

INDIA

Mysore: The Ashtanga Pilgrim's Guide

Krishnamacharya's palace school, the Jois shalas today, Mysore-style practice, sacred sites, seasons, e-Visa and Pune, checked and dated



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teacher or medical advice. Questions; administration@lacangel.fr

Before you begin

Mysore is a city of palaces, sandalwood and jasmine at the foot of a sacred hill in southern India; since 2014 its official name has been Mysuru. For most of the twentieth century it was not a yoga destination at all. Yet two of the most widespread forms of modern yoga, the Ashtanga method of K. Pattabhi Jois and the Iyengar method of B.K.S. Iyengar, both trace back to a wing of one of its palaces, where T. Krishnamacharya taught under a maharaja's patronage in the 1930s. Every winter, practitioners from dozens of countries still come to Mysore to roll out their mats before dawn.

This guide is written for them: the history of the city and its royal patrons, the lineage of the Ashtanga method, what a "Mysore-style" class actually is, the temples on the hill and on the Kaveri, Dasara, the climate month by month, arrival, and the questions to ask before you pay anyone. An annex covers Pune and Lonavala, the other pole of Krishnamacharya's legacy.

It is not a list of "the best shalas". You will find no ranking, review or recommendation of a school or teacher, and that is deliberate. We report what institutions publish and what independent sources say, and give you the questions to judge for yourself.

It is built on three promises.

First, practical facts are checked and dated. Registration rules, entry fees, festival dates and visa rules change. Every practical fact in this guide was checked online on **16 October 2026** against the most official source we could find, listed at the end. When official sources contradict each other or the press, we show both. When we could not verify something, we left it out or said so.

Second, no invented experiences. No testimonials, no "when I practised in Gokulam" anecdotes, no reviews of shalas or teachers. Legends are called legends; historical dates come with their sources; disputed accounts, and there are several about the origins of Ashtanga, are attributed to whoever makes them.

Third, the sacred is treated as sacred. Chamundi Hill, the temples of Srirangapatna and Melukote and the processions of Dasara belong to a living religious life, and Ashtanga is taught in Mysore with a guru, a chant and rules of conduct, not as a workout. Sanskrit words are written in Devanagari with a scholarly transliteration (IAST), Kannada words in Kannada script with theirs.

This guide informs; it does not replace official advice. Before you travel, read your government's travel advice for India, check the official Indian e-Visa website yourself, read the current rules of any shala on its own website, and see a travel health professional. In an emergency in India, dial **112**, the national emergency number (UK FCDO travel advice, accessed 16 October 2026).

How to read Sanskrit and Kannada words in this book

Most names appear in three forms: the everyday spelling on signs (Chamundi), the original script (Sanskrit चामुण्डा) and a transliteration (Cāmuṇḍā, Cāmuṇḍi).

Letter	Sounds roughly like	Example
ā, ī, ū	long a, ee, oo	āsana, Maisūru
ē, ō	long e, long o (Kannada distinguishes them from short e, o)	bēku, āṭō
ṛ	a short "ri"	dṛṣṭi
ś, ṣ	"sh" (two different "sh" sounds)	Śiva, aṣṭāṅga
c	"ch" as in church	cikitsā
ṭ, ḍ, ṇ, ḷ	t, d, n, l with the tongue curled back	Cāmuṇḍi, ūṭa
ṅ	"ng"	aṣṭāṅga
ṁ	nasal hum	oṁ

In Kannada, final vowels are pronounced: Maisūru is "My-soo-roo", nīru (water) is "nee-roo".

How to use this book

Still deciding? Start with Chapters 3, 4 and 9. Place booked? Chapters 10 to 12, and the checklist in Chapter 18. Already in Mysore? Chapters 5 to 8, and the Kannada of Chapter 19.

