

101 Cheap Date Ideas

With a little creativity, you can plan an inexpensive night on the town -- or at home -- with your special someone.

Meghan Ross, Contributor

2 Comments

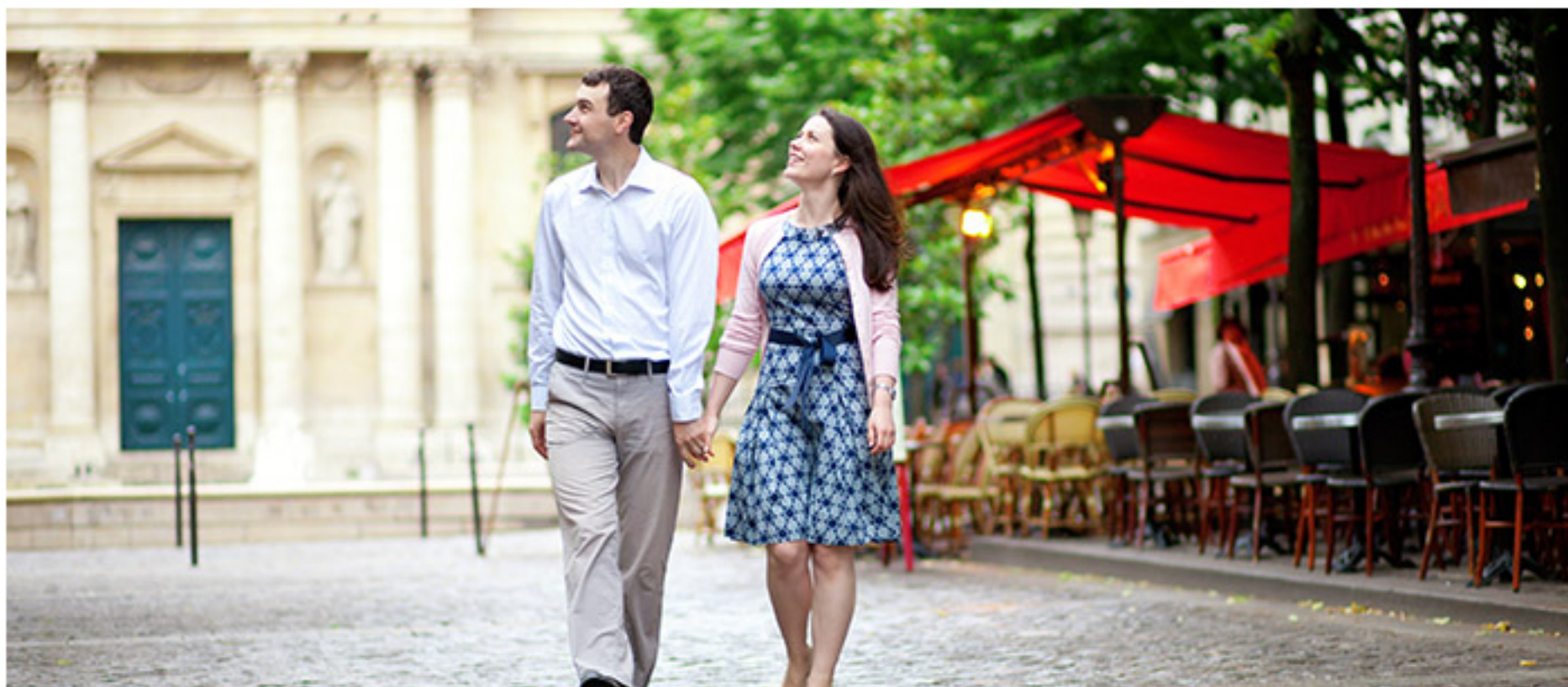
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Remember when you and your partner used to go on date nights? It used to seem so easy. What happened?

"It seems like when my wife and I were dating, we had no problem coming up with date ideas, but now, things come up, life gets busy," says Ben Homan, relationship blogger at [Top Date Ideas](#).

Get comfortable with date night again. Whether it's Valentine's Day, your anniversary or an average weekend night, [hire a date night babysitter](#) and spend some special time together. And your date doesn't have to be expensive.

We reached out to Homan, Stef Safran, matchmaking expert of [Stef and the City](#), and Kalyn Brooke Comings, deals expert at [Creative Savings](#), and put together 101 date ideas to get you started.

(You can even do some of these at home, while your kids are sleeping!)

