

THE TRYOUT PREGNANCY YOGA

What made you do it? Despite being so inflexible that I can't even sit cross-legged, pregnancy yoga seemed to be the one exercise that was aimed at me in my blossoming condition. It's meant to relax the body, keep it supple without straining muscles, and increase energy levels – something else I was in dire need of as I entered my 18th week of low-level nausea.

How did it go? There were about 12 women of varying stages of pregnancy in my class. The teacher, Raquel, spoke to everybody individually before the class to ascertain if there were any specific concerns. Although I was a beginner, I was immediately put at ease. We were each given varying numbers of cushions – depending on the size of the bump – for back and leg support, and then started off with a relaxation exercise. Then it was a series of gentle movements focusing on different parts of the body. At least half the class was spent lying down, concentrating on breathing and relaxation.

The most arduous exercise was the downward dog, but we were advised to stay within our comfort zones and listen to our bodies. The pelvic floor exercises were particularly useful, as those muscles come into their own during labour. There was a bit of chanting, which made me feel self-conscious, but I'm hoping I'll get used to the om-ing and aah-ing.

Would you do it again? I came out of it feeling totally refreshed, and that night

I had the best night's sleep I'd had in ages. I don't know how much it would improve my fitness but it would certainly help to keep me limber as well

as lower my stress levels. *Jackie West attended the Sitaram Partnership's pregnancy yoga class at Brockwell Lido, London SE24 (020-8678 0054; sitaram.org)*



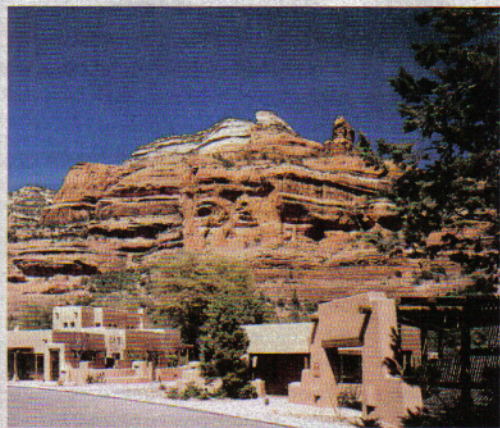
THE GEAR It's rare for an insole to be an object of desire, but the terribly named Forfootsches are no ordinary insoles. Warm them in hot water or cool them in the freezer, slot them into your shoes, and experience the sensation of the gel moulding around your trotters. Lovely. £14.95, from geldoctor.com.

THE MYTH

'Women who pump iron will end up looking like Arnie.' Bulking up requires testosterone, and women's levels of this hormone are far lower than men's. In fact, as well as decreasing the risk of osteoporosis, weight-training increases the metabolism, which helps to burn calories. If you are still concerned, combine lifting weights with regular cardio workouts.



THE SUPERFOOD CHILLI PEPPER • The chilli belongs to the capsicum genus and grows in hundreds of varieties. • Capsaicin, the active component responsible for the burning sensation, may have an anti-inflammatory effect and help stop the spread of prostate cancer cells. • Red chillies contain high levels of beta-carotene, a powerful antioxidant (boosts the immune system and fights free radicals). • Chillies also contain vitamin C, dietary fibre, potassium and iron, which helps the blood transport oxygen.



The spa Spiritual hideaways

For escapes that offer soul-nourishing treatments: **Mii amo** in Arizona is built in indigenous red stone and fits organically into the landscape like superbly hewn rock. Mii amo means 'one's journey' in the Native American dialect Yuman, and the spa – built on a site where the Yuman believe the first woman gave birth to the human race – has a spiritual theme. In addition to massage and facials, there are unique Connect with Spirit readings – hour-long palm, astrology and tarot sessions – and spa treatments designed to restore energy flow, clear the mind and open the heart. One of these, Mii amo Spirit, involves being anointed with oil and then, with scent and sound, encouraged to reveal your 'inner sanctuary' and visualise your dreams. The Spiritual Exploration Journey, which includes a crystal bath, psychic massage and interpretive reading, costs from \$2,178 for three nights (00 1 928 203 8500; miiamo.com). **Ubud Hanging Gardens** in Bali is a magical oasis of villas on stilts whose treatments include yoga and chakra meditation. From €184 per night (00 62 361 982 700; orient-express.com). **Temple Spa** in Co Westmeath, Ireland, aims to restore balance and harmony through holistic therapies such as shiatsu, massage, kinesiology, craniosacral therapy and aromatherapy. A three-night wellbeing break costs from €760pp sharing (00 353 57 933 5118; templespa.ie). **Kate Shapland**. See telegraph.co.uk/spa