



Blowing in the wind

The actual practice changes throughout the year, but it's always the season for Ryoho yoga. **By Sue White**

As the cool sand between my toes threatens to divert my attention from the task at hand, yoga teacher Kris McIntyre reminds me exactly what I'm doing on rugged Kingscliff beach, NSW, at 6.30 am. "A joggle is not a jog, a walk or a run," McIntyre says. "It's somewhere in between. "It's the first morning of my weekend Ryoho yoga retreat, and although the 6.30 am beach run may suggest otherwise, this experience is far from yoga boot camp. Held at the high-end Peppers Salt Resort & Spa, a stone's throw south of the Queensland border, everything's optional.

As I begin shuffling along the sand, waves crash spectacularly against the shore and a prana-filled autumnal wind whips around my face. I decide a joggle is basically jogging without the pressure. But regardless of what you call it, the key is the breathing. The two short breaths in and three sharp breaths out should encourage my digestive system to kickstart before our morning yoga practice finishes the job. Fifteen minutes in, a fireball-like

sunrise helps me forget my dislike of moving faster than a power walk, and something strange happens. I feel like this is yoga.

YOGA FOR THE SEASONS

Of course, joggling isn't the whole picture. Ryoho yoga has a firm commitment to food (macrobiotic) and lifestyle (healthy), and McIntyre has prepared us well for both. Recipe suggestions and lifestyle tips awaited me on my bed last night, inspiring me to give skin brushing, tongue scraping and the universal yogic doctrine of "early to bed and early to rise" a try over the weekend.

Ryoho was developed by an Australian practitioner, Andzrej Gospodarczyk, who combined his learnings from BKS Iyengar, a Japanese aikido sensei, a Zen shiatsu master and the founder of macrobiotics into a hatha yoga practice. Postures work in combination with the five-element theory, which teaches that wood, fire, metal, earth and water all interact cyclically within nature and our body. It's the seasonality I find most enticing—it makes perfect sense that practices I do on a breezy autumnal day like this would be quite different to what's right for my body in the heat of summer.

It quickly becomes apparent that the pace of the asana is faster than what I'm used to. After a long period of



Clockwise from top right: Kingscliff Beach is adjacent to Peppers Salt Resort & Spa; dinner is an upmarket affair at Roughie's Restaurant & Bar; the main resort pool; The Golden Door runs a spa onsite.



PHOTOGRAPHY: MANTRA GROUP; PEPPERS SALT RESORT & SPA

I love the diversity that McIntyre manages to pack in to our few days.

Ryoho yoga tips for winter

RESTORE YOUR BODY: As the season for hibernation, winter should be a period of rest and restoration. "It's the perfect time to focus inwards and build strength and stability in the body," says Ryoho yoga teacher Kris McIntyre.

PRACTISE WATER-ELEMENT POSES: "In traditional Chinese medicine, winter is when the water element in the body is most prominent," McIntyre says. "It's an ideal time to deal with lower-back issues, stress and hormonal imbalances." McIntyre recommends practising poses that support the water element by focusing on the kidney and urinary bladder meridians. These poses include Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose), Dandasana (Staff Pose), Garudasana (Eagle Pose), Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend Pose) and Halasana (Plough Pose).

CHOOSE HEALING FOODS: McIntyre points to food as a means of helping us through the chilly season. She suggests using healing winter foods, such as beans like adzuki or kidney; seaweeds, such as kombu or wakame; shiitake broth; grains, including buckwheat or soba, and long, slow cooking methods. "You should also try to avoid caffeine, too much liquid and eating late at night," McIntyre says.

Iyengar where it might take a good couple of minutes to get into a pose, I need time to adapt to the more flowing movements of Ryoho.

The Ryoho asana actually feels slightly bonkers, involving rolling around on the floor and fewer traditional hatha poses than I'd imagined. With the exception of the rolling along a partner's back—which is kooky and difficult—I'm sold on the partner work. We give our partner a gentle kick between the hip and buttocks (a must try!), a foot massage and help each other into various stretches. McIntyre, a yogi from way back, is confident, knowledgeable and completely relaxed about the fact this is not the yoga many of us have previously experienced. It's clearly working for her and she's an enticing advert for the Ryoho approach.

HIGH-END LIVING

There are pluses and minuses of a retreat held in a resort. On the plus side, morning classes held by the contemplation pond are a lush experience truly in harmony with nature. There's also my room. Generous in size, it includes a large balcony looking over an enticing lagoon-shaped pool. But there are a few downsides—the resort is fairly big, requiring plenty of time to move between activities, and I'm uninspired by the nondescript conference room where the day and evening classes are held. Surprisingly, it's also a little disconcerting eating in a nice restaurant wearing my yogic get up. I'm tempted to do hair and make-up, but surely that would be missing the point of focussing on what's inside?



Clockwise from top: tomato and fresh scallops; chef Reuben Radonich in teaching mode; the spacious resort accommodation.



Ryoho yoga teacher and retreat host Kris McIntyre guides a student through a yoga sequence, which is tailored to the appropriate season.

I settle on a compromise—zero effort for yoga, with a nod to grooming at meals.

Nonetheless, I love the diversity that McIntyre manages to pack in to our few days. Somehow in between the six hour-long yoga classes I learn about non-fat cooking from the chef at The Golden Door, spend a night doing a fabulous "how to massage" class, and get pampered by the long smooth strokes of a Lomi Lomi massage at The Golden Door Spa.

With my body and my brain both

challenged through the practice McIntyre has encouraged, I leave armed with resources—a yoga mat, seasonal recipes, notes reminding me of the value of a daily cold shower and far more. Glancing across to the beach as I head home, I catch myself thinking the impossible—maybe I'll even give that joggle another try. ❀

Sue White is a Sydney-based freelance writer and long-time yoga practitioner. She travelled as a guest of Peppers Salt Resort & Spa.



TOP IMAGE: SUE WHITE

Fact File

KRIS MCINTYRE teaches weekend retreats at Peppers Salt Resort & Spa every season. The spring event is held September 10-12. Cost, from \$490, includes two-nights' accommodation, six yoga classes, all meals, yoga mat, three Golden Door workshops/demonstrations plus a treatment at The Golden Door Spa at Salt Village. www.krismcintyre.com or www.peppers.com.au/salt

ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS: Rooms at Salt are light and airy, often overlooking the resort's swimming pool. Choose from single or twin share. Meals are held in Roughie's Restaurant & Bar. Breakfast is buffet-style, while lunch and dinner are from The Golden Door cookbook. Simply advise if you have any special eating requirements.

GETTING THERE: Virgin Blue, Qantas and Jetstar fly to the Gold Coast from all major Australian cities. Transfer to the resort with the friendly Pottsville Tweed Coast Limousine Service, 0417 661 641.