

Creative Dating on a Dime for Valentine's Day



By Mary Humphreys for Galttime.com

Valentine's Day is coming and romance is in the air. So what if you are looking to meet someone new but are tight on funds? Don't worry, you don't need fancy dinners and limo rides to spark a romance with someone. All you need is a personal connection, and we've come up with some great date ideas that can create connections on a budget.

Get online to go offline

Hanging out at a club or going on blind dates can get expensive while you are trying to find that special someone. Get out of the bars and onto your computer. With free trial

periods and coupon codes galore, you can try out even the most popular paid dating sites without making the commitment of paying full price. That way you can set up as many dates as you'd like. And the beginning of the year is the most popular time to start dating online, so now's a great chance to check out the largest pool of new daters.

Let's Take This Outside

Planning something active outdoors is one of the best ways to spark a connection with another person. And depending on your city and the weather, there are lots of great active dates you can plan.

Act like a kid: If your town's a winter wonderland right now, suggest doing some of your favorite activities from childhood. Grab your ice skates and head to an outdoor skating rink. Dive headfirst down a hill on your sleds. Have a snowball fight from your opposing snow forts. Build your own Frosty the Snowman. Or just fall into the fresh snow and make snow angels. You can even pack a thermos of hot chocolate to keep you warm in the cold.

This will help break the ice (no pun intended) and help showcase your playful side, and hopefully give you a glimpse at his inner child. Any of these activities are guaranteed to spark laughs and some deep conversations about how each of you grew up. It's perfect for that getting-to-know-you stage.

Get active and release some endorphins: If the weather's a little warmer, try working up a little bit of a sweat. Go for a hike; it'll give you plenty of quiet time to get to know each other and nature is a perfect backdrop to spark conversation when there's a lull. Go for a bike ride through the park. Exercise will also release endorphins in your body that will help in making that love connection.

Stay-At-Home Romance

Looking for a date that won't make you and your honey head out into the cold? These dates are probably better suited for a little later on in the relationship, but they can be great, cozy ways to get to know each other better.

Movie theater-style movie night: Take a trip to a local grocery store to pick out all your favorite movie snacks and either grab a great movie rental or use an online video streaming service like Netflix or Amazon Instant Video and throw yourselves a theater-style night at home. Bonus if it's cold outside, so you have an extra excuse to cuddle.

Top Chef meal: Pick out a recipe or two that you've wanted to try and go out to buy the ingredients together at a farmer's market or a local grocery store. Then cook up your creations at home and give yourself ratings. For extra fun, come up with a challenge to complete, like incorporating an unusual ingredient or technique.

Hometown Tourist

If you've never played tourist in your hometown, now's the time. Look online for free walking tours or just head out to the most popular tourist attractions and take your camera.

Try a history lesson: Hit up some of the most famous landmarks and tourist attractions in your city, although avoid any tourist traps, they tend to overcharge unsuspecting tourists. Take a tour of an old, historic building. Learning new information will not only give you something to talk about, but will also give you something to bond over on future dates.

Use culture to spark a conversation: Often museums offer free entrance once a month or on specific days, and looking at art is a great way to spark a conversation. If you check ahead of time, you may be able to get a great deal on entrance.

Get close on an adventure: Looking for something a little more obscure? Check out Geocaching. Using a GPS device or your

smartphone, you can locate hidden containers left all around the world by other Geocachers, get your hands on some cool little treasures, and leave your own artifacts behind. Geocaches are stashed in a wide range of places, from hidden city nooks to remote wilderness spots, so you can explore wherever you are.