

Garudasana – The Eagle Posture

Garuda means eagle, the king of the birds in Indian mythology. The mythology of this story says that Vinita, the wife of Kashyap laid an egg and became the Mother of Garuda, the Bird God. Garuda is the remover or destroyer of obstacles and the carrier of Vishnu. Many yoga postures are named for mythological creatures, gods and warriors.



This is a particularly challenging posture requiring a combination of strength, balance and flexibility. The ankles and legs are strengthened in this posture and flexibility is restored to the shoulders.

This posture is particularly beneficial to those suffering from cramping in calf muscles. If you have weak ankles and are prone to ankle sprains this posture will tone up the muscles surrounding your ankle joints. Balance is restored to the body and the mind is centered.

Often in my classes, when I am working a particular area, such as the shoulders I will just do the arm work for this posture. This is a good way to work the posture if you are not able to balance or achieve proper alignment in the full posture.

Benefits:

Strengthens ankles
Loosens shoulders
Prevents cramping in calf muscles
Balances body and mind

Caution:

If you have a recent injury or a pre-existing medical condition please consult with your physician before you begin.

1. Stand in Tadasana, the mountain posture. With your toes and heels together press your feet firmly into the ground and firm up your thigh muscles. Lift your chest and roll your shoulders back and down.
2. Bend your knees slightly and while balancing on your left leg, bring your right thigh over your left thigh and hook the toes of your right foot behind the calf muscle, just above your ankle. Your right leg should now be entwined around your left leg, while balancing on your left foot. If you are having difficulty balancing, stand with the left side of your body next to a wall and use your left hand to take the wall for support. The leg action in this posture again, is very challenging. Do not hesitate utilizing a wall for support! Remember, yoga is about intention. It is not about achieving anything.
3. Now we will add the arms: keeping your torso perpendicular to the floor, check to see that your chest is still lifted with your shoulders back and down. If you are able to balance, extend your arms forward in front of you, and bend your elbows. Take your left elbow over your right elbow and bring the palms of both hands together. If you are unable to achieve this, hold a strap in each hand until you are able to bring the hands together. With your elbows level with your shoulders and your forearms perpendicular to the floor, squeeze your elbows together and push them forward away from you. At the same time try to pull your shoulders down and lift your breastbone forward and up.
4. Hold the posture for thirty seconds. Breathe slowly, deeply and evenly. Then release and return to Tadasana. Repeat the posture with the left leg entwined around the right leg and with the right elbow over the left elbow.

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