



Valentine's Day Outdoor Activities for Couples

Choosing activities that you can enjoy with your spouse or partner not only ensures you'll spend time together, but also means you can help to motivate each other. When you plan a bicycle ride for two or book time on the tennis court, you're less likely to cancel than if you're going solo. And those days when you're feeling reluctant or too busy to take a walk, your spouse can encourage you to get up and moving. So what better occasion to celebrate healthy living together than Valentine's Day?

Did you know that 50 percent of cancers can be prevented? A mutual commitment to healthy living leads to a lifetime of better health and can help prevent many diseases, including cancer.

There are plenty of outdoor activities for couples to enjoy in the Vancouver area at this time of year. Here are a few suggestions.

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- ♥ Stroll (or stride) along the shore at sunrise at Pacific Spirit Regional Park, which has over 50 km of walking trails. For other great places to walk and hike check out Club Tread (www.clubtread.com) and Tourism BC (www.hellobc.com), which list regional trails rated from easy to challenging. Always wear a wide-brimmed hat when walking to protect from the sun.
 - ♥ Take the dogs for a romp along the Stanley Park Seawall or let them chase sticks in the forest at Capilano Regional Park. Studies have shown that couples with dogs tend to get more exercise than their pet-free counterparts.
 - ♥ Double up in a two-person kayak to paddle the waters of Burrard Inlet. Launch your boat from Granville Island and head up False Creek or in the other direction, under the Burrard Bridge to Sunset Beach.
 - ♥ A day spent skiing or snowboarding naturally leads to a cozy evening by the fire. If you're a beginner, local resorts like Cypress Mountain, Grouse Mountain, and Mount Seymour offer lessons for all levels. If speed isn't your thing, try cross-country skiing or snowshoeing for a great workout and wonderful views of the back trails. Remember, winter sun can be very intense as it reflects off the snow, so be sure to wear protective eyewear and sunscreen of SPF 30 or more.
 - ♥ Fill a thermos with hot tea or hot chocolate (made with low-fat milk or soy milk) and go for a long evening walk at New Westminister Quay. If you arrive before 6:30, pick up some fresh veggies at the public market.



- ♥ Hold your partner's belay rope at a climbing wall. Climbing helps build muscles, coordination, and balance. Check out Cliffhanger Climbing Gym (www.cliffhangerclimbing.com) or The Edge Climbing Centre (www.edgeclimbing.com).
- ♥ Try some spicy salsa dance lessons, then follow them up with a meal of healthy Mexican-style tortilla soup (. . . you can practice your moves while you shimmy around the kitchen). Salsa Vancouver can point you to classes and instruction at www.salsavancouver.net.
- ♥ Vancouver's cycling network is expanding. Visit the city's website at www.vancouver.ca to download a Bicycle Route Map and find out about the growing Greenways that provide year-round safe places to cycle. If it's a chilly day, pack a thermos of hot soup and stop for a warming break along the way.
- ♥ Take advantage of sunny days to hit the courts. A good match of tennis or 21 will get your heart pounding. If the weather isn't cooperating, book an indoor court to play tennis, badminton, volleyball, or squash. The Vancouver Park Board has lists of local recreation centres with indoor sports facilities at www.vancouver.ca/parks/rec/index.htm. BC Tennis also gives court locations at www.bctennis.com/FindCourts.aspx.
- ♥ For true winter fun, bundle up with your beau and head for the snow for some sledding or tubing. Grimston Park in New Westminister has views of the Fraser River. Afterward, share some warming homemade stew or a stir-fry filled with fresh winter veggies.
- ♥ Surprise your partner by booking a romantic trail ride at a nearby stable. Campbell Valley Regional Park in Langley is a good place for an easy two-hour trail ride. Take along some healthy snacks such as carrots or apple slices —though your horses might want to share them!
- ♥ For a more adventurous outing, go for a couples' paintball game. (Try working as a team rather than against each other.) North Shore Paintball (www.nspaintball.ca) is open in winter.



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