

14 Ways to Celebrate Valentine's Day on the Cheap



Ironically, there are a lot of broken hearts on Valentine's Day. Those of us in relationships often have high expectations of our partners, and when they fall short of what we think we should receive on February 14 or how we should be treated, well, the result is often the antithesis of what Valentine's Day is supposed to signify.

This year, hedge your bets by keeping the money you spend to a minimum while kicking the thoughtfulness up a notch. Here are 14 ideas that are easy on your wallet:

Celebrate the Day Before — or After

It's no secret that there are [serious markups](#) on flowers, activities, and dining out on Valentine's Day. To avoid the hike, plan your celebration a day before or — better yet — a day after. Waiting until February 15 will save you a bundle via return-to-normal pricing on dining and hotel stays and upwards of 50% on extras like discounted post-holiday cards, flowers and candy.

Get Clever

I buy a lot of things for myself that are custom — like my conversation-piece iPhone case from [Casetify](#)— and I appreciate when I receive well-meaning custom-made presents. There are innumerable ways you

can show your love with just-for-you Valentine's gifts this year, like creating a custom crossword using [Crossword Hobbyist](#). It takes about 20 minutes to create a crossword of clues and answers about your partner, and it only costs \$3.95.

Keep Your Getaway Local

[When you can't afford an expensive vacation](#), consider a local getaway. Look around for no-frills hotels and motels and inquire about deals and specials. Bonus point if you can locate the increasingly elusive vibrating bed. That's bumpin' old school, baby.

Attend Free Activities

Check your town's online bulletin board along with regional publications to see what's up for free on February 14.

Go Out by Staying In

If you're a dress-up for dinner, champagne, and dessert loyalist, consider these tips from [TheGroceryGame.com](#) CEO Teri Gault on how to duplicate that fancy night out, in:

- **The Invitation:** Send an invitation on Evite, with time, attire (semi-formal or formal), and...
- **New Location:** To make it new and special, set up a table in a different room. Dim the lights, and pull out the candles, tablecloth, your best china, crystal stemware, champagne on ice, and a single red rose in a vase.
- **Easy Money-Saving Dinner:** Shrimp, lobster, crab, and steaks are often on sale in supermarkets at up to 67% off, which means savings of 85% to 90% off restaurant prices. Opt for Prosecco, the Italian version of French 'champagne' for better than half-off without compromise.
- **Entertainment:** Play dinner music, and have a movie and popcorn ready for after dinner. And rent or buy an on-demand movie to [avoid expensive movie-theater prices](#). Or, better yet, borrow a romantic movie from the library.

Focus on Experiences

"You can keep your Valentine's day costs low by focusing on experiences and staying away from gifts," explains Paul Moyer, founder of [SavingFreak.com](#). "Instead of buying jewelry, go to a nice local restaurant and use [Restaurant.com](#) to get \$15 off the price of your dinner. Also, check websites like LivingSocial or Groupon. You may be able to score as much as 50% off activities or day spa services. Spending time together getting a couples' massage or doing a cooking class is a memorable way to celebrate your relationship."

A word of caution, however: Check for any blackout dates by calling the service provider in advance.

Consult Your Apps

There truly is an app for *everything*. Edit a sweet video for your S.O. using [Splice](#), customize a greeting card via [Punkpost](#), or search the App store for more ideas.

Look for Candy Deals

You can find affordable Valentine's sweets at [your local dollar store](#), and [Walmart](#) has a few festive exclusives this season, including Strawberry Chocolate M&Ms, Dove Milk & Dark Chocolate Hearts, Minis Mix Valentine's Party Bag, and Reese's White Hearts.

Try a Staycation

When London, Rome, and Paris are out of reach for a jet-setting love-fest, embark on the next best thing: a staycation with foreign flair. [Travel blogger Katie Matthews](#) offers a few tips:

"Start with a Parisian-themed meal or cheese and fruit plate, paired with a bottle of Champagne," she suggests. "Cue up Paris-themed movies, such as *An American in Paris* or *Amelie*. If you're more artistically inclined, pick up a copy of [this travel-themed coloring book](#), and share your creativity while coloring in the Eiffel Tower or a Paris street scene."

Enjoy an At-Home Movie Marathon

Instead of making a selection of sappy films for your in-house movie marathon, create a screening list of new and favorite horror and sci-fi flicks that'll bring you two even closer.

Serenade Your Lover

I've never had a bad time at a piano bar; they've become increasingly popular over the past decade or so, and you may be able to find one near you that's hosting a Valentine's event with a little research. In New York City, the [Shake Rattle & Roll Dueling Pianos Show](#) offers a three-hour all-request performance for \$20 per person so you can serenade the night away.

Celebrate V-Day at Brunch

Try flipping the holiday on its head by going out for breakfast or brunch.

"Since Valentine's Day falls on a Sunday this year, it's easy to celebrate first-thing without worrying about interrupting work schedules," says Kendal Perez, savings expert at [CouponSherpa.com](#). "Plus, breakfast and brunch often cost much less than dinner, though you can expect some breakfast restaurants to have special Valentine's Day menus."

Have Dinner In and Dessert Out

If Valentine's dinner is a must, lessen the cost by splitting the celebration: Have dinner at home then head out to indulge in the sweet stuff.

"A popular Valentine's Day spot like The Melting Pot will charge upwards of \$150 per couple for their premium Valentine's Day dinner, but you can choose to enjoy their delicious dessert fondue for just \$25," Perez says.

Get a Helping Hand

I've saved the best for last.

If you send a properly-prepared greeting card addressed, stamped and sealed in a larger envelope to the lovely folks in Loveland, Colorado, they'll add a few sentimental finishing touches before sending it off to its intended recipient. Loveland is home to the nation's largest Valentine Re-Mailing Program, and 2016 marks the 70th year of stamping special messages on more than 160,000 cards during the Valentine season. Learn more about the program, and how you can make your ordinary greeting card extraordinary, with [this video showcasing the special endeavor](#).