

But you don't have to be a human pretzel. And Radice continuously reminds us to do what we can, be content with our bodies as they are and work within the confines of our own limitations.

She assists us during certain poses, corrects a posture or helps intensify a stretch. And she pushes you ever so slightly, but not to the point where you feel like you're overdoing it.

By the end of the two hours, I've had an intense, cardiovascular workout, but I feel stretched and relaxed, too. My mind is clear, and my muscles, I know, are going to be sore later.

- **When:** Two-hour class every Saturday in fall (until Dec. 18) from 10 a.m. to noon; three-hour class held from 2 to 5 p.m. every first Saturday of the month.

- **Cost:** Drop-in prices are \$20 for the two-hour class and \$30 for the three-hour class; multiple-class packages also available.

- **Info:** (317) 631-9642 or www.invokestudio.com.

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