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TEACHERS' CORNER

HAVE MAT WILL TRAVEL

By Jaymie Meyer

One of the perks of traveling as a corporate spokesperson is connecting with IYI teachers all over the U.S. After becoming a member of the IYI Teachers' Association and receiving the international directory (which is also available on the IYI website), I decided to try to take a Yoga class in each city that I visit.

I began by e-mailing the IYI teachers or visiting their websites to find the classes that worked for my schedule. I used Mapquest to get directions (text only, thank you very much, for this map-averse yogini!). Whether practicing in a world-class commercial space or in an instructor's home studio, the classes have been nothing short of delightful. The welcome I have received from members of the 'IYI tribe' has been heart-warming and the classes help reduce stress, increase my energy and, perhaps most importantly, allow me to feel at home wherever I go.

In Columbus, Ohio, I experienced a class on High Street. Hence the studio's inspirational name: Yoga On High. I chose Marcia Miller's class because she and her husband opened the original Integral Yoga Studio in Columbus, Ohio in 1976. Since founding Yoga on High in 2001, Marcia and her two partners have realized their dream of offering a full spectrum of classes in many different styles of Yoga.

I was impressed to see that the Level II class was packed at 7:30 on a Monday night with nearly 40 people comfortably filling one of three large studios. We did extensive work on our backs, using props to encourage heart-opening asanas. Like most of the master teachers I feel drawn to, Marcia conducted the class with a keen sense of humor, impressive self-knowledge and a willingness to share her own challenge of easing an ever-busy schedule. The class ended with what I believe to be the heart of the IYI technique - a generous Yoga Nidra. I left the studio feeling blissed and slept like a baby. Yoga is alive and well at YOGA ON HIGH in Columbus, Ohio.

In Cleveland, I connected with a teacher named Debbie who holds classes in her home. A member of the health care profession, she does not advertise and is happy to have the 4-6

weekly clients who have found her via word of mouth. She has created a lovely, inviting space in her basement; wood paneling, low pile carpet and subtle lighting make for a wonderfully intimate atmosphere. She welcomed each of her students by name and obviously knew a lot about them and their day-to-day lives. This class was very close in structure to the Level I Integral class. I arrived a little early, so we had a chance to talk. Although I wasn't able to take Debbie up on her offer, she volunteered to take me sightseeing - at the Cleveland Zoo and other local attractions - while I was there. I was truly touched by her generosity. She also invited me to take her class for free, but I felt compelled to make an offering. Debbie remembers her Level I training as one of the best experiences of her life and hopes to continue her training at Yogaville in the near future.

Finding an Integral class in Nashville, TN was not so easy. I did however exchange e-mail with an IYI teacher there who helped me find a studio close to my hotel. I ended up taking a class taught by a teacher who specializes in Flow. This 75-minute class was humbling and interesting. I knew it would be challenging and different from what I am used to. We performed four different series of Sun Salutations (5 each) in approximately 10 minutes. (That's 20 Soorya Namaskarams at the speed of light!) The entire class was rigorous and aerobic. The teacher had a beautiful technique and was able to demonstrate the asanas flawlessly. After thanking the teacher, I slowly made my way back to the car; I couldn't wait to take advantage of the hotel whirlpool. For many days afterwards, I thought a lot about the different styles of Yoga that people practice. I wondered whether people's personalities have anything to do with the style of Yoga that appeals to them. While I consider myself highly motivated and a tomboy (still), I prefer a slower, deeper method, which encompasses close attention to technique. This is not a criticism of the class, but rather an observation of how I appreciate the opportunity of having the time in the IYI technique (both as a student and a teacher) to find the 'sweet spot' in every posture. And of course, as one's practice deepens, this 'sweet spot' evolves.

You might wonder why I don't forgo the potential hassles of finding Yoga studios in unfamiliar surroundings and simply practice in my hotel room. I often do practice by myself. But being on the road can tilt my inner sense of balance. I am there to do a job, which often involves communicating complex, technical information, a very left-brain activity. I enjoy it a great deal but it can be draining. While locating out-of-town classes can be challenging, it's certainly well worth the effort. In addition to taking me away from the world of business, I am able to connect with like-minded individuals. Because the IYI technique (in my experience) evokes a palpable sense of peace and well being, I benefit from being in the presence of IYI teachers. If I lose my internal balance, I find that it is often restored after practicing with fellow IYI yogis and yoginis. Truly, it is like finding a home away from home, wherever I go.

A final footnote: traveling yoginis (even after restoring their inner balance) can be a bit scattered. Kudos to the rental car company in Nashville, TN, which found my yoga mat in the backseat and promptly sent it home, where it awaits further adventures in Georgia, Washington, DC and Maryland!