



FESTIVAL PRICES ▾

The second Lamu Yoga Festival will take place from 12 to 16 March 2015.

Classes only: Yoga classes and festival T-shirt (KES 6,000).

Full works: Four days of yoga, all classes, festival T-shirt, Swahili dinner, dhow sunset meditation, evening entertainment, grand finale beach party (KES 9,000).

For more information about Lamu Yoga Festival, visit www.lamuyoga.org

Lamu Yoga Festival

OASIS OF CALM

By Kate Wingar

Yoga has been unstoppable over the past 20 years, with a steady rise not only in people taking up the hobby but also in the number of teachers.

Many of Kenya's cities and large towns have seen the benefits of the yoga surge; but it was the overwhelming response to Lamu's first yoga festival, in March 2014, that had the yoga world talking. The event was a shining example of the recreation's growing popularity.

As well as creating new jobs for local people, yoga leads to a healthier, happier community. In a world where we are more than ever focused on money and dependent on technology, it is vital to look after our health.

The aim of Lamu Yoga Festival is to promote yoga as an easy way for Kenyans to stay healthy, while highlighting Lamu as one of East Africa's top wellness destinations. And, boy, did it succeed.

After crossing fingers and toes for a crowd of 75, the event organisers were delighted when 108 aspiring and accomplished yogis attended. (And as 108 is a holy number in yogic tradition, the festival coordinators regard it as a good omen for future success.)

Speaking to Fly540, Monika Fauth, one of Lamu Yoga Festival's organisers, explained what makes the island one of the most relaxing

places on earth to practise yoga.

"Lamu is a ready-made and complete wellness spot," Monika told me. "From the moment you arrive in Lamu, visitors can feel it. No cars, no shoes – just a kikoi [a type of sarong] and a T-shirt. Walk around barefoot, eat fresh and healthy food and take in the great energy. Even if you don't practise yoga, guests can leave the stress of daily life in Nairobi, Mombasa or wherever in the world at the aeroplane door. Life isn't complicated – just how it should be."

Underway

Despite being such a huge success, the yoga festival has plenty of room to grow, and plans are under way for a second festival. The 2015 event has a target of 250 yogis, 16 teachers – including instructors from the Africa Yoga Project – and eight venues. Next year's festival aims to be bigger and better, with new additions including a Swahili dinner cooked by local women, a dhow meditation, evening entertainment in the main square, a beach barbecue, a market promoting local artists, henna painters and the new acro yoga.

The festival caters for all levels of yogi and yogini and offers a range of yoga styles, from hatha, power vinyasa flow, and kundalini to yin, acro and dru yoga.

This small yoga event is now a significant asset for Lamu, with the potential to become internationally recognised. But one of the event's most admirable qualities is that organisers have a strong desire to stay true to its initial aim of enriching local people with knowledge rather than becoming commercialised.

So, if you are looking to recharge your battery or get tips for a healthier lifestyle, the Lamu Yoga Festival is definitely worth a visit.

Stretch ▾ Body and soul



HOW IT ALL BEGAN ▾

Monika Fauth fell in love with Lamu when she first visited the island in 1997. After travelling for a year and a half to beautiful places such as Bali and India, experiencing the Bali Spirit Festival and other yoga events, Monika had found a place to settle. She saw potential in Lamu as an ideal place to practise yoga and eventually start up her 'spirit festival'.

Monika began teaching yoga classes on the beach in 2000 at a time when Kenyans were beginning to take relaxation seriously. Although the term 'burn-out' had yet to be coined, they understood that, by de-stressing, they could achieve a longer, healthier life.

In 2007 Monika and her husband, Banana, opened a wellness centre at their hotel, Banana House, training local people in yoga and organising yoga retreats. And in 2013 a group of yoga teachers came up with the idea of holding a festival.