

By Julie Phillips-Turner, RYT, AYS

# Benefits of Beach Yoga



**O**n a warm, sunny day in south Florida, what better place to be than the beach? And, of course, why not take the time to practice a little meditation and asana while spending the afternoon quietly sitting and looking at the sea?

Take a deep breath and run your hands through the cool, soft sand and you'll immediately feel the calming qualities of the beach.

While moving through each pose in the sand, feeling it's qualities to support and mold to the body, or even be flattened out to hold a balance pose, you'll find that sand is a malleable surface could be used as a supportive prop like a block or a soft blanket.

The beauty of doing yoga in the sand is that it conforms to your body, or wherever you move it – unlike hard floors or grassy earth.

Sand allows the fingers sink to grasp the earth, or form little divots to support the knees. It also serves as a wonderful anchor, allowing the feet to bury in the sand, or a great source to lift the body by building little mounds beneath the hands or sit bones.

It helps to experiment with the formation of the sand and how it can be moved and molded to enhance the stability, or comfort, of a pose. It really is a great prop.

Practicing yoga on the beach can bring a new sense to a basic hatha yoga practice, as it focuses personal energy through balance and strength. The qualities of sand

can help you more comfortably access a pose that you might not feel comfortable with on a hard, non-malleable surface. It can also help manage over-efforting, and help you to relax into the pose as it conforms around your body.

The balance of the cool sand and the warm sun can also balance the body and mind – which is the whole purpose of hatha yoga.

## 6 poses to try in the sand:

### 1. Tree Pose (Vrksasana)

At first, the sand's lumpy surface may seem like an obstacle, however, allowing your foot to form with the sand can make your pose even better. Gaze at the water's horizon and focus on the breath for a steady balance.

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## 2. Monkey Pose (Hanumanasana)

If you're truly open to this pose, the sand is a great surface to practice sliding the feet forward and back simultaneously – which some practice on hard floors with feet on blankets. The surface of the sand can also be built up into a mound to support the sit bones and legs if the full pose isn't quite reachable.



## 3. Heroes Pose (Virasana)

Sand is especially good for giving the knees a little softness just like a blanket. The sand can also be built up into a small mound under the sit bones to raise the hips – just like a block or blanket would do. Finally, for sputa Virasana (or the reclining version of this pose) you can build a mound of sand to support the back as well.



## 4. Headstand (Sirsasana)

The soft sand is so forgiving on the crown of the head. Just build a small divot, place your head, and bottoms up. The view of an upside down beach scene even more beautiful! (Note: be sure the surface is fairly flat and not slanted, such as the slope near the water's edge.)



## 5. Extended Side Angle Pose (Utthita Parsvakonasana)

The sand is a great prop for anchoring the feet, just like a non-slip yoga mat. If you usually prefer a block to support the lower hand on the floor, can simply build a mound of sand to your own personal height – just grab the sand and keep building until the appropriate height is reached.



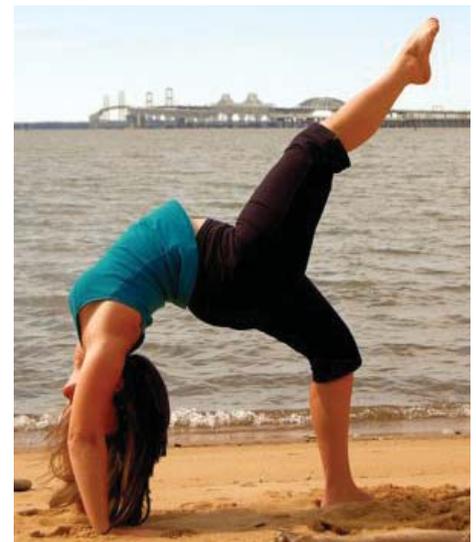
## 6. Savasana

You may also want to call this one “Sunbather’s pose” - perfect for ending a practice on the beach.

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*Julie Phillips-Turner, RYT, AYS, teaches Beach Yoga in Sarasota, Florida on Turtle Beach.*

*For more information about classes: Julie@ChesapeakeYoga.com*