Chapter 1. Mysuru in legend and history

The town of Mahiṣa

The name Mysore is an anglicised form of the Kannada Mahiṣūru, "the abode of Mahiṣa". In Sanskrit, महिष (mahiṣa) means "buffalo"; here it refers to Mahiṣāsura (महिषासुर), the buffalo demon who, according to local legend, ruled this land and was killed by the goddess worshipped on the hill above the city. The Government of Karnataka announced in 2005 its intention to change the English spelling; the Government of India approved it in October 2014, and the city was officially renamed Mysuru on **1 November 2014** (Wikipedia, Mysore). This book uses both forms, as people do: Mysuru for the city, Mysore for the "Mysore style" of yoga, which kept the old name.

The goddess and the buffalo demon

The great Sanskrit text on the Goddess, the Devī Māhātmya (देवीमाहात्म्य), tells how the gods, defeated by Mahiṣa, poured their energies into a single radiant form, the Goddess, who fought and killed him. In the same text, the fierce form of the Goddess who slays the demons Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa receives the name Cāmuṇḍā (चामुण्डा). In Mysuru the two stories meet: the goddess of the hill, Chamundeshwari (Kannada Cāmuṇḍēśvari), is worshipped as Mahiṣāsuraṃardinī (महिषासुरमर्दिनी), "she who crushed Mahiṣāsura", and a large statue of the demon, sword in one hand and cobra in the other, stands near her temple (Wikipedia, Chamundi Hills; Karnataka Tourism). These are sacred stories, and this book presents them as such.

The Wodeyars

The royal family is known as the Wodeyars (also spelled Wadiyar), from the Kannada oḍeya, "lord". Their own tradition says they descend from the lunar line of Kṛṣṇa and came from Dvārakā; historians suggest instead that they were local lords who claimed a Purāṇic ancestry. The conventional starting date is **1399**, when a garrison chief, Yaduraya, was made prefect of Mysore by his Vijayanagara overlord (Wikipedia, Wadiyar dynasty).

After Vijayanagara collapsed in 1565, Mysore became independent. In **1610**, Raja Wodeyar I took the island fortress of Srirangapatna on the Kaveri and celebrated Navarātri there that year; that celebration is the origin of today's Mysuru Dasara, which its official website presents as "celebrations since 1610 AD" (Wikipedia, Srirangapatna; mysoredasara.gov.in).

A famous legend belongs to these years. When the defeated Vijayanagara viceroy retired to Talakadu, his widow Alamelamma, so the story goes, threw herself into the Kaveri rather than surrender her jewels to the new king's men, and cursed the dynasty: talakāḍu maraḷāgali, mālaṅgi maḍuvāgali, maisūru doregaḷige makkaḷillade hōgali, "may Talakadu turn to sand, Malangi become a whirlpool, and the kings of Mysore remain childless". The encyclopedic entry records that an idol of Alamelamma is kept in Mysore Palace and that the Dasara rites inside the palace close with a pūjā to her (Wikipedia, Wadiyar dynasty). It is folklore, and part of how the city tells its story.

Tipu Sultan and the restoration

From the 1760s to 1799, real power passed to the commander Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan, who ruled from Srirangapatna while the Wodeyars were kept as nominal kings. Tipu fought four wars against the British East India Company and was killed when Srirangapatna fell on **4 May 1799**. The Company restored the Wodeyars; a British commission administered the kingdom from 1831 to 1881, after which power returned to the Maharaja. The last reigning Maharaja, Jayachamarajendra Wadiyar, acceded to the Indian Union after independence. The family's present head, Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, lives in a part of Mysore Palace (Wikipedia, Wadiyar dynasty; Srirangapatna; Mysore Palace).

A city of patrons

For a yoga traveller, what matters is what the Wodeyars funded: Sanskrit learning, music and physical culture. The palace held a nineteenth-century compendium compiled under Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, the Śrītattvanidhi, with a section of illustrated postures. Into this world of patronage, Sanskrit and physical training came a scholar named Tirumalai Krishnamacharya.

End of the sample

Thank you for reading this far. We hope these first pages already help your practice, and that they show how the rest of the book is built: clear steps, texts quoted with their source, nothing invented.

The full book has 44 pages.

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