

Prasara Yoga Lesson: Iguana Asana for Leg Swoops

About the author:

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INTRODUCTION

In Prasara yoga, many people have difficulty mastering the basic Leg Swoop from FlowFit (Level 2). Once mastered, this movement is a TON of FUN, but learning it can be a little frustrating. To ease the learning process, I recommend the Iguana Asana and its variations.

Start by prepping the body with Intu-Flow joint mobility for the spine, shoulders, and hips, then review Trinity Breathing Squats and basic Quad Hops (also FlowFit Level 2). Warmed up and ready, it's easier for your body to work through the asana and vinyasa (poses and breath transitions) outlined below.

IGUANA ASANA (and variations)

Preparation

Step 1: Sit tall with back upright, legs together, heels projecting forward with knees straight and toes pulled back. Continuously extend heels as your breathing relaxes into the position. Visualize inhaling into any tight spots, inflating them like balloons, then allowing them to deflate and relax as you exhale.



Step 2: Continue to extend right leg as you bend the left leg, bringing the knee into the shoulder with foot flat on floor. Grab the knee and/or shin with both hands. Inhale as you sit up extra tall (chest up, shoulders back). Exhale deeply and collapse the chest back while your left foot remains flat on the floor. Maintain deep exhalation with a tight core and feel the upper and mid back open as your body extends your arms.



Step 3: Relax back to an upright seated posture and extend the left leg (as in Step 1). Repeat Steps 1 and 2 on the other side.

Entrance

Step 4: From the upright seated posture (Step 1), pull the left foot back and in line with the left hip. Continuously extend right heel and keep left foot flat. Sit extra tall and get a deep breath as you lengthen your spine up towards the ceiling.



Basic Iguana Pose

Step 5: Maintaining extended right heel, flat left foot, and long spine, turn towards your right. Allow breath to be expelled as water being wrung from a towel. Your throat is open and relaxed. Place hands flat on mat, spaced equally to either side of a line drawn straight out from your right hip. (pics show 2 angles)





Extended Iguana Pose

Step 6: Adjusting hand position as needed, extend spine lengthwise in line with hip. Emphasis is upon extension (keeping straight spine) rather than “dropping low” (which encourages spinal rounding). Exhale upon extending, and keep left foot flat on the floor as right leg remains straight. The arms should bend only as needed to support the body at its maximum point of extension. For an extra challenge, the arms may slowly pump up and down to build strength at maximum extension, exhaling during effort as appropriate. Repeat on other side.



Elevated Iguana variation

Step 7: Similar to #5, but bring the hip off the ground, supporting your weight solely upon the arms and one foot. Start with the elbows locked, thereby providing solid structural support with less effort. Lengthen the spine upward and outward in line with the right hip for Elevated Extended Iguana.



Extended Elevated and Hopping Iguana variations

Step 8: If #7 is easy, allow arms to bend as body lengthens forward and folds at the hip. Keep both elbows in. (The pic shows poor flaring of right elbow compared to tight position of left elbow.) Add pressing up and dropping down (as in #6) and try to get air for the challenging Hopping Iguana. Repeat on other side.



VINYASA

Step 9: From standing position, use a Trinity Breathing Squat to sit down into a Flat Foot Squat. Then allow yourself to rock forward slightly until both hands are on the floor. This is your middle position.



Step 10: Both hands remain in contact with the ground. Exhale as you turn your hips to one side. Lead foot is flat on the floor while the rear foot pivots on its ball. Your tailbone drops during the pivot, and most of your weight shifts onto the lead foot. Return to middle position, then repeat towards other side.





Breath Through It

Step 11: Keep a soft open airway and allow the movement to breathe you. Exhale on your way down into the squat, and continue as you turn towards the first side. As you pass through middle position, you will feel a slight decompression inhale, then exhale again as your hips turn towards the second side. Allow your body to relax and decompress as you return to center, rock back into your Flat Foot Squat and stand up.

Step 12: Your next task is to put everything together into a seamless flow of movement. From #10, just extend your rear foot forward to enter the Iguana poses described above. When returning the extended foot to center, it is important to place the heel of that foot in line with the same-side hand. This prevents ending with the feet too close together when it is time to stand up.

LEG SWOOP

As shown here, you will be able to perform Leg Swoop (Level 2) from the FlowFit routine. The vid clip shows the complete movement performed at a modest training pace suitable for beginners. Practice this Leg Swoop until it is smooth, then combine it with other movements as part of a larger flow.

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=1UZq38ph-kY>

CONCLUSION

As you become proficient with the Leg Swoop, you will notice improvements in endurance, upper body strength and stability, balance, and mobility. The steps outlined above have helped many clients and yoga students achieve their first Leg Swoops, and opened the doors to more challenging material. Have fun, and please send your questions to Jason@CSTMinnesota.com