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An unforgettable date this Chinese Valentine's Day

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8 Perfect Dates

Just in Time for Chinese Valentine's Day

The Return of Handsome Furs
Heilongjiang's Northern Lights
China in the Lens

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Eight Great Dates

Between lost hutongs and luxe clubs, Beijing is an incredibly romantic city. We set you up with eight dates just in time for Chinese Valentine's Day.

By Eveline Chao

Revolutionary Date

A truly great date plays on a city's history. For Beijing, exploring the capital's 20th century past is a romantic rendezvous for two sinophiles in love.

Start your Revolutionary Date by marching with your comrade to Panjiayuan to get decked out in a proper PLA or Red Guard getup. If it's a weekday, you can always buy Red Guard caps at Ya Show for ¥15.

Dressed to the nines, head down to Tian'anmen Square where you can pay your respects to the Chairman. Afterwards, march down Chang'an Jie to the Wangfujing Photo Studio, where Mao, Deng Xiaoping and Zhou Enlai all had their pictures taken back in the day. This is still the city's best known portrait studio, and every day, government officials and newlyweds stop by for their snapshots. It's also one of the few studios left that shoots mostly on film. Pose together with your Little Red Books just like it was the summer of '69.

Another not-to-be-missed Revolutionary Date destination is the Military Museum, where you can check out Fidel Castro's revolver, larger-than-life statues of CCP superstars, a captured U.S. spy plane and one of Chairman Mao's limos.

Faces shining with hope, head out to Red Capital Club, a kitschy Maoist-style courtyard restaurant that serves classic Zhongnanhai cuisine alongside imperial favorites. Dishes are garnished with vegetables carved to look like Mao and Deng. Red Capital Club is located on Dongsijutiao Hutong—just look for Madame Mao's old limo, parked in front.

For entertainment, check with the People's Liberation Army Song and Dance Theater, which regularly performs Cultural Revolution-period model operas and ballets.

Afterwards, if you're lucky, you'll spend the night clasping each other in chaste revolutionary fervor, and be up in time for the sunrise flag-raising, back at Tian'anmen Square.

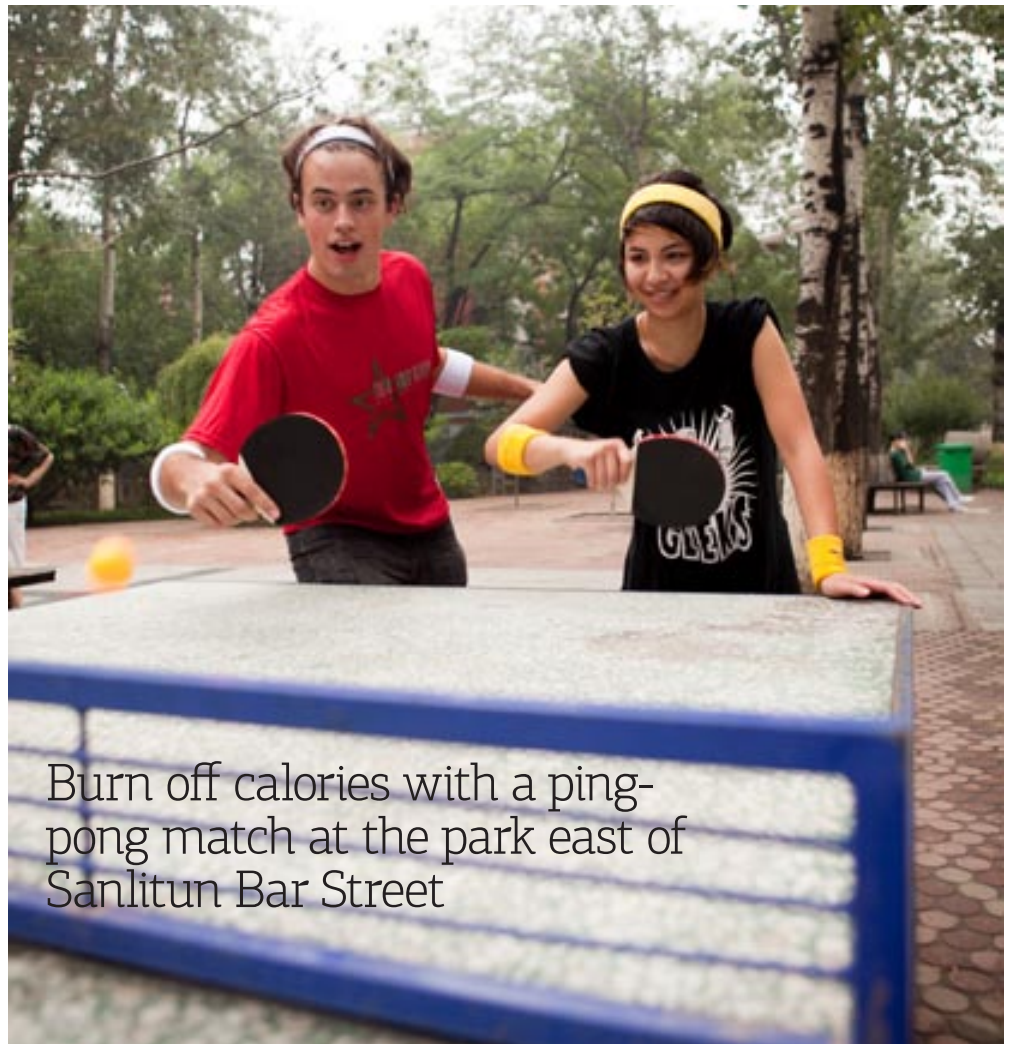
Panjiayuan Antique Market (West of Panjiayuan Bridge, 潘家园桥西, Tel: 5120-4671), **Military Museum** (60 Deshengmennei Dajie, 德胜门内大街60号, Tel: 8322-0726), **China Photo Studio** (180 Wangfujing Dajie, 王府井大街180号, Tel: 6512-0624), **Red Capital Club** (66 Dongsijutiao, 东四九条66号, Tel: 6402-7150), **PLA Song and Dance Theater** (60 Deshengmennei Dajie, 德胜门内大街60号, Tel: 8322-0726)

