

Embassy of India

Lisbon

Yoga and Ayurveda in Portugal

Yoga:

The Portuguese people have an abiding interest in ancient Indian systems of health like Yoga and Ayurveda. Any online search will reveal yoga's skyrocketing popularity in Portugal, especially in the last 3-4 years. Yoga vacations, detox retreats, wellness holidays and yoga teacher training programs are held at a variety of locations across Portugal. There are several Yoga studios that teach traditional Ashtanga, Sivananda, and Iyengar Yoga, as well as modern-day Vinyāsa Yoga, Hot Yoga, gymnastic Yoga etc. along with meditation, massage and Ayurveda. Some popular Portuguese celebrities are known to practise Yoga like Sara Matos (Actress, singer and model), Ana Rita Clara – (Actress, activist and TV presenter), Laura Figueiredo (Actress), Cuca Roseta (Fado singer, Sofia Mano (Actress), Jani Gabriel (Model), Ruben Rua (Model). As per one media report, football star Cristiano Ronaldo practices Yoga for agility and stress management. There are more than 15 Yoga institutes and Indian yoga and meditation groups like the Art of Living, Isha Foundation, Brahma Kumaris, ISKCON Hare Krishna etc. in Lisbon and Porto. Some hotels in Portugal also have wellness centres where yoga classes are being offered.

Yoga Institutions:

There are more than 15 Yoga institutes and Indian yoga and meditation groups like the Art of Living, Isha Foundation, Brahma Kumaris, ISKCON Hare Krishna etc. in Lisbon and Porto. Some hotels in Portugal also have wellness centres where yoga classes are being offered. A list of such Yoga classes is given below*:

1. Portuguese Yoga Confederation
2. Art of Living Portugal
3. Casa Vinyasa
4. Iyengar Yoga Centre (follows BKS Iyengar school of Yoga)
5. Budha Dharma Centre
6. Sivananda Yoga Centre (follows Swami Vishnu Devananda)
7. Yoga Shankara Studio
8. Ashtanga Yoga Tree
9. Prema Yoga
10. Espaço Sadhana Bairro Alto
11. Padma Yoga Centre
12. Natha – Yoga Spiritual School and Tantra
13. Centros de Yoga em Portugal – CPYOGA

14. Associação de Yoga Integral

15. Abhyasa Yoga Centre

(* This list is taken from information available in the public domain. The Embassy neither takes ownership of this information nor endorses any of these Centres. It is simply a collation of publicly-available information for those interested.)

A few Universities in Portugal also offer Yoga courses and training facilities:

i. In 2019, the Lusófona University (Private) introduced a Postgraduate Course in Yoga Instruction, aimed at individuals with some experience in yoga and interested in practical philosophies of life in the context of holistic health and well-being, and reflective awareness. The Course aims to provide a theoretical and scientific understanding and refinement of personal practice of yoga and meditation. It provides methodologies and development of pedagogical skills in teaching yoga, with 352 hours of face-to-face training on weekends (from 9 am to 6 pm) for 2 years. It includes practices of the techniques taught, research and theoretical work and practical internship during the 2nd year.

ii. Many universities in Portugal had been running a special programme called 'Yoga and Stress-free Exams' in May-June

iii. Faculty of Science and Technology, University of Lisbon, Monte da Campus has regular classes through-out the year and Short term courses on Yoga and Ayurveda are conducted in Lisbon University by our very own Dr Paulo Hayes and Dr Paulo Meira.

iv. Today Yoga is reportedly practised by over 10,000 school children in 162 schools across Portugal. We have also been working with the Portuguese Ministry of Education to introduce Yoga in the curriculum of public schools, starting with a pilot project, with assistance from VYASA University in Bengaluru, to scientifically evaluate the benefits of yoga for school children. An MoU for this research project was also signed during the Portuguese President's state visit to India last 2020, although the project has been delayed by the pandemic.

Embassy initiatives in Portugal:

--Since 2015, the Embassy has largely been organising its main IDY event at the iconic Belem Tower, a UNESCO World Heritage site from where Vasco da Gama sailed for India in 1498. Other events have also been organised in big stadiums/public spaces with hundreds of participants including local dignitaries.

-The followership for Yoga increased after the arrival of ICCR appointed Yoga teacher in the year 2018 who actively promoted Yoga and also conducted classes for the Portuguese government officials (MOFA, Policia Judicial etc.) and other diplomats, which created a lot of goodwill for India. The post was withdrawn in July 2020. We have diversified our outreach to these various local and international organisations in promoting Yoga and Ayurveda by collaborating with different organisations.

