

we want

To waste away the hours with Seinfeld: Complete Collection, which is released this week. The limited-edition, 33-disc box set includes all 180 episodes of the show, which brought us the self-obsessed comedian Jerry Seinfeld and his neurotic friends Elaine, George and Kramer. Dh664 (plus p&p) from www.amazon.co.uk



Don't box me in

Unique exercise classes seem to be emerging from every corner. Katie Boucher rounds up the best options

It's as if someone has taken the gym timetable and blown through it. Suddenly, everywhere you look there are opportunities to engage in new and interesting ways to exercise. Where once there was only spinning and BodyPump, there is now kettlebell, hapkido and vertical flex.

And with temperatures starting to dip, we can finally emerge from our air conditioned gyms into real air, where outdoor activities with numerous health benefits abound. Not only are beach boot camps springing up, but parkour enthusiasts now convene weekly on Abu Dhabi's Corniche, fans of Bikram yoga can tone up on Jumeirah Beach, and pole walkers can stride the city's parks.

We've rounded up the best alternative options for keeping fit. You'll never need to pound the treadmill again.

abu dhabi

Punch Fitness

What it is: A form of boxercise, Punch Fitness teams you up with a partner so you both get a go at punching the pads. Expect plenty of core exercise – sit-ups, bridging, planks, shuffles and sprinting.

Health benefits: Strengthens the body, gives you flexibility, agility and balance. "Boxing is one of the most demanding sports there is, and fitness levels need to be very high," says Corey Oliver, the founder and head trainer at the Original Fitness Co. "In Punch Fitness you are doing some of the same exercises, so it's rigorous."

Need to know: Suitable for ages 16 to 65 and any fitness level. Sessions take place Mondays and Wednesdays in the park opposite Marina Mall in Abu Dhabi (6am and 8pm during Ramadan and 6am and 7.30pm after Eid). Single sessions cost Dh100, or a four-week course of eight sessions costs Dh700. Call the Original Fitness Co on 02 406 9404.

Boot camp

What it is: An intensive beach workout (on the public beach past the Emirates Palace) that focuses on different parts of the body: one day on upper body, one day on lower body and one day on running. "You may lose interest in the gym," says Georgina Johnson, the business development director of Original Fitness Co, "but each day at boot camp is different."

Health benefits: Increased fat loss and cardiovascular output. If done in tandem with a healthy diet, you could expect to lose around 3-4kg in four weeks.

Need to know: Suitable for all fitness levels (a fitness test is carried out when you join to assess your level, and training is tailored accordingly). A single session costs Dh100, and a four-week course of three



Gary Alford practises Muay Thai boxing, which is sometimes called "the art of eight limbs", at the Cobra Muay Thai Gym in Abu Dhabi. Jaime Puebla / The National

sessions costs Dh1,000. Sessions take place Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday, 6am and 8pm (during Ramadan), 6am and 7.30pm (after Eid). Can be combined with Punch Fitness for a concentrated get-fit regime. Women-only sessions are held at Sheraton Corniche, Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday at 9am, and kids sessions on Sunday and Tuesday at 4pm. Boot camp starts next month at Al Raha Beach Hotel. Call the Original Fitness Co on 02 406 9404.

Vertical flex

What it is: Exercises using vertical poles. Involves plenty of upper body work, including climbing, pulling up and bodyweight work.

Health benefits: Dramatically increases upper body strength and tones upper arms. "Women don't have much upper body strength," says Joanne Smith, vertical flex instructor at the Expressions Studio of Dance and Drama, "but after five weeks you'll notice a real difference."

Need to know: Classes are women only and take place once a week at the Expressions Studio of Dance and Drama in the ADCB building on the Corniche (they will resume after Eid). A five-week course costs Dh250. There is currently a waiting list. Call 02 626 2533.

Muay Thai boxing

What it is: The national sport of Thailand, Muay Thai boxing is also called "the art of eight limbs". It differs from traditional kickboxing in that elbows and knees are used as well as hands and feet.

Health benefits: Improves cardio fitness, strength, flexibility and mental discipline.