Arty Date

Lint-roll any unsightly white fuzz from your nicest black turtleneck and then head out for a Saturday afternoon of gallery openings in 798.

Start the day off with Erwin Wurm's "Narrow Mist," an exhibition of striking interactive sculptures at the UCCA. Afterwards, step into Super Ganbei for espressos—or better yet, martinis—before continuing your 798 romp.

When your date becomes weary of leering cartoon faces and pigtailed Mao portraits, confess that you only come to these openings because you're friends with the curators. Down



Burn off calories with a ping-pong match at the park east of Sanlitun Bar Street

some free wine and rant about the commercialization of contemporary Chinese art. Tell your date you know a great "space" in a former vegetable stand that "signals an economy of means that informs practice." Hop in a cab to check out Arrow Factory's site-specific installations that are viewable from the street.

Afterwards, dine early at ROOMbeijing, where every room is a mini art installation. End the night by getting drunk on too much red wine, then do a bit of impromptu performance art for the Yintai Center security guards.

UCCA (4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, 酒仙桥4号, Tel: 6438-6675), **Arrow Factory** (38 Jianchang Hutong, 箭厂胡同38号, web: arrowfactory.org.cn), **ROOMbeijing** (3/F, Park Life, Beijing Yintai Center, 2 Jianguomenwai Dajie, 建国门外大街2号, 银泰中心3层, Tel: 8517-2033)

Sporty Date

Nothing is more romantic than a grueling, 50 km bike ride in the mountains and valleys surrounding the city. If it sounds intimidating to try this on your own, join in with the Beijing Peloton, which rides every Saturday morning.

If biking's not your thing, try a twee game of *menqiu* (it's sort of like croquet), which can be

played at the northeast corner of Ditan Park. Follow that with a booze-fuelled 8-10 km run with the Beijing Hash House Harriers.

Having now sufficiently warmed up, head to the rock climbing wall at Ritan Park to show off those gleaming muscles, or if you feel the need for a cool-down, to the ice climbing wall inside the North Face store at Sanlitun Village.

Refuel with American-style bar fare at All-Star Sports Bar & Grill, where the mere sight of its 65 plasma-screen TVs, all airing sports matches, is enough to get the heart pumping.

Burn off the calories with a ping-pong match at the park east of the south corner of Sanlitun Bar Street. Keep up the sweat with some free throw hoops and Dance Dance Revolution at Game Park in the basement of 3.3 Mall. If the date has gone well so far, sneak into the closeted Safari Park video game for a secret make-out session.

North Face (58-15, 25, Sanlitun Village, 三里屯Village南区8号楼15, 25号商铺, Tel: 6417-3920), **Beijing Hash House Harriers** (Web: www.hash.cn), **Touchstone Rock Climbing** (Ritan Park, 日坛公园, Tel: 138-0105-2361), **All-Star Sports Bar & Grill** (5-1, Solana, 6 Chaoyang Park Rd., 朝阳区朝阳公园路6号Solana蓝色港湾国际商务区5-1, Tel: 5905-6999), **Game Park** (B1 3.3 Mall, Sanlitun, 三里屯3.3, B1, Tel: 5136-5777)



Bob your head up and down to the sounds of the capital's most Pitchfork-worthy bands

Indie Hipster Date

Your look will make or break the night, so get ready by not showering for a few days and buying a pair of fake glasses at Beijing Eyeglasses City.

