

# Going out of the ordinary for Valentine's Day

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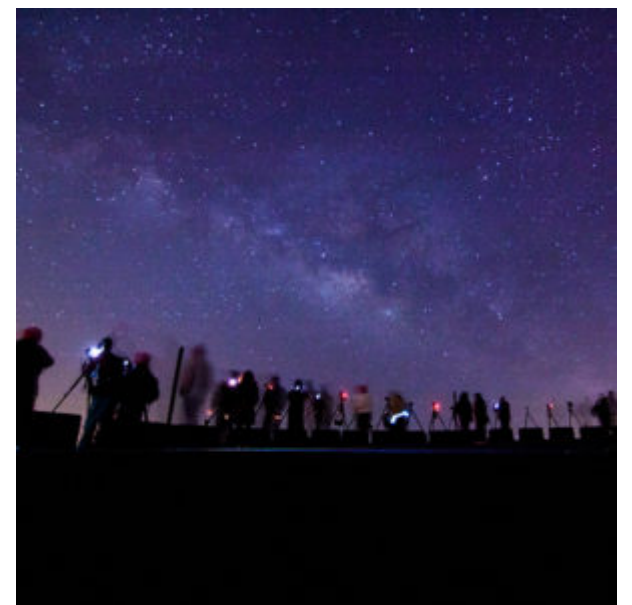
There's a lot of pressure on Valentine's Day. As the shops fill with panic-button red, heart-shaped merchandise and restaurants book up faster than a Donald Trump impeachment seminar, it's easy to feel more hopeless than hopeless romantic.

So, in a move away from the fluffy teddy bears and boxes of chocolates, we've put together a list of activities that will have you looking forward to 14 February, no matter what stage your relationship is at. Whether you're planning a treat for a long term partner, testing the water with a new date, or celebrating "Palentine's" with an old friend, here are a few alternative ideas for things to do on the day.

## 1. Stargazing

[\[https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/GettyImages-477240825.jpg\]](https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/GettyImages-477240825.jpg)

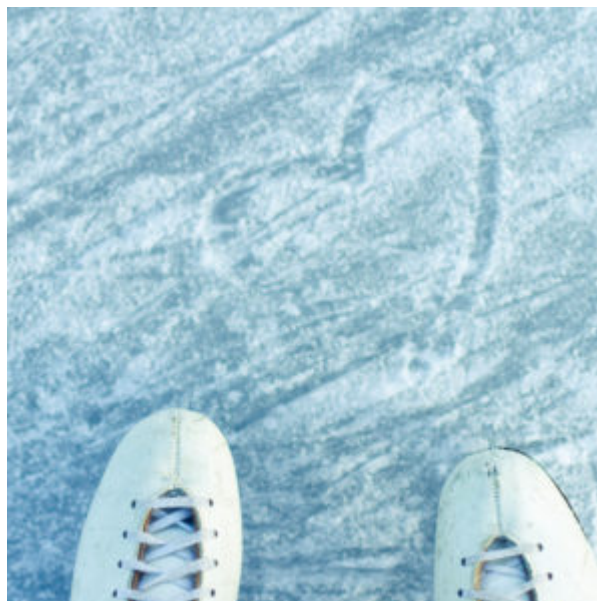
Look on the bright side of winter nights and put February's early evenings to good use by investigating the night sky. The beauty of twinkling stars is one of the natural world's most romantic phenomena and a pleasure to share or enjoy all to yourself. [Dark Skies Festival](http://www.darkskiesnationalparks.org.uk/) [\[http://www.darkskiesnationalparks.org.uk/\]](http://www.darkskiesnationalparks.org.uk/), which runs 9-25 February with events in some of the UK's most stunning national parks, giving you the perfect reason to get out for the evening. And, for built-up areas, there are a number of apps that locate constellations when you hold your device up to the sky. If you share a curiosity of the natural world, enjoy going outdoors or feel like doing something different, things are looking up ...



## 2. Ice skating

[\[https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/GettyImages-640288780.jpg\]](https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/GettyImages-640288780.jpg)

A classic winter activity, ice skating is (ironically) also a great ice breaker. You'll either get to show off your secret skills or have to hold tight to your skating partner as you tackle the rink together. Visit one of London's most iconic landmarks by testing out the ice rink at [Alexandra Palace](http://www.alexandrapalace.com/ice-rink/) [\[http://www.alexandrapalace.com/ice-rink/\]](http://www.alexandrapalace.com/ice-rink/), or catch the temporary ice rinks at [Canary Wharf](http://www.icerinkcanarywharf.co.uk/) [\[http://www.icerinkcanarywharf.co.uk/\]](http://www.icerinkcanarywharf.co.uk/) or the [Eden Project](http://www.edenproject.com/visit/whats-on/ice-skating) [\[http://www.edenproject.com/visit/whats-on/ice-skating\]](http://www.edenproject.com/visit/whats-on/ice-skating) in Cornwall before they go.



What's more, there are indoor ice-rinks [across the UK](http://skating-rinks.co.uk/) [\[http://skating-rinks.co.uk/\]](http://skating-rinks.co.uk/) that are open to the public all year round, just make sure you bring someone who won't laugh at you (too much) when you inevitably fall over.

## 3. Theatre

[\[https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/GettyImages-713849215.jpg\]](https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/GettyImages-713849215.jpg)

February's evenings are long, dark and chilly, so there's no better time of year for cosying up in the theatre. Valentine's falls over half term, so there's likely to be a hive of cultural activity during the week. In London, go to [Soho Theatre](https://sohotheatre.com/whats-on/) [\[https://sohotheatre.com/whats-on/\]](https://sohotheatre.com/whats-on/) for the best in up-and-coming comedy acts the city has to offer, or [Battersea Arts Centre](https://www.bac.org.uk/content/43626/whats-on/whats-on/shows/reclaiming-the-classics) [\[https://www.bac.org.uk/content/43626/whats-on/whats-on/shows/reclaiming-the-classics\]](https://www.bac.org.uk/content/43626/whats-on/whats-on/shows/reclaiming-the-classics) for contemporary re-imaginings of theatre classics. If you're fans of drag, the [Queer Contact festival](https://contactmcr.com/festival/queercontact/) [\[https://contactmcr.com/festival/queercontact/\]](https://contactmcr.com/festival/queercontact/) celebrates its 10th anniversary in Manchester this year, with plays and spoken word performances. Wherever you are, check out your local theatre, independent cinema or gig venue, and honour Saint Valentine by showing your love of the arts.



## 4. Urban axe throwing

[\[https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Capture.jpg\]](https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Capture.jpg)

A bit of a wild card, [urban axe throwing](https://whistlepunks.com) [\[https://whistlepunks.com\]](https://whistlepunks.com) is a date to suggest with caution. It's likely to be a success with [Valentine's sceptics](https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/advice/valentines-day-ideas-for-romantics-sceptics-and-singles#.WmoTy5OFj-Y) [\[https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/advice/valentines-day-ideas-for-romantics-sceptics-and-singles#.WmoTy5OFj-Y\]](https://soulmates.theguardian.com/blog/advice/valentines-day-ideas-for-romantics-sceptics-and-singles#.WmoTy5OFj-Y), but possibly not with the more traditional romantic, so make sure you know your audience before you book. Even so, it's becoming an increasingly popular pastime, with centres in Manchester, Birmingham and London - and will certainly help relieve any stress caused by the prospect of a date on Valentine's Day.



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