-In 2020, the Centro Lusitano de Unificacao Cultural (CLUC) collaborated with the Embassy in the translation and publication of 1500 "Patanjali Yoga Sutra" books from Sanskrit to Portuguese. The book was released jointly on last IDY. Several articles on Yoga and Ayurveda have also been published in local media from time to time. Several

other books on Yoga and Ayurveda have been distributed to institutions and Yoga Centres.

-The success of all these collective efforts by Embassy and various Portuguese entities can be gauged from the fact that no of IDY events have grown from just 1 in 2015 to more than a dozen different initiatives in 2021! Also, the feedback from these events has been very encouraging too- with participation more than doubling every year (from 200 in 2015 to 7000 and counting this year, including online and social media impressions!)

-Thus, the tremendous rise in participation shows that despite the pandemic, we continue to promote wellness through Yoga & Ayurveda through lectures, talks, presentations, publications and online Yoga sessions. It is always an endeavour of the Embassy to engage with multiple partners and different stakeholders in the process of promotion of these treasures of ancient knowledge and spiritual wisdom.

Some of the recent initiatives of GoI which may be of interest to Yoga professionals and practitioners:

(I) Launch of Certification Scheme by GOI for Yoga Certification Board of AYUSH Min, all Missions appointed as nodal points and will be conducting certification exams on behalf of YCB in four categories:

-Yoga Volunteers, Yoga Protocol Instructors, YOga Wellness Instructor and Yoga Teacher and Evaluator. Interested applicants can register online to obtain this certification from Ministry of Ayush, India. Soon, Embassies will become YCB centres to accept registrations and conduct exams and issue certifications. This will grant official recognition of professional knowledge and experience of Yoga teachers, volunteers and practitioners thus giving them 'authenticity.'

ii. Today, our Hon'ble PM has launched the M-Yoga app on the occasion of the seventh International Day of Yoga. Developed jointly by the Ministry of Ayush and the World Health Organization (WHO), the mYoga app intends to provide yoga training and practice sessions of varying durations to laypersons and enthusiasts alike. The app can be used as a daily yoga companion for persons aged 12-65 years. WHO says the app was developed through review of scientific literature and extensive international expert consultation. Currently, it is available in French, English and in Hindi, with more languages to be added in the coming months. Android users can download the mYoga app from Google Play Store.

iii. Embassies can engage local experts as part time Yoga Teachers under a proposed ICCR Scheme

iv. Apart from this, ICCR has scholarships in Yoga and Ayurveda (full time Graduate/PG courses (more on website.)

Ayurveda:

- Ayurveda is India's renowned traditional system of natural and holistic healing, based on the concept of harmonious alignment of a human being's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual energies for optimal health. With increasing stress levels of modern life and the growing popularity of holistic wellness, there are over 300 Ayurveda practitioners across Portugal with a professional license for

naturopathy and herbal medicine in line with the Portuguese legislation (Lei nº71/2013 of 02 September 2013). The Portuguese Ayurvedic Medical Association (AMAYUR) has professional courses in Ayurveda and also provides Ayurvedic treatments and consultations in Portugal through its national network of more than a 100 certified and recognized Ayurvedic Medical professionals, many of whom are conventional doctors of modern medicine. The list of all professionals of Ayurvedic Medicine and Therapies (region-wise) is at the link:

<https://amayur.pt/profissionaisamayur/>

AMAYUR also provides free Ayurvedic treatment to poor migrants and engages in assisting the local community.

- The Art of Living also has an active centre in Portugal. A highly-qualified Indian Ayurvedic Doctor offers online consultations with quarterly visits. The centre also offers Marma therapy to patients for rejuvenation and restoration as well as treatment and recovery from acute health symptoms.
- The Indian Embassy and entities like AMAYUR are working towards securing official recognition for Ayurveda by the Portuguese government, to ensure that the Portuguese people have access to authentic and affordable treatments and medicines.
- Government of India, through Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), offers scholarships to foreign nationals to pursue various Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) courses in India. Two Portuguese students are currently pursuing a 4-year Bachelors degree in Ayurveda at the Gujarat Ayurved University, Jamnagar on ICCR Scholarships. For more details and the procedure to apply for these scholarships, one can visit the section on 'Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) Scholarship Schemes' under the 'Education' header of the Embassy's website.

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