From Chennai to Rishikesh, we bring you India's top yoga centres that teach you to be a guru

**Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Dhanwantari Ashram, Kerala**

The 12-acre Sivananda Yoga Ashram is located near the Neyyar dam in Kerala. With its headquarters in Canada—established in 1967 by Swami Vishnudevananda, a disciple of Swami Sivananda—the Neyyar branch is one of three ashrams in India. Their approach is holistic and offers yoga, devotion, and philosophy.

**Highlights:** Besides the one-month course, the ashram also has an Advanced Teachers Training Course, spread over four weeks and designed for graduates of the Sivananda Teachers Training Course. As part of this, students study Sanskrit, the Raja Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, Vedanta philosophy, anatomy and physiology.

**Procedure:** The fee for Indian applicants is Rs 25,000, while for foreigners it is CAD 2,400. Dormitory accommodation is provided and there is no charge of a waiting period.

**Details:** yogaindia.shivardan.org

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**Parmanth Niketan, Rishikesh**

Nestled on the banks of the Ganges, the Parmanth Niketan ashram was founded in 1946 by Pujya Swami Shukdevanandaji. The reins were taken over by Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji three decades ago and under him the ashram has flourished. The 1,600-room retreat plays host to students from over 40 countries. And the teachers training programmes have found many takers.

"We offer three courses, which begin on the same day. The first is a two-week beginner course, followed by a three-week intensive course, and ending with a five-week teacher course," explains Sadhvi Bhagwati, a teacher and counsellor at the ashram. "The teachers will assess the students. They will have to experience the asanas in their bodies before they can impart the knowledge to others," she adds.

Two years of regular yoga asana practice is a prerequisite to join the training course, which explores all eight limbs of yoga and includes the study of asanas, pranayama, philosophy and meditation.

**Highlights:** For the past one year, the ashram has been working with Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhan Samsthan (VYASA), an international yoga research organisation. This association will give their certificates wider recognition. The ashram also has teachers from over 20 countries who teach their knowledge of yoga and spiritual knowledge from their cultures to give a holistic approach to their teaching.

**Procedure:** The classes have high attendance from foreigners (with many coming from China, Japan, South America, Russia, and Kazakhstan in the last few years). The fee for foreigners is Rs 50,000, while for Indians it is Rs 20,000.

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**Isha Yoga Center, Veliangiri**

Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev founded the Isha Yoga Centre over 30 years ago. Located 30 kilometres west of Coimbatore, at the foothills of the Veliangiri Mountains, the 150-acre ashram embraces all the four major paths of yoga—Ghana (knowledge), Karma (action), Kriya (energy), and Bhakti (devotion).

In the last two years, they have also become a hub for yoga teacher training programmes. Revived by the Sadhupura, the five-month residential programme teaches classical hatha yoga. "The classes include sadhana, yogic practices, meditation, yogic physiology, anatomy, the science of Siddha medicine and, of course, teaching methodology," says Sheela Rajend, the training coordinator at the centre.

The classes for 2014 will begin on July 12 (Guru Pournami)."We screen all applications, and for novices, we have them attend a basic course, called the inner engineering course. It can also be taken online (innerengineering.com)."

**Highlights:** The certified classes include tours of various religious places and trekking pilgrimages to places of yogic significance in the Veliangiri Mountains. For certified teachers, Isha also provides post training support.

**Procedure:** You can apply for the course online. The fee for both Indians and foreigners is Rs 10,000. Details: IshaIshaYoga.com

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**Surya Prabhullama, with inputs from Neelima Menon**