



Students follow a vegetarian diet, avoid alcohol, and rise early enough to make the daily 5 a.m. class. Most stay at least a month

group as a whole. Beginners get separate instruction for part of the day. Class ends at 8:30 a.m., after which many students adjourn to nearby cafés. Whatever they order must be vegetarian. Alcohol, too, is off-limits.

The strict regimen doesn't seem to be a problem for the students, according to Marcus Fontoura, a senior research scientist at Yahoo! Research in Sunnyvale, Calif., who is on his first pilgrimage to Mysore. "I practice at 5 a.m. in Califor-

nia, too. I'm used to it. Everyone is."

A month's tuition is 26,900 rupees (about \$600), with additional months 17,900 rupees (about \$400) each. There's no weekly rate since the school requires a one-month commitment—no refunds if you leave early, either, and some students do. The Institute is open from January through March and June through December, except for a short break around yearend.

When the school is closed, Sharath

**CLASS IN PROGRESS** (clockwise) Students go at their own pace through the practice's poses as teachers move about, offering adjustments and suggestions; Institute founder Jois; Mysore Palace; teacher Rangaswamy

travels abroad. His workshops in New York, London, Sydney, and elsewhere have been attended by a host of celebrities, including Gwyneth Paltrow, Madonna, Willem Dafoe, Sting and his wife, Trudie Styler, and Mike D., drummer for the Beastie Boys. Sonya Jones, wife of hedge-fund magnate Paul Tudor Jones and a close

friend of Guruji and Sharath, has made a few low-profile visits to Mysore, too.

While yoga beckons many tourists, it's not the only reason to visit. Mysore and its 1.5 million residents are still somewhat sheltered from the wave of modernity that has swept through India over the past decade. An ancient city, Mysore gained sovereignty as a kingdom near the end of the 18th century. The main palace, built in the Indo-Saracenic style that incorporates Hindu, Muslim, Gothic, and Rajput styles, was commissioned in the late 19th century and completed in 1912. It remains one of the city's most popular tourist attractions.

Mysore is also close to some of South India's finest wildlife sanctuaries. Two national parks, Bandipur and Nagarhole, draw visitors for jeep safaris into the jungle and stays at eco-friendly resorts. The area also boasts renowned health-and-beauty spas, such as Indus Valley Ayurvedic Centre, and the regal Brindavan Gardens, which has served as the colorful backdrop of countless Bollywood movies.

Residents have adapted enterprisingly to the stream of yoga adherents. Locals rent rooms, apartments, and even houses to visiting students, and they will arrange for phone and Internet service.

For travelers who prefer something more upscale, there are several good hotels in the area, including Hotel Regaalis, Royal Orchid Metropole, and Lalitha Mahal Palace Hotel. Rates run from around \$100 to \$170 a night for a double room. Dinner at a high-end restaurant, such as the Tiger Trail at the Royal Orchid Metropole, costs about \$40 to \$60.

The best times to visit are winter, fall, and—if you don't mind the monsoons—summer. The Institute is closed in April and May because it's just too hot, even for those who seek to transcend the physical. ■