



Ruby pulls her weight at Tone House, where New York's fittest burn 1,000 cals per session

COULD YOU SURVIVE THE WORLD'S TOUGHEST WORKOUT?

It looks like a torture chamber and surviving the warm-up is seen as a badge of honour. Ruby Warrington tries out NYC's Tone House hard-core gym

PHOTOGRAPHS
BRIDGET FLEMING

THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF INTENSE WORKOUTS IN MANHATTAN. This is a city of high-energy, type-A individuals after all, where some dedicated hard bodies are known to clock up two or three 'boutique' fitness classes in one day, paying the equivalent of a second mortgage for the privilege.

But the newest workout spot in town, known as Tone House, has even the city's most ambitious amateur athletes quaking in their Lululemon leggings, earning itself the reputation as the 'hardest workout in New York'. And, promising to burn up to 1,000-plus calories in a one-hour session, it's no wonder it's become a go-to

sweat session for the fash pack. 'Thanks @Instabutterrr for introducing me to the best and hardest workout ever!' posted Victoria's Secret model Gracie Carvalho recently, while fellow Angel Anne V is apparently also a regular.

If SoulCycle is known for its pumping soundtracks and spiritually uplifting mantras, the USP at Tone House is this is how *real* athletes train. Ten minutes into my first class, I'm beginning to wish I'd never decided to see what all the fuss is about. Although, to be fair, I had been warned. Melisse Gelula, co-founder of insanely popular wellness site Well+Good, told me, 'If you make it through ▶



It's a case of no pain, no gain for fitness fan Ruby

the warm-up, that's a badge of honour.' Mentally prepared for the worst, I still feel like I've been punched in the stomach by the time the hurdle-sprints finally come to an end. Gasping for breath, myself and the other first-timers – including one woman who tells me she only gave birth six weeks ago – shoot each other looks of abject terror. We're expected to endure another 50 minutes of this?

It doesn't help that the Tone House studio looks like a torture chamber, with black AstroTurf on the floor and black walls hung with weighted harnesses, straps, weights and pulleys. Dim orange lighting adds to the dungeon-like mood, and they even have the *Game Of Thrones* soundtrack blasting before the class starts.

Following the warm-up, we're split into groups of two or three for yet more sprints – this time on all fours. With everybody watching, I feel utterly exposed, even though the rest of the 'team' (we're encouraged to adopt a pack mentality to make us all accountable) actively cheer me on. I soon understand what Coach Shayne, one of the three instructors leading the class, meant when he told us, 'There is no place to hide at Tone House.' Worse, I've been paired with a girl who was on the sprinting team at college – and even she is beetroot red and heaving by the time we've finished running backwards, at full pelt, up and down the studio.

Next, I'm strapped into a harness attached to 80lb of weight and instructed to sprint to the end of the room. Then comes a series of lunges and squat jumps

with a huge sandbag attached to my chest, a punishing upper body set involving weighted bungee cords and a 'game' where we stand in a circle while Coach Shayne barks at us to perform a sequence of jumps, squats, crunches and push-ups.

And if I thought I was pretty fit, having fully embraced the NYC workout culture since I moved here two years ago, a couple of times my heart is pounding so hard I think I might pass out – or be sick. But thankfully, the instructors are all supportive – not to mention easy on the eye. Turns out Coach Shayne is a fitness model at Wilhelmina Models, just like Tone House founder Alonzo Wilson, a former professional American footballer.

'Unleash your inner athlete' is the unofficial mantra here, and after class Alonzo explains how – 'I realised that only a small percentage of the population have been exposed to how real sports teams train,' he says. But hang on, is it safe for us mere mortals to work out at this level? He chuckles, 'There's nothing in the class a non-athlete can't do. A lot of the time it's about mind over matter.' And, with equal parts men and women in the class, Alonzo thinks 'women are more mentally tough'.

But will I be back? Despite walking out of class with a massive sense of achievement, the workout was too brutal for me to go back any time soon. But ask me again when bikini season rolls around. I might be just about ready for a re-match with that killer warm-up by then. ■

For more details, visit tonehousenewyork.com

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Try the world's other most excruciating (yet fashionable) workouts



THE CELEBRITY FAVOURITE
LA: BODY BY SIMONE

Created by former dancer Simone De La Rue, Anne Hathaway and Naomi Watts are fans of this killer workout, which has a rep as the hardest dance-cardio class on both east and west US coasts (the other studio is in NYC). It's how Sandra Bullock got her *Gravity* body.



THE LULU-HEADS' HIKE
VANCOUVER: THE GROUSE GRIND

Top execs at Lululemon HQ in Vancouver regularly challenge each other to the Grouse Grind – a 2.9km climb up 2,830 'steps' cut into the face of Grouse Mountain – it's commonly referred to as 'Mother Nature's Stairmaster'.



THE EDITORS' CHOICE
LONDON: BODY BY CHRISTINA

Personal trainer Christina Howells' Body By Christina workout is the go-to for editors in the UK fashion capital, with *LOVE* magazine's Katie Grand saying, 'Christina first sorted my legs out for my wedding. I had built up a lot of muscle and wanted to make them leaner.'



THE AMATEUR ATHLETE'S FIX
SYDNEY: AGOGA

With the tag-line 'Leaner. Faster. Stronger', Agoga functional training studio on Sydney's Bondi Beach uses all sorts of crazy equipment to create total body moves for the ultimate workout. 'Agoga' refers to the training of 'a class of warrior citizen' – so slacking will absolutely not be tolerated.