

Thousands of yogis search for serenity in Times Square

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Thousands of yoga aficionados celebrated the summer solstice amid the neon lights and cacophony of Times Square Wednesday, searching for inner peace in the heart of New York on International Yoga Day.

"I have always wanted to come to yoga in Times Square. This year I retired so now I can," said 62-year-old former school principal Kathy Gaffney, who took the ferry bright and early from Staten Island to get a good place in line.

Around 12,000 people were expected to take part in six one-hour yoga classes beginning at 7:30 am (1130 GMT) to celebrate the official start of summer and the longest day of the year. The event is now in its 15th year.

For the last three years, it has coincided with International Yoga Day.

"It is mind over matter," laughed Magdalena Leszko, 40, of the surrounding Times Square din. "To have fun and to be part of a community. It tests the limits."

Chloe Liu, a Malaysian living in New York, came with two Chinese friends.

"To be able to do yoga in Times Square, in the middle of this chaotic and noisy scene, to be able to find calmness and equanimity," she said. "I was able to—not the whole [time](#), but in and out," said the delighted 49-year-

old.

Under the watchful eye of police in one of the busiest plazas in the world, organizers handed out green yoga mats and bottles of water, before talking participants through their postures.

"The first year there were only three people who participated, the weather that day was horrible, raining," said Douglas Stewart, [yoga](#) teacher and co-founder of the event. "But it started to grow year after year," he added.

In 2015, when the event coincided with the first International Yoga Day, 17,000 people took part, including then UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon.

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