

# THE BENEFITS OF SUP YOGA

BY KAITLYN VITTOZZI

SUP Yoga, pronounced sUP - not soup - stands for Stand-Up Paddle Board yoga. If you have an aversion to yoga in traditional settings, hear me out when I say that this might be the perfect class for you.

Personally, I learned yoga as a teen from my ballet instructor and had kept it up because it was good stretching, and everyone always said “yoga’s good for you”. I never particularly cared for yoga. For me, it was easier than taking a kickboxing class at the gym since I was already quite mobile. With this lack of enthusiasm, I continued to go to yoga for over 10 years.

In 2012 I tried to take a SUP Yoga class while vacationing in Rhode Island, but our family was there before peak tourist season so classes weren’t running yet. Like many of us, I became obsessed with what I cannot have so I was determined to find a SUP Yoga class when I got back home to Rochester. At the time, Leslee Schenk Trzcinski of Tune Yoga was teaching classes on Canandaigua Lake. My best friend and I drove down on a weeknight, and I’ll admit I was nervous. What if I fall in? What if I pull a muscle?

The list of unknowns had me holding a lot of tension in my body all the way down route 332. My first SUP Yoga class was literally life changing. I left class happy.

The breathing, the water, the movement – what had I been doing wrong in yoga the last 10+ years? This yoga stuff was legit and could lead to a path of happiness.

While I didn’t realize it at the time, that night inspired me to become a yoga teacher, move to Europe, start a career as a yoga therapist and opened many doors but most importantly it taught me the tools to self-regulate and bring more joy and peacefulness into my own life on a regular basis. I didn’t even really like the outdoors before this, besides drinking

on patios. After I became certified to teach a few years later, I was hired as an instructor and now manage the SUP Yoga program on Canandaigua lake. This work makes my summers incredibly special.

### *How does this even work?*

While different locations around the globe run these classes differently, at Canandaigua Sailboard you will have a board waiting for you that is at least 10 feet long and extra wide, for added stability – I wouldn’t recommend

felt your feet while you walked? How often do you walk around barefoot? Within your first few minutes of standing on a board you really FEEL your feet. If you live in the northeast, you probably rarely look at your feet for eight months of the year. Did you know knee and hip pain can often stem from mis-aligned or rarely used foot muscles? If you’re interested in exploring this, before you get on the board try doing a couple of calf raises, and walking around balancing on your toes. Then lower to your heels, lift your toes and balance or walk around on your heels. If it is safe for your ankles lean on to the outer edge (the pinky toe side), and then the inner edge. Try walking on those.

2. Balance! Much like your foot muscles, SUP will teach you to how to use your core and leg muscles to really STAND UP. You cannot rely on your regular movement patterns while balancing on the water. Even if you are already active, SUP is great cross training especially when you add the flexibility and mobility component from yoga. Muscle coordination and stability will build quickly after a few SUP

sessions.

3. It’s not perfect. Have you avoided yoga because the thought of a bunch of skinny bodies touching their toes to the back of their heads sounds anything but relaxing? The paddle board is the great equalizer. No fancy poses here. Poses are scaled back and more basic than they would be on a class on the land. Usually the people who become the most frustrated on the boards are trying to be really good at it. This is accessible to all ages and fitness levels. Although the finger lakes scenery is perfectly instagrammable, did I mention we anchor at the north end of Canandaigua Lake with the sound of ducks, teenagers and motorcycles on some nights?



trying this on a narrow paddle board designed for racing as the added challenge might just frustrate you. Then for class your board is anchored, and you are a one-person island. Then soak in the views, listen to the teacher’s instructions while you move on the board and the class will end with a rest.

Pro tip: Don’t wear cotton, it gets heavy when it gets wet. Even if you don’t take a full dunk you will still get your hands and feet wet. You can wear bathing suits, gym clothes, yoga pants – whatever your preference is.

### *Benefits of SUP, for the yoga-loving and yoga-loathing.*

1. Fancy footwork. When is the last time you







*“Join me on Canandaigua Lake this summer, or when we can travel again – check out a class on your next vacation.”*



4. Breathing with nature. Research has shown that just being near water reduces stress levels. So how about being on it? Much like our breath never stops, the ripple of the water doesn't either. It's constant. See how the two move together and it sucks you into the present moment so much that you don't have time to worry about that snide email from your boss or the that tiff with your spouse. It doesn't hurt that you get to take in the sights of water and sky at the same time, either.

5. Dropping your ego. In our culture we underestimate how much courage it takes just to walk into any class for the first time. It requires overcoming the fear of something new. Even if you have a good felt sense that you are going to be physically good at paddle boarding, it tends to be a humbling experience. Just like life, there are factors on the water you

can't control – the wind, boat wakes, whatever. Maybe you were going to nail that pose like an Olympic gymnast sticks the landing, but something threw you off balance. When you fail and fall off the board you physically cool off and you have a fresh new start with one less thing to worry about. So often we think failing is a negative, but it is actually part of living a whole-hearted life according to Dr. Brené Brown. Since no two SUP Yoga classes are the same, you can leave giving yourself a pat on the back that you mixed up your routine.

So, I hope you can see how beneficial and non-traditional this yoga class can be.

Join me on Canandaigua Lake this summer, or when we can travel again – check out a class on your next vacation.

You can book a class now through September at [www.fingerlakesyogascapes.com/sup-yoga](http://www.fingerlakesyogascapes.com/sup-yoga)

The 2020 Schedule is:

*Weekly SUP Yoga Classes*

*Sunday - Friday classes include a paddle warm-up, and then we'll anchor to enjoy some stillness for yoga.*

*Saturday mornings are all SUP Yoga, for those of you who just can't get enough.*

*Saturday - SUP Yoga 8:30-9:45 AM*

*Sunday - Paddle & SUP Yoga 8:30-10 AM*

*Monday - Paddle & SUP Yoga 6-7:30 PM*

*Wednesday - Paddle & SUP Yoga 6-7:30 PM*

*Friday - Paddle & SUP Yoga 8:30- 10AM*

Private lessons and group sessions are available for socially distanced parties and team building. Call Kaitlyn to schedule (585) 200-7209. Kaitlyn Vittozzi is an RYT-500 Yoga Instructor and Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapist in Training.