

# BODY AND MIND



Silvia Duarte

**W**hatever reason a person decides to pursue yoga, a vast collection of spiritual practices and techniques aimed at integrating mind, body and spirit to achieve a state of enlightenment, the Algarve is home to some excellent teachers who have embraced this ancient philosophy. Inside spoke to three of the area's leading yoga teachers who, through intensive training and enriching travel experiences, are sharing their knowledge and insight with others in Lagoa, Silves and Portimão.

Carl Hawker's story is a familiar one: "I was going through some problems about 20 years ago, and a friend suggested I try yoga. I did one class with a teacher in Lagos and never missed a day from then on."

Describing the clarity he felt after a few months, and seeing the improvement in the lives of his friends, whether mentally or physically, Carl made the decision to follow this "amazing path" and share it with others, and now teaches at his own gym in Lagoa.

In the belief that one must "tune the body to ultimately tune the mind", Carl began with the physical path of Hatha yoga – what we commonly call yoga in the West – before doing extensive reading and engaging in the practice of Raja yoga, the royal path of meditation. Alongside visits to India, where he spent time in ashrams and studied under different masters, Carl undertook several courses, from beginners to advanced, with the International Yoga Teachers Association (IYTA).

Although yoga – meaning union – comprises various different paths, Carl chose to teach Integral Hatha Yoga at his studio in the Just Body Fitness gym in Lagoa. Considering it "one of the most comprehensive forms you can learn", the class combines the physical training of Hatha, the chanting of Japa yoga, the meditation of Raja yoga, and Pranayama breathing.



Carl Hawker

Once again, he emphasises the physical side of the practice and notes that during the class, every muscle of the body is used. "How can you find peace if every time you sit down you're in pain?"

When asked if yoga is for everyone, Carl replies: "It is everybody's birth right to find the peace that's inherently inside us. In today's materialistic society, most people will never find that peace, and yoga helps us find it."

Classes take place twice a day on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and private classes are also available.

Visit [www.justbodyfitness.com](http://www.justbodyfitness.com) or contact 282 342 022 for more information.





However, whilst noting that yoga is about “finding your place in the sun”, Silvia points out that it's not a magic tonic: “Yoga won't solve your problems – you will still have ups and downs, moments of happiness, sadness or loss – but it is essentially a tool for how you live your life. It changes the way in which you deal with those problems, gives you strength and a different consciousness to face life's adversities.”

Incredibly proactive in her approach, Silvia created Portimão's first meeting of yoga teachers, as well as initiatives and events such as the Zen and Rituals days. Often found on Praia Grande beach – she is the teacher behind the popular paddleboard yoga every Saturday morning at 8.30am throughout the summer –, Silvia currently teaches at the CLCC language centre in Portimão (a room she describes as unique, bright and with an energy all of its own) and Clínica João de Deus in Silves.

For timetables, visit [www.silviaduarte.info](http://www.silviaduarte.info)

With more than 25 years' experience as a fitness instructor, Silvia Duarte is one of the best-known yoga representatives in the Algarve. Having taught holistic classes for many years, including Pilates and tai chi, Silvia truly surrendered herself to the yoga philosophy around five years ago, also during a difficult period in her life. “It was that feeling of 'this is what was waiting for me!'.”

With extensive training combined with annual trips to India – she describes her first trip to Nepal, Thailand and Tibet, where she had contact with the monks, as “the journey of my life” – as well as numerous retreats and workshops under the great yoga masters, Silvia's motto is to look within oneself: “Above all else, yoga is about self-discovery. It's accepting ourselves as we are, and peace, balance and the true essence of each person comes with that acceptance.”

Whilst her classes revolve essentially around Hatha yoga, the teacher believes it's not about touching your toes or doing the poses (asanas) perfectly; it's the journey itself. “I see lots of people in serious need of this practice. They come in like shadows of themselves and there's nothing more fulfilling than seeing the changes after a few months.”



One of the region's most respected yoga teachers is Catarina Ordaz Wentink, who teaches from her home studio in Portimão or at clients' houses, alongside therapeutic classes for those with specific problems, and at the Health & Happiness Studio in Alvor for 'absolute beginners'. Grateful for the “different techniques and knowledge that yoga teaches us”, Catarina was initially drawn to yoga as a form of exercise, but after trying that first class in Amsterdam 18 years ago, she was hooked. Years of teacher training courses followed, and as an ongoing learning process, she still attends regular courses and classes, and undertakes workshops and retreats with the great yogis.



Catarina Ordaz Wentink

“I believe that through regular practice, we can gradually unravel and understand the body's language, integrating it with our mind and soul and thus surpass and transcend ourselves and understand the Universe that surrounds us,” says Catarina.

From her experience as a yoga teacher, Catarina spotted a gap in the market and, in 2002, she and her husband set up the company YogaMaterial, which provides support material for those who are less flexible and ensure the more advanced poses are done comfortably and safely. From non-slip mats and a range of cushions (including bolsters and eye-pillows) to cork or foam blocks and even handmade blankets for meditation, the company produces and sells products made with quality materials that are natural wherever possible.

For class timetables or for more information on the products available, visit [www.yogamaterial.com](http://www.yogamaterial.com). ■