

9 Frugal Dating Tips for Cost-Conscious Lovebirds



By Andrea Woroch

Summer is the season for romance as singles and couples seek magical moments amid the sunny and hot weather. However, creating a magical date can be a nerve-wrecking experience, depending on the dating situation. Thinking about what to wear, wondering if he/she will like you or stressing over what you will talk about is enough to make someone go crazy. With so much to think about, the last thing you need to worry about is your wallet.

Lucky for cost-conscious lovebirds, there are plenty of ways to spark a romantic connection without blowing your budget.

Here are nine ways to enjoy a memorable yet inexpensive

summer date:

1. Time-sharing babysitting: Finding a competent and dependable babysitter is often an expensive nightmare. It's almost enough to make a parent want to stay home. When you think about it, however, many others face the same situation.

Why not swap services with neighbors, co-workers, family or friends for a free night or afternoon out? Otherwise, consider sharing one babysitter among a couple of families and splitting the cost. Consider searching SitterCity.com for vetted babysitters in your area who will match your needs and budget.

2. Avoid alcohol: Even if you find a cut-rate meal (early bird special, anyone?), a couple drinks can greatly add to the bill. You might want to hit a restaurant that doesn't serve booze or make it an afternoon date. Otherwise, plan to drink and dine at a restaurant or bar that offers happy hour prices which is usually in the early evening. You can enjoy most drinks and food at very reasonable prices.

3. Date with gift cards: Buy a gift card at a discount from sites such as CardAvenue.com. They will save you anywhere from five to 50 percent on restaurants and other entertainment activities.

4. Plan a freebie: Dating doesn't always have to mean dinner and a movie. Some activities – like hiking, biking or visiting farmers' markets – don't cost a dime and tend to reveal more about your partner than a standard date.

5. DIY date night: Create your own dinner with a picnic in a local park. For a romantic touch, pack portable speakers with a pre-mixed playlist on your iPod as well as a bottle of wine and a few chocolate-covered strawberries for dessert. Not only is this DIY date an inexpensive alternative to a night on the town, but you'll score extra brownie points for taking the time to plan this special event.

6. Get smart advice from smartphones: Use your mobile phone to find local deals and date ideas. The Date Night iPhone app for example will help you find unique, interesting and affordable events that are sure to impress. The app randomly selects a “thing to do” for your next evening on the town, some of which won’t bust your budget.

7. Dial into daily deals: Groupon, Living Social and other group-buying coupon companies offer some great deals – up to 50 percent off – on such entertainment experiences as wine tastings, boat tours, museums and comedy clubs. If you’re worried about appearing “cheap,” redeem the offer when your date is in the restroom.

8. Go cultural: Many libraries and coffee shops offer free poetry readings and musical entertainment. Look for art gallery tours or free museum days to improve your cultural IQ while impressing your date.

9. Create a thrifty movie night: Instead of dishing out \$20 for two movie tickets plus cost of popcorn, candy and soda, plan a romantic movie night at home. Pick-up a free DVD from your local library or a new release for just a dollar from Redbox. Then dim the lights and serve some freshly popped popcorn or your date’s favorite candy for a theater-like experience.

Consumer Savings Expert Andrea Woroch has been featured as a media expert source on NBC’s Today Show, FOX & Friends, MSNBC, ABC News NOW and many more. For more savings tips follow @AndreaWoroch.