

ॐ magic of rishikesh

OM explores the incredible Rishikesh International Yoga Festival with leading teachers Francesca Cassia and Roberto Milletti

More than 1,000 participants from India and abroad, representing over 80 nationalities, plus 40 of the best-known masters of the yoga world all came together for this year's Rishikesh International Yoga Festival (IYF).

The week-long festival, which takes place every year in early March, is renowned for drawing people together from around the world, bringing them back to yoga's spiritual home.

Rishikesh has been dubbed the yoga capital of the world, a small city on the banks of the Ganga, and in the lap of the Himalayas – the birthplace of yoga. A place where for thousands of years, saints, sages and *rishi* have performed their meditation, their yoga, and their *sadhana* in search of enlightenment.

It was The Beatles, of course, that made Rishikesh famous around the world back in 1968, in their quest for spirituality. They spent time at the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi Ashram and practiced transcendental meditation, diving into Advaita Vedanta philosophy. Ringo Starr stayed only for a short time (famously packing tins of baked beans in his luggage, to enjoy home comforts on the road), while Paul McCartney, John Lennon and George Harrison stayed longer. During their sojourn in the ashram, the band crafted songs that would later appear on legendary albums such as *Abbey Road* and *Let It Be*.

Today, Rishikesh is where many westerners seeking an authentic yoga

