

## More people enrol for boot camps in the outdoors to get fit and trim

PUBLISHED JUL 25, 2014, 8:04 PM SGT

---

### More people are doing high- intensity, interval-training exercises at boot camps in the outdoors to get fit and trim [Lydia Vasko](#)

At his daughter's first birthday party, Mr Rohit Mehrotra was surprised by the sight of a once-pudgy friend who had shed kilos. Mr Mehrotra, who had been unsuccessfully trying to lose weight, asked for his friend's secret.

The answer - boot camp, a group exercise class which is usually held outdoors and uses a series of cardiovascular, resistance and plyometric (jump) exercises to raise participants' heart beats and metabolism. Through high-intensity, interval- training exercises, the camps help people burn fat and get fit fast.

Mr Mehrotra, 33, who is 1.74m tall and works in investment banking, attended his first **FuelFit** boot camp class in Punggol in April 2012. He weighed 87kg when he started and within six months, he lost close to 15kg.

He attends three boot camp classes a week and now maintains his weight at 76kg. His results encouraged his wife and a number of his friends to sign up for boot camps.

Thanks to such rapid and visible results, boot camps have proliferated here in the past few years. There are now over a dozen gyms, fitness companies and personal trainers offering more than 100 weekly boot camp classes around Singapore.

UFit Urban Fitness offers more than 40 classes a week for 700 clients, up from just 12 clients and four classes a week when New Zealander Darren Blakeley, 48, started the company in 2008.

The fitness instructor, who moved here to work as a civil engineer in 1998 before making the career switch to focus on fitness in 2006, says: "I think boot camps' popularity is a natural progression from the fitness trends of the 1970s and 1980s when people first started exercising outside on a regular basis.

"People were asking why they needed to be in an air-conditioned gym when there was fresh air and sun outside. Plus being in a warmer environment makes you sweat more and your calorie expenditure is higher."

Similarly, **Ms Saudi Tan**, 34, saw the demand for boot camps and left her job as a physical education instructor to start **FuelFit** Bootcamp in 2012. Then she ran two

classes by herself. Now she has three trainers to help her run eight boot camp groups of anywhere from six to 16 people who meet three times a week in HDB neighbourhoods.

She says: "**I wanted to make fitness convenient and affordable for those who do not have the time or money to go to a gym.**"

She charges \$180 for 10 sessions for a person.

Art consultant Marilyn Umboh, 38, says she will never go back to gyms after making the switch to boot camps three years ago.

She says: "I enjoy the scenery while exercising in a park, and in boot camp, you become friends with other people in the class and we encourage one another. There is a community feeling that you do not have in a gym. Plus **gyms try to lock you into a membership for at least a year, which is expensive and too rigid. Boot camps are much more flexible.**"

Boot camps range in cost from \$18 to \$45 a session, depending on the number of classes you buy at a time. You can buy classes in packages of 10 and switch classes or trainers, unlike gyms which charge about \$100 to \$200 a month for membership and require users to sign a one- to two-year contract. Breaking the contract results in a financial penalty.

Another attraction of boot camps is the range, from traditional outdoor camps which focus on high-intensity interval and circuit training, to those targeting specific interest groups, with boxing, pilates or cycling.

These often use increased frequency of classes - up from a couple of classes a week to daily classes for a month, for example - to boost the fitness level and technical ability of participants.

Classes are typically capped at less than 20 people, so instructors can provide personalised attention and ensure participants complete the exercises properly. Smaller class sizes also promote a supportive and competitive atmosphere among participants.

Boot camps frequently focus on partner exercises, where partners must work together to achieve fitness targets or work against each other's body weight to complete resistance and weight- lifting exercises. Such interaction allows participants to become friends.

Mr K.C. Cheang, 42, says this sense of community is part of what pushes him and keeps him interested in his boot camp class.

The civil servant discovered boot camps in July last year when he saw such a camp in progress at Fort Canning Park. He had struggled to maintain his interest in exercise, often doing only a 20-minute jog once a week in his Oxley Rise neighbourhood. But he was intrigued by the boot camp and took his first trial a few weeks later.

[vlydia@sph.com.sg](mailto:vlydia@sph.com.sg)



PUBLISHED JUL 25, 2014, 8:04 PM SGT



Physical education teacher Saudi Tan, 34, started group fitness company FuelFit Bootcamp in February 2012 to make exercise classes accessible to people living in the heartlands of Singapore.

She says: "I kept hearing a lot of people saying that they wanted to get fit but they didn't know what to do. They couldn't afford a personal trainer or did not have time to travel to and from the gym."

She also realised that a lot of people found gyms confining and intimidating but boot camps, held largely at the Botanic Gardens and Fort Canning, were too difficult to get to.

"I wanted to reach out to heartlanders and bring fitness to where people live," she adds.

She started outdoor boot camp classes at Punggol Park and Marina Bay Financial Centre and now, with the help of three trainers, runs boot camps in seven heartland locations, including Buangkok, Braddell View and Sengkang Anchorvale. She hopes to expand to Ang Mo Kio, Bishan, Yio Chu Kang and Tampines.

Anyone can sign up for or create a FuelFit boot camp class. All they need is a minimum of six participants who each pay \$180 for 10 sessions held at a convenient place and time, three days a week.

The hour-long classes, which are capped at 16 people and suitable for any fitness level, are popular with office workers and housewives alike.

The exercises, which include interval training, circuits and partner work, change every session to maintain variety and interest and often include competitions and games to keep the class fun.

Participants are given options for how intense they would like each class to be and every three months, Ms Tan holds a fitness assessment so that participants can judge their progress.

"The goal is to get people out of the gym and into fresh air," she says.  
"Our motto is, you are never too busy to be fit."

**Where:** Currently in Buangkok, Braddell View, Bishan Park, Punggol, Serangoon NEX, East Coast Park, Bedok Reservoir, Sengkang Anchorvale, Changi City Point

**When:** Time is pre-arranged with instructor for twice or thrice weekly sessions

**Cost:** \$180 for 10 sessions per person; \$300 for 10 sessions per couple

**Info:** Go to [fuelfit.com.sg](http://fuelfit.com.sg)