Need to know: Classes take place at the Cobra Muay Thai Gym at the One to One Hotel several times a week. They cost Dh50 per visit or Dh500 for 16 passes over a three-month period. Call Matthew Dryden (trainer) on 055 616 0996.

Parkour

What it is: Also dubbed free running, Parkour is the art of moving from A to B as quickly as possible (remember the opening scene of *Casino Royale*?). Sessions involve climbing, running, pulling up and bodyweight exercise. "Basically, it's a lot of acting crazy," says Steve Smuts, founder of Abu Dhabi Parkour.

Health benefits: As well as offering increased muscle tone and weight loss, the intensive cardio workout acts as the opposite to self-defence "by enabling you to get away from people who cannot do what you do", says Smuts.

Need to know: A basic level of fitness

is required. It will take around six months to reach an average level of skill. Sessions are free and are held on Fridays in front of the Hilton Bainuna on the Corniche (times vary; sessions will resume after Eid). Call Steve Smuts on 050 721 8169.

dubai

Kettlebells

What it is: A relatively new concept that is essentially a hybrid version of Olympic lifting. It claims to burn fat faster than any other training method. A solid iron weight is used to work the body's three planes of motion. "It will completely change your body shape," says Peter Sullivan, a kettlebells instructor, "and if you keep it up for a period of time, your body will stay in that shape."

Health benefits: An excellent cardiovascular workout that builds the body's core muscles. It increases strength, flexibility, speeds up your metabolism by building lean muscle mass, and is particularly useful for getting back in shape after a pregnancy or rebuilding strength following an injury.

Need to know: Peter Sullivan holds beginners' and regular classes at Emirates Hills Golf Club, Arabian Ranches and, from October, at Safa

Park. Sessions are Dh75 each or Dh250 for a one-on-one. Visit www.springdubai.com for more information or call Peter on 050 378 7367.

Bikram yoga

What it is: A 90-minute sequence of 26 hatha yoga positions carried out in a room that has been heated to 42°C. Some sessions are held on the Madinat Jumeirah Beach in association with the Talise Spa.

Health benefits: Excessive sweating means you eliminate toxins, while open capillaries absorb more oxygen and nutrients. Bikram yoga reduces cholesterol, strengthens bones, increases lung capacity, increases flexibility, helps weight loss, digestion and makes muscles look leaner.

Need to know: Four or five classes a day are held at Club Stretch on Al Meena Road (call to find out about the next beach-based one). An introductory package (including classes on 10 consecutive days) is Dh90 until after Ramadan, when it's Dh100. Call Club Stretch on 04 345 2131.

Boot camp

What it is: An intensive beach workout that aims to improve fitness levels and aid weight loss. There are now camps in Dubai Marina, The

Palm, Umm Suqeim, Safa Park and Jumeirah.

Health Benefits: Increased fat loss and fitness levels. If done in tandem with a healthy diet, you could expect to lose around 3-4kg in four weeks.

Need to know: A four-week course of three sessions costs Dh1,100. Camps take place in various locations every day except Saturday. Call Physical Advantage on 04 311 6570.

Hapkido

What it is: A form of martial art from Korea, hapkido combines leg work, kicks, punches, pressure points and arm guards with meditation. The result is a more intensive version of karate or tae kwondo.

Health benefits: As well as providing a cardio workout, it disciplines the mind, improves flexibility and strengthens bones and joints.

Need to know: Classes are held at the Big Apple (04 319 8660) and Al Arees Club (04 232 5670), Festival City on Saturday, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. The curved moves incur no pressure on the spine, so hapkido is suitable for ages up to 70. Classes cost Dh45. Call Andre Meyerhans (instructor) on 050 550 8670 or Metin Sayer on 050 695 9510.

Mall walking

What it is: Technical fitness walking sessions held at Mall of the Emirates. Stride for Life teaches at an individually tailored pace. The aim is to deliver a moderately intensive regime for all fitness levels.

Health Benefits: Cardio workout improves overall fitness levels and muscle tone. "The mall is obviously good because of the climate," says Deborah Dixon, the founder of Stride for Life and a walk leader, "but it's also discreet for those who don't want to exercise in public or outside."

Need to know: Sessions are free and held at 8.30am daily except Friday at Mall of the Emirates. Call Deborah on 050 657 7057 or visit www.strideforlife.com.

