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FROM SILKS TO SANDS: A WELLNESS JOURNEY THROUGH AERIAL YOGA, PILATES & SEASIDE SERENITY

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I remember the first time I caught a glimpse of an Instagram influencer effortlessly suspended in the air, wrapped in a silk hammock, gracefully transitioning into a pose. The spectacle of aerial yoga left me in awe. Meanwhile, the elegance of Pilates, with its emphasis on posture and core strength, had always intrigued me. It was high time I embarked on my personal fitness journey, taking the leap from ground to sky. Our world has seen a surge in unique fitness routines, each promising transformative results. Aerial yoga, an ethereal blend of traditional yoga and aerial acrobatics, and Pilates, a discipline focusing on alignment and core strength, have made their mark in the contemporary wellness landscape. "It's not just about fitness; it's a dance between discipline and strength," quotes Reiko, an aerial yoga instructor I had the pleasure to learn from. Similarly, Joan, my Pilates trainer, believes, "Pilates isn't just exercise; it's a way of aligning your body and soul."



Image 1: Author in aerial yoga pose (Source: Author's own collection)

"Pilates isn't just exercise; it's a way of aligning your body and soul."

In my journey, the first challenge was confronting the fear of the unknown. Aerial yoga initially filled me with a blend of excitement and apprehension. The idea of suspending myself in mid-air, supported only by a fabric hammock, was both tantalizing and daunting. This form of yoga posed a unique set of challenges, not least of which

was overcoming the natural fear of heights and the unsettling sensation of hanging upside down. But as I took my first 'flight', a transformative experience unfolded. As I lifted off the ground, the world below seemed to fade away, leaving only the sensation of weightlessness and a rush of adrenaline. Suspended in the air, my body became an instrument of grace, moving through a choreographed sequence of stretches, inversions, and spirals. The hammock, far from a mere prop, transformed into a supportive partner in this aerial dance. It cradled me when I sought balance, stretched me when I aimed for flexibility and challenged me when I dared to push my physical limits.

Rather than feeling disconnected, I found that the hammock facilitated a deeper connection with my own body. It became a tool for expanding my range of motion and exploring postures that would be challenging—or even impossible—on solid ground. Contrary to my initial reservations, the hammock nurtured a sense of security and freedom, allowing me to move with greater confidence and daring. The entire experience felt like a fusion of athleticism and artistry, where I could express the full extent of my physical capabilities while also tapping into an emotional and spiritual realm.

It was as if I was participating in a form of active meditation, where focus, breath, and movement coalesced into a singular, harmonious experience. On the flip side, Pilates was grounding. This discipline put a strong emphasis on precision, control, and mindfulness, shaping my awareness of my body's mechanics. Every movement in Pilates was executed with deliberate intention, focusing not just on what moves, but how it moves. Each sequence required meticulous attention to detail, from the engagement of specific muscle groups to the timing and depth of each breath.

Breathing in Pilates was not merely a passive act; it was synchronized with every movement, acting as an internal metronome that paced my exercises. This harmonization of breath and movement cultivated a level of mindfulness that transformed the routine from a mere physical workout to a conscious, fully engaged act. Initially, the reformer—a specialized piece of equipment used in Pilates—appeared intimidating, resembling something between a workout machine and a medieval torture device. However, as I began to use it, the reformer soon felt like an extension of my own body. It assisted in fine-tuning my alignment, deepening my stretches, and intensifying my contractions, allowing me to explore the full range of movements and postures in a controlled environment.



Image 2: Author using the Pilates reformer at the studio
(Source: Author's own collection)

It taught me to trust the process, and in doing so, I discovered a newfound appreciation for the subtle, yet profoundly transformative, power of Pilates. Just when I thought I had found a sense of balance between the sky and the ground, I decided to blend my passion for yoga and Pilates with an innate desire for tranquillity and dived into a yoga retreat at the Tanjong

Jara Resort from October 13th to 15th, 2023. Situated by the beach, the retreat allowed for an intimate relationship with nature. The sound of the waves and the tactile sensation of sand underfoot added a unique layer to my practice. Here, I learned that yoga isn't merely an indoor regimen. Its essence can be amplified when connected to nature.



Image 3: Author using the Pilates barrel at the studio (Source: Author's own collection)

Located by the beach, the setting enriched my practice by introducing an elemental touch. The rhythm of the waves and the feeling of sand underfoot brought a new dimension to the poses, making the practice more sensorially engaging. In this seaside context, my yoga sessions felt invigorated, broadening my perspective on wellness as a multisensory experience. The combination of sun, sand, and surf breathed new life into the traditional poses, enriching my understanding of wellness as an integrated experience. In conclusion, fitness is an ever-evolving journey, and the path one takes is deeply personal.

‘fitness is an ever-evolving journey, and the path one takes is deeply personal’

For some, it might be the thrill of defying gravity in aerial yoga, while for others, it’s the grounded elegance of Pilates.

The rhythm of the waves and the feeling of sand underfoot brought a new dimension to the poses, making the practice more sensorially engaging.

And then there are those special moments, like my time at Tanjong Jara, where the boundaries between ground and sky blur, giving way to a profound sense of seaside serenity. Yet, at the core of it all is a pursuit of wellness, a dance between strength and flexibility, ground and sky – a balance of mind, body, and spirit. In a world that’s perpetually in fast-forward, these practices teach us to pause, reflect, and find our centre, for our health and wellness.



Image 4: Group yoga session by the beach during Sucimurni Retreat at Tanjong Jara Resort (Source: Instagram @ninieyoga)