PADDLEBOARD YOGA:

a creative exercise for nature lovers

BY MIKAYLA KREUZBERGER
THE JOURNAL

SUNSET — Imagine standing still in Tadasana, the basic yoga standing pose. It's a simple pose, with both feet placed evenly apart, hands to the sides of your body. Despite its simple appearance, it's all about practicing the art of standing evenly on both feet, bringing awareness to the body and improving posture.

Now, open your eyes and look around. You're standing on the lake. You can feel the gentle waves lapping against your paddleboard and hear the birds chirping in the morning sun.

Nope, you're not dreaming, and you're not in a dark, stuffy room with mirrors at every angle. You're enjoying paddleboard yoga.

A paddleboard is a surfboard-type surface board used as a form of exercise. Paddleboarders can kneel, stand or even exercise on the platform.

Phaedra Kennedy has practiced "land yoga" for 25 years, but she's always been a watersport enthusiast.

"I was a river guide, and I'd play around on the rafts and stand on my head," Kennedy laughed. "I got into kayaking, but it was a little intense. I had heard of paddleboarding, and it looked fun. Then I saw paddleboard yoga, and it looked awesome."

She teaches paddleboard yoga classes at One With the Ride, a "surf shop in the mountains" in Sunset, a small community in Pickens County near Lake Keowee and Lake Jocassee.

Kennedy said paddleboard yoga is great because of the variety of physical challenges it creates.

"It focuses on balancing, core strength and flexibility," she said. "Especially the intensity of balancing on the water — it's a totally difference experience.

> **'It's very low-risk** and not dangerous at all.'
>
> **Phaedra Kennedy**
> Paddleboard yoga instructor

"You're already in a positive state of mind through yoga — you're stretching, and you open your eyes and see the lake. It's surreal."

Kennedy said it's unlike "land yoga" because the participant can just fall into the water if a move becomes unstable.

"It's very low-risk and not dangerous at all," she said. "I like to stand on my head on the board. It's playful, yet challenging. And, if you want simplicity, you can enjoy the gentle practice of yoga, stretching, sunning and enjoying nature."

During a lesson, yoga participants start out on land and travel to an island for "beach yoga," and eventually head to a cove to practice on water.

One With the Ride co-owner Brooke Walton said stand-up paddleboarding as a form of exercise has grown quickly in popularity.

"It was popular in the 1950s and the mid 1990s, and it's back again," Walton said. "It's a lot less restrictive, unlike kayaking, and it's a great core workout."

Paddlers can stand in a "normal stance" with toes pointed forward, or in a "surf stance" with one foot forward.

"So many people that have never kayaked, and even people that do kayak, love stand-up paddleboarding," she said. "People always look on the TV and see surfers doing cool things at the beach — well, it's that kind of sport that you can do anywhere."

Walton and co-owner John Winchester rent paddleboards and offer lessons and variety of experiences, including night paddles and champagne paddles. Beginners can paddle on a wide, 9-foot board; more experienced paddlers can ride on a more narrow, 14-foot board.

Walton said the best part about paddleboarding is that the paddleboarder creates his o her own pace.

"You can work out your arms for starters. Then, the more you practice, you can learn to lift your toes off to practice balance, similar to yoga. Keep your knees slightly bent, and it becomes a great leg workout as well. It's an all-body workout, for sure," she said. "I have weak ankles, and balancing on the board has definitely strengthened them."

The hardest part about paddleboarding?

"Carrying the boards back to the shop," Walton joked. "It's an 'all-levels' water sport."

She said a paddleboard event is scheduled for Aug. 10 at Seneca's The Lighthouse on Lake Keowee, and she encourages interested paddleboarders to join in.

Kennedy offers Friday sunset paddleboard yoga and Saturday mid-morning paddleboard yoga. Appointments can be made on Sundays and throughout the week.

In addition to paddleboards, One With the Ride also specializes in providing wakesurf boards, another watersport activity.

Walton said their mountain surf used to be an old home on the Keowee River that is currently at 2640 Crowe Creek Rd., Sunset, SC 29685.

One With the Ride is open Monday and Wednesday through Friday from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. The shop is closed Tuesdays.

For information, visit www.onewiththeride.com or call (864 868-2040. For rentals, contact Walton at (864) 906-1412, and for paddleboard yoga information, contact Kennedy at (864) 633-9011.

mikayla@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6681
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SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

Can you do that? "It's all about balance," said Phaedra Kennedy, a paddleboard yoga instructor at One With the Ride in Sunset. She encourages beginners to try it out.

PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

Above: A paddleboarder skirts across Lake Keowee at The Lighthouse in Seneca. A paddleboard event with One With the Ride, in Sunset, will be held at The Lighthouse on Aug. 10.
Top right: A group of paddleboarders make their way into a cove on Lake Keowee.
Bottom right: A paddleboard yoga expert performs a handstand on her paddleboard. The sport of paddleboarding has grown in popularity.