When you pick up your date, casually mention that you need to buy a new camera at the Lomo store on Andingmen Nei, just north of Jiadaokou Dong Dajie.

After dithering over Dianas versus Holgas for a bit, trek over to Wudaoying Hutong to do a bit of secondhand clothes shopping at Brand Nü, a charity shop whose proceeds benefit rural women in China. Stop by Saffron, a few doors down, for a double espresso, no sugar, no cream.

Head further down the hutong to Natooke to check out the fixed-gear bikes, before deciding that what you're really looking for lies in the secondhand Jiuhuo Bike Market on Dongsì Beidajie.

Newly armed with appropriately rickety, rust-encrusted Flying Pigeons, pedal to Chaodou Hutong for chicken wings served up by the all-hipster staff at Hot Bean Collective.

With the fire of their uber-hot wings still burning your lips, hop back on the bikes and ride over to Yugong Yishan. Drink cheap beer. Bob your head up and down to the sounds of the capital's most Pitchfork-worthy bands, but remember, no dancing. Repeat: NO DANCING.

Beijing Eyeglasses City (East Third Ring South Side Road, 东三环南路辅路, Tel: 8773-0786), **Lomo** (9 Longtouting Jie, 龙头井街9号, Tel: 6657-2769), **Brand Nü** (61 Wudaoying Hutong, 五道营胡同61号, Tel: 150-1115-3421), **Saffron** (64 Wudaoying Hutong, 五道营胡同64号院, Tel: 8404-4909), **Natooke** (Wudaoying Hutong 19-1, 五道营胡同甲19-1号, Tel: 8402-6952), **Jiuhuo Bike Market** (43 Dongsì Beidajie, 43 东四北大街), **Hot Bean Cooperative** (Chaodou Hutong, Jiadaokou Nandajie, 交道口南大街炒豆胡同, Tel: 8401-6165), **Yugong Yishan** (3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, 张自忠路3-2号, Tel: 6404-2711)

Getaway Date

One sure way to impress a date is by rescuing them from Beijing's polluted air and getting back to nature.

The Schoolhouse at Mutianyu makes this easy for any budget with buses from the Lufthansa Center and Starbucks at Pinnacle Plaza every Saturday morning (¥120/person round-trip). Spend the day wandering the mountains near the Great Wall, then end the day with dinner at The Schoolhouse. You may even want to consider making it at an overnight trip and stay at the nearby Brickyard eco-retreat (rooms from ¥1,200/night). Alternatively, pamper yourself at The Commune's Anantara Spa.

Whether master yogis or just a couple looking to stretch in the beautiful Fragrant Hills, you and your date might also try a weekend retreat at Mountain Yoga. September's "Love, Devotion, Surrender" workshop (¥2,200) may be the perfect tantric spark.

Schoolhouse at Mutianyu (12 Mutianyu Village, 怀柔慕田峪村 12号, Tel: 6162-6506), **Brickyard** (Yingbeigou Village, Tel: 6162-6506), **Anantara Spa** (Commune by the Great Wall, 八达岭高速公路水关长城出口, Tel: 8118-1888), **Mountain Yoga** (Web: www.mountain-yoga.org, Tel: 139-0102-1322)

DIY Date

For some good, cheesy fun, head to Viplus Unique Gifts in The Place to get yourselves carved into clay figurines, perhaps holding hands under a heart. For more hands-on action, zip across the city to Hobby Town in Xidan's Joy City Mall, which stocks all kinds of DIY craft kits for painting, embroidery, sock-doll-making, or even creating a personal seal.

While you're in the hood, act out the pottery-sex scene from the movie *Ghost* at Xidan Yilie Pottery Art Bar, down Zhongsheng Hutong in Xidan. There are usually four technicians on hand to help you with shaping, sculpting and painting your own piece of ceramic art.

Get a set of felt coasters for your creations, along with his 'n' hers slippers and anything else you can dream up at Yours, a store on Nanluoguxiang that can hand-make anything you design out of felt.

Pick up a local craft with a traditional kite-making course at China Culture Center. Afterwards, take your kites for a test flight at Ritan Park.

The perfect end to the night is, of course, a home-cooked meal back at your place. Stock up with fresh ingredients at the Sanyuanli Market.



Take the kites you've made for a test flight at Ritan Park

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21世紀飯店和劇場
(010) 8454 3468

BICF ZGC - Sundays 10AM (ENGLISH)
Raycom Infotech Park, Tower A,
Basement, 2 Kexueyuan Nanlu,
Haidian, Zhichunli subway station,
north exit
市海澱區中關村科學院南路2號融科資訊中心A座地下室
(010) 6286 2813

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21st Century Theatre
Lower Auditorium,
40 Liangmaqiao Rd,
Chaoyang 21世紀劇場
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nightalive@bicf.org

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Check out the adorable bunnies, puppies, chinchillas and ferrets at Coco Pet

If things go well, you'll be shopping for DIY house & home wares in no time at the world's largest branch of B&Q.