Pole walking

What it is: Walking with poles to increase the core workout, stride and speed. It's accessible for all ages and fitness levels. Joanne Macdonald, the founder of Keenfit, holds clinics in parks and beaches across Dubai. "As well as providing a good workout, the pole walking clinics help develop a sense of community here," she says.

Health benefits: Increases your upper body workout by 40 per cent and cardio by 26 per cent compared to normal walking. The techniques mean that 90 per cent of body mass is often being used.

Need to know: Walking poles cost Dh350 but clinics, which take place three to four times a week, are all free. For more information visit www.keenfit-me.com or call Joanne on 050 559 7137.

Ian Brown, Human League sign on for new music festival

The 1980s legends The Human League, Echo and the Bunnymen and the Happy Mondays will headline a new music festival in Dubai aimed at promoting interaction and creativity throughout the Middle East.

The bands lead a line-up of more than 30 artists taking part in Dubai Sound City, a three-day event that organisers hope will become the region's answer to other international music conventions such as Austin's South by Southwest.

Also on the bill are the US hip-hop pioneers De La Soul, the British indie heavyweights Doves and the psychedelic Welsh rockers Super Furry Animals.

Dubai Sound City will take place from November 5-7. In addition to concerts, organisers intend to drum up debate among the festival's audience through a series of conferences focusing on the future of the

music business and its priorities in the region. More than 40 industry insiders, artists and experts are due to attend as guest speakers.

The former Stone Roses frontman Ian Brown will officially launch Dubai Sound City with a special one-off show at the Madinat Arena on October 1. The singer, who inspired the likes of Oasis and Arctic Monkeys, releases his sixth solo album, *My Way*, later this month.

There will also be a new bands competition every Tuesday throughout October. Battle for Sound City will give the winning group or artist the chance to open the three-day event in November.

"We are trying to oil the wheels of the music industry in the Middle East and to make a statement," said Alex Bracken, the chief executive of New Dawn, the festival's organisers. "We think the conference will be

just as important as the music, like South by Southwest in the US," he said. "There's nothing like that here at the moment. The music business is one of the biggest industries in the world and it's so international. Dubai has a great location and a large number of different nationalities living together, so it's an ideal place to have a festival like this where people can meet and make deals."

The Synthpop trio The Human League, which have sold more than 20 million records worldwide and are best known for the single *Don't You Want Me*, will headline the festival's first day. They share the bill with Ocean Colour Scene, The Wombats, The Farm, Dirty Skirts, The Automatic, Sound of Guns and Bicycle Thieves.

The post-punk group Echo and the Bunnymen, who hail from Liverpool, will play the second day

This is something on a slightly different scale for Dubai that lots of avid music fans will enjoy

Alex Bracken organiser

alongside Doves and Super Furry Animals. Also on the bill that day are The Parlotones, Nitin Sawhney, Dan Black and Post War Years.

Closing the festival will be the infamous Madchester band the Happy Mondays, featuring the shambolic frontman Shaun Ryder and the dancer Bez. De La Soul also play the final day, as well as The Courteeners, The Whip, Kissy Sell Out, Ladytron, We Have Band, Wave Machines and Ezra Bang & Hot Machine.

The festival's biggest shows will take place at the Irish Village arena, which is able to hold up to 7,000 fans. Other venues which will be used for the festival include Alpha Club, 360, The Apartment, Warehouse and Chi at The Lodge.

Single-day passes for the event will cost Dh295 and three-day passes cost Dh750. Admission to the music industry conference is

separate; tickets cost Dh300.

"We are giving people the chance to see 10 artists for the price of one," said Bracken. "Dubai is full of commercial acts on a really big scale. This is something on a slightly different scale that lots of avid music fans will enjoy."

The music industry conference will take place at Emirates Towers over the festival's three days. Sessions will include: "The secret world of the agent" (in a time when live music becomes more popular, has there ever been a better time to go on the road?) and "Music is free, music is free, music is free" (can the industry make the consumer see the value in purchasing music once more?).

Further bands and artists are yet to be confirmed. This event is strictly for people over 21.

★ Oliver Good