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Bikram yoga finds following in Durham

By [Nicole Kyle](#)

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Cassidy Fleck/ The Chronicle

Bikram Yoga Durham, a new studio in Durham, offers yoga classes in 105-degree heat and 40 to 50 percent humidity.

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Students lay relaxed on their backs, palms facing up, enduring the heat and humidity. Yoga in Durham just got quite a bit hotter.

Bikram Yoga Durham, which opened Aug. 27, provides a new yoga experience for residents. The series of yoga postures, developed by Bikram Choudhury, is intended for a heated environment and is supposed to protect and repair muscles, promote relaxation and detoxify the body.

So if traditional yoga poses are not quite tough enough, try attempting them in 105-degree heat in a room with between 40 to 50 percent humidity. 'Sweaty' is often an understatement, and the only practical clothing is swimwear or Spandex.

"If you can do this for 90 minutes, you can do whatever you want, physically speaking," said Director Mani Tyler, who called the facility the "Saks Fifth Avenue of Bikram."

In just over a week after opening, the studio has attracting between 20 and 35 people each session, Tyler said. On Wednesday, assistant basketball coach Steve Wojciechowski was spotted at the facility in a Team USA T-shirt.

Some residents had been waiting for the studio to open for a number of weeks.

“I was stalking it until it opened,” said Katie Coleman, a Durham resident. Coleman added she has also done Bikram before, although the studio also welcomes beginners.

Owners Ralph and Andrea Newman, with Tyler’s help, spent about a year developing the studio. It employs three full-time, certified Bikram teachers—including Tyler and Newman—and two part-time instructors. Classes are offered at least three times per weekday and twice a day on the weekends.

For Newman, the dedication to the practice comes from a traumatic experience. He suffered multiple severe injuries and two major accidents, including an attack that burned nine percent of his body and a near-fatal motorcycle accident. Newman attributes his successful recovery Bikram Yoga, which he has been practicing almost every day for the past six years.

“I found this yoga and it saved my life,” said Newman. “I want to share this yoga with the community—it’s very important to me.”

Bikram Yoga Durham wants to create feelings of health, comfort and connection, Newman said. He called the studio “truly a Bikram yoga college” where class is serious.

The experience is not supposed to end at the same time as class. Perks for students include ice-cold, lavender-scented towels distributed after the lights go down and a cooler full of fruit-flavored popsicles.

“They’re my favorite,” said Coleman, “I really look forward to it after class.”

The studio also uses state-of-the-art and hypoallergenic technology including three air-handling units, two humidifiers and tankless water heaters to heat the studio, prevent mold and conserve energy, Tyler said.

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