

# Namaste, travelers! SFO opens airport yoga room

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In this Friday, Jan. 27, 2012 photo, travelers Maria Poole, right, and Lindsey Shepard, practice yoga at San Francisco International Airport's new Yoga Room, in San Francisco. The quiet, dimly lit studio officially opened last week in a former storage room just past the security checkpoint at SFO's Terminal 2. Airport officials believe the 150-square-foot room with mirrored walls is the world's first airport yoga studio, said spokesman Mike McCarron. (AP Photo/Paul Sakuma)

(AP) -- Stressed out by flying?

Travelers in Northern California can now find their inner calm in the Yoga Room at San Francisco International [Airport](#).

The quiet, dimly lit studio officially opened last week in a former storage room just past the security checkpoint at SFO's Terminal 2.

Airport officials believe the 150-square-foot room with mirrored walls is the world's first airport yoga studio, said spokesman Mike McCarron.

The room, open to all ticketed passengers, contains a few chairs and yoga mats but no instructors or televisions. No shoes, food, drinks or cell phones are allowed.

"Silence is appreciated," says a sign spelling out "Yoga Room Etiquette."

A prominent blue-and-white sign with a Buddha-like pictogram beckons visitors: "Come check out our Yoga Room."

Frequent flyer Maria Poole accepted the invitation, practicing a downward dog asana and other yoga poses before boarding her flight.

"It's perfect," said Poole, 47, of Lafayette. "I think it should be in every airport, especially the terminals that I fly through. This would be such a great way for me to get my exercise in, get a little peace and quiet - a little Zen moment."

The Yoga Room is just the latest example of how airports are trying to improve the passenger experience and showcase their regional culture, noting the ancient practice's popularity in the San Francisco Bay area, said Debby McElroy, executive vice president of Airports Council International-North America.

In recent years, airports have upgraded their food and shopping venues and added massage parlors, nail salons, dry cleaners and pet hotels, McElroy said, but SFO is the first to add a yoga room in North America and probably the world.

"I expect other airports will be looking at whether a yoga room at their airport makes sense," McElroy said.

SFO officials say the idea came from a passenger who checked out the newly remodeled terminal last year and told Airport Director John Martin it was lacking one thing: a yoga room.

Martin, a long-time yoga practitioner, agreed. Airport managers spent \$15,000 to \$20,000 to turn the storage space into the yoga studio.

SFO officials had to design the Yoga icon after they couldn't find one in the international guide of airport pictograms that direct travelers to taxis, restrooms and baggage claim carousels.

Lindsey Shepard of Fremont, who was traveling with Poole, said she liked having "a dark place to chill out and have a timeout and relax."

"Flying can be stressful," Shepard said. "It's nice to have something to do at the airport besides sit around and eat bad food and read magazines."

Of course, the Yoga Room isn't for everyone.

"If I got into yoga, I might lose track of time and miss my flight," said Robert Diaz, 52, of Seal Beach, who was visiting San Francisco with his wife. "I'd be so relaxed."

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