1. Sing in a karaoke bar.
2. Look through old photo albums.
3. Roast marshmallows around a backyard fire pit.
4. Take advantage of offers to try out free martial arts or exercise classes.
5. Volunteer together.
6. Go out for coffee.
7. Participate in a local astronomy club's stargazing event.
8. Go sledding and warm up with hot cocoa afterward.
9. Look through travel brochures and plan your next vacation (or your dream one).
10. Hold a movie marathon.
11. Go fishing.
12. Dip fondue. "We love strawberries, marshmallows and pretzels," says Comings.
13. Browse the farmer's market.
14. Rent a canoe.
15. Go out for breakfast.
16. Make a [fancy popcorn recipe](#) and eat it while you watch a movie.
17. Attend a presentation at your local library.
18. Play cards or board games.
19. Go for a run.
20. Snuggle in a backyard hammock.
21. Cheer on the high school sports team.
22. Bake cookies.
23. Take a peek at homes in your community during real estate open houses.
24. Camp at a state park, which often has lower fees than a privately owned facility.
25. Drive around to look at holiday lights.
26. Take a walk in the park. "Even going for a simple walk is an easy way to enjoy each others' company, while getting some fresh air," Safran says.
27. Cook dinner together.
28. Go for a scenic drive -- especially nice when the autumn trees are in full color.
29. Eat takeout by candlelight.
30. Conduct a taste test. Comings suggests driving to three or four local bakeries, picking up one chocolate chip cookie from each, then tasting and rating them to decide which the best is.
31. Stroll through a college campus.
32. Visit a historic site in your area -- admission is usually inexpensive.
33. Go out for ice cream.
34. Attend a free concert in the park.
35. Invite another couple over for a game night.
36. Go fantasy car shopping. Browse the lots and dream about which ones you'd like to own.
37. Visit an apple orchard or a you-pick berry farm.
38. Attend a high school or college play.
39. Walk hand-in-hand through the downtown streets.
40. Go bowling.
41. Fly kites.
42. Grill a pizza in your backyard.
43. Massage one another.
44. Play Frisbee.
45. Browse a secondhand store for new-to-you treasures.
46. Head to happy hour. "Enjoying a drink or two together won't break the bank," says Safran.
47. Ever play the game [Name 5](#)? Take turns calling out categories and seeing if the person can name five things that fit (five Tom Hanks movies, five pizzas topics, etc.).
48. Take a yoga class that focuses on relaxing.
49. Attend a poetry reading -- you might even consider reading your own compositions.
50. Collect shells at the beach.
51. Take a bubble bath together.
52. Have a special dinner at home. After the kids go to bed, "Dress up for late-night dinner in and bring out the fancy china," suggests Comings.
53. See a movie at a drive-in theater.
54. Play on a playground -- they're not just for kids!
55. Have an alphabet scavenger hunt. Challenge yourselves to kiss in front of an item that starts with each letter of the alphabet.
56. Browse the stacks at the bookstore or library.
57. Watch your wedding video.
58. Visit free- or low-cost museums. Small-town museums often have low admission rates while large, city institutions often have free or pay-what-you-wish hours.
59. Play 1-on-1 basketball.
60. Go [geocaching](#).
61. Tackle a household project together.
62. Drive through ritzy neighborhoods and look at the houses.
63. Take photos of one another in a scenic location.
64. Go birdwatching.
65. Challenge each other to a video game competition.
66. Browse a home-improvement store and dream about renovations you'd like to make someday.
67. Draw pictures of one another -- stick figures are allowed!
68. Pick up a pizza and eat it in the park.
69. Attend the zoo or the aquarium on a free day.
70. Read aloud to one another from a book or magazine.
71. Set up your own wine tasting, with several single-serving bottles.
72. Have a lunch date. Many restaurants offer lunch-hour specials.
73. Hike the trails at a nature preserve.
74. Window shop at the mall. Treat yourselves to a soft pretzel or a giant cookie.
75. Hit up a used book sale.
76. Do crosswords or other word puzzles.
77. Go hunting. If that's not your thing, go wildlife watching.
78. Test your smarts at a trivia night. "It's a fun and inexpensive way to bond over teamwork," encourages Safran.
79. Attend a carnival or town festival.
80. Go mini golfing.
81. Set up an indoor picnic. Homan says, "My wife and I do this one now and then, and it's so nice to get away from everything and have an organized night in."
82. Ride bicycles.
83. Take advantage of buy-one-get-one-free meal coupons for local restaurants. Keep an eye out for deals like these in the newspaper, the phone book and online deals sites.
84. Feed ducks at the pond.
85. Go swimming -- or just spend time in the hot tub.
86. Watch the sunset. This can be done from the beach, the hood of your car or your own front porch.
87. Attend an art fair or art show.
88. Enroll in a class together. You can find reasonably priced programs through your community college, parks and recreation department or community center.
89. Browse a flea market.
90. Dance -- in your living room for free or look into low-cost lesson options.
91. Rent a TV show on DVD and watch as many episodes as you can in one night.
92. Watch a concert by your community band or orchestra.
93. Play racquetball or tennis.
94. Listen to podcasts.
95. Go roller skating.
96. Watch planes take off and land at the airport.
97. Visit a hobby store to pick out supplies for a project you can work on together, like a vacation scrapbook or a model car.
98. Play [Google Roulette](#). Homan suggests this game, which involves plugging random words into a search engine and picking an activity from the results. "This will push both people involved out of their comfort zone," he says.
99. Build a snowman or a sand castle -- depending on the time of year.
100. Visit a garden center or arboretum. Make plans for your own landscaping or garden.
101. Go out for slices of pie.

Don't let lack of funds hamper your dating creativity. No matter your budget, you and your partner can enjoy fun, romantic, relationship-building times together.

Meghan Ross is a freelance writer in Illinois.