

## 20 Dates for Less than \$20

1. **Be a tourist in your own town** -- Ask your friends for their favorite spots that are cheap. See if your museum has a “First Sunday Free” program or some similar discount. For less than \$20 you could do a free museum tour and actually afford to eat at their café.
2. **Starbucks** -- And not the drive thru. Go in, order a couple of tall lattes, two giant cookies, and soak up all that atmosphere.
3. **Dive Dining** -- Some of our favorite restaurants are hole-in-the walls that you won’t find a national advertising campaign for. We love to eat at a taqueria down the road from our church, the lupia place on the east side of town, and the falafel stand next to the university. All of these places have amazing food for relatively cheap prices.
4. **Be a 50’s Retro Couple** -- Get together with another couple to play cards and have dessert. (Bonus 50’s points if you play bridge or canasta and drink Sanka coffee.)
5. **Breakfast in Bed** -- This date will require some planning the night before. Friday night grab a box of donuts or sweet rolls from a bakery in town and purchase the local paper at a newsstand. Set the timer on your coffee pot to go off mid-morning Saturday. When the aroma of Starbucks’ Sumatra Blend lures you from the sheets, put the paper, the rolls and a pot of coffee on a tray and plan on lingering in bed. (Who cares if the news is yesterdays? Enjoy the comics, the sports section and the lifestyle section.) If you have young kids, plan on buying enough rolls or donuts to share.

6. **You Light Up My Life** -- Around the holidays looking at Christmas lights is our absolute favorite thing to do. Most local papers will have a guide to all the best houses in your city. Pack a thermos of Peppermint Hot Chocolate and play some Trans Siberian Orchestra or put on Mercy Me's Christmas Album to sustain the mood.

7. **Music in the Park** -- Many of the downtown associations in our area have Concert in the Park series that we can take advantage of all summer long. Either pack a dinner or eat before hand and enjoy a double scoop of ice cream.

8. **Putt-Putt** -- Miniature golf may sound like the classic "getting to know you" first date (watching your fix-up throw his club at the mini windmill after missing a putt is a great way to weed out a dating loser...) but that is precisely why it is a great married date as well. Not only do you have the chance to walk around, hold hands, flirt and cheer each other on, it is the only sport where a girl can wear date-worthy high heels.

9. **Bookstore Browsing** -- The deal is simple. You each get \$10 to spend on books, magazines or coffee. Bonus points if you can find all those "I-don't-know-what-to-get-her" Barnes & Noble gift cards that your co-workers gave you at the office Christmas party. Double bonus points if you can agree on a book to purchase together and have enough money left over to split a grande latte in the bookstore café.

10. **Tasters Choice** -- We have been to several tastings over the years; cheese tastings, coffee tastings, and even an olive oil and balsamic tasting. Use your \$20 to buy your favorite that you can both agree on.

11. **Movie Swap** -- It is embarrassing how many DVDs we own. It is the fallback gift for our

kids to give to each of us. Plus, we are so incompatible when it comes to our taste in movies that it is just easier for us to wait to for things to come out on DVD (that way I can still get credit for watching the movie with my husband, even if I am resting my eyes.) Despite our library taking up tons of living room space, there are still days when we peruse our friends collections and think, “Ooohhhh, I’d like to see that...” For those movies you’d like to watch, but don’t necessarily need to own, swap discs with another family. (But keep a list of what has been loaned. It is better for everyone’s relationship if you do.)

12. **Coupon Craze** -- Everyone around my house mocks me for clipping coupons – that is until we want to eat out *and* stick to our budget. Look for the buy-one-get-one-free offers in the newspaper or in the junk mail you get everyday. I have also gone to several restaurants’ websites and signed up for their special e-mail offers. (I have a separate e-mail account for all this requested “junk” so when I’m looking for someplace to go I just log on to that account and look for the latest special offer.)

13. **Hiking** -- I hear that there are people who enjoy this. Whatever.

14. **Going to a Farmer’s Market** -- OK so this will not technically cost less than \$20, but the good news is that you can use part of your grocery budget for your shopping list.

15. **Cook Out** -- Pack up the marshmallows and hot dogs. Find a day camp site and let your man cook over an open fire. (This used to be a hard date for me until Roger bought me a Coleman coffee maker and a comfy chair to read in . Now I look forward to day camping...)

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16. **The Dog Park** -- I know these are traditionally reserved for singles that are on the prowl, but really, there is no law saying married people can't go there. It is fun for your spouse and your pup.

17. **Xbox vs. Wii** -- Get control of the game controls for a night and challenge your spouse to Rock Band.

18. **I Said Board – Not Bored** -- How about a good old fashioned game of Monopoly (or Twister to spice things up with your spouse. See "Bonus Project" in *The Marriage Project*)

19. **Cooking Throwdown** -- Find a recipe on the Food Network and shop for the ingredients (forcing yourself to keep the cost under \$20) Bring it home and have fun cooking, flirting and eating.

20. **Sex**

**Dates I don't recommend if you are trying to stick to a \$20 budget.**

1. **Bowling.** How retro! How expensive. Bowling is today what yachting was in the 80's – only for those with disposable income.

2. **Window shopping.** How fun! Let's walk around and talk about all the things we can't afford!

3. **Going to the movies.** If you can tell me how two people can go to the movies, get a pop-

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corn and a drink to share for less than \$20 without sneaking in through the side door, just let me know...

4. Bringing your children to anything. Kids automatically triple the cost of any outing.
5. Doing anything with people who are not on a budget. You will be talked into going to a restaurant you can't afford, and then will have to eat canned corn and pumpkin puree for the rest of the week.