Viplus Unique Gifts (A05, The Place, 9 Guanghua Lu, 朝阳区光华路甲8号世贸天阶北地下一层A05, Web: www.viplus.com.cn/index.php), **Hobby Town** (18, 4/F, U-Center, 五道口购物中心F4-18, 6266-6848), **Yillie Pottery Bar** (3 Zhongsheng Hutong, Xidan, 西单艺猎陶艺屋, 西单钟声胡同3号, Tel: 6605-5400), **Yours** (63 Nanluoguxiang, 南锣鼓巷63号, 8402-8566), **China Culture Center** (Kent Centre A201, Anjialou, 29 Liangmaqiao Road, 亮马桥路29号安家楼肯特中心院内, Tel: 6432-9341), **Sanyuanli Market** (Shun Yuan Jie, Dongsanhuan, 东三环顺源街), **B&Q** (北京家居装修海淀区西四环中路39号, Tel: 8776-8811)

High-Roller Date

Rent a limo and driver for a day from Beijing Central Chauffeur (¥3,000/day), or better yet, buy a Maybach at the Lufthansa dealership. The new Maybach limo, which debuted at the Beijing Auto Show in June, includes a 19-inch cinema

screen, perfect for Ring Road gridlock.

Have Jeeves drive you to Green T. House Living's Bath House in Shunyi for one of the most luxurious spa treatments available in Asia. This cathedral to high design and posh pampering sells an indulgent couples massage, spa and beauty package, including four hours of treatments for you and your sweetheart, for just ¥8,800.

Glide along in that state-of-the-art suspension system to Naoki, the French-Japanese fusion restaurant in Aman at the Summer Palace. The set lunch there is a steal at ¥498 each.

To counter this regrettable act of thrift on your part, pop open a bottle of Dom Perignon during your ride south to Lane Crawford in Season's Place on Financial Street, where you can romp through a luxury wonderland of Prada, Gucci, LV and Dior.

Settle down afterwards for a tea ceremony at the Whampoa Club with tea picked by its in-house tea master. They also make a mean martini. Pay the ¥688/person minimum for one of the gorgeous VIP rooms next to the lotus pond.

For a dose of culture, call up Stretchaleg Travel, a custom-designed private tour company, and be whisked off to the Forbidden City where, for an extra ¥2,000 on top of entrance fees, you can get exclusive access to a closed-to-the-public garden where emperors once received foreign dignitaries.

Finally, feeling heady with power, roll into China Grill at the Park Hyatt for dinner and drinks. Look out across the city from the highest restaurant in Beijing before retiring to your solid gold bed.

Beijing Central Chauffeur (www.bccrental.com, Tel: 6758-6625), **Maybach Lufthansa Center** (50 Liangmaqiao Lu, 亮马桥路50号, Tel: 6465-1188), **The Bath House** (318 Cuigezhuang Xiang Hege Zhuangcun, Tel: 6434-2519), **Naoki** (Aman at Summer Palace resort, 15 Gongmen Qianjie, Summer Palace, 安缇颐和 宫门前街15号, 5987-9999), **Lane Crawford** (L130, Seasons Place Shopping Mall, 2 Jinchengfang Jie, Jinrong Jie, 金融街金城坊街2号金融街购物中心L130, Tel: 6622-0808), **Whampoa Club** (23A Jinrong Jie, 金融大街甲23号, Tel: 8808-8828), **Stretchaleg Travel** (www.stretchaleg.com), **China Grill** (66/F Park Hyatt, 2 Jianguomen Wai, 建国门外大街2号, Tel: 6587-1838)

Heavy Petting Date

Start your day by swimming among sharks, with diving lessons at the Blue Zoo Aquarium. After you've dried off, head over to the Beijing Zoo to contemplate the birds and the bees—and the pandas.

Stop by the pet stores on Gulou to check out the adorable bunnies, puppies, chinchillas and ferrets. We recommend Coco Pet.

For dinner, reserve a table at Afunti, a Xinjiang restaurant that features a real-deal snake charmer. In addition to spectacular dancing and live music shows. The night always ends with diners dancing on the tables.

While dancing on tables may sound wild, it's never as wild as Pet Conspiracy's live show. Cheer on Beijing's most infamous band as they rock their electro-punk anthems in animal costumes and black vinyl. If the spirit moves you, join the conga line during their requisite "Zhantai" encore. (See p. 25 for details.)

To wind down, grab a drink at Amilal, home to two very inquisitive cats who'll probably spend most of the evening curled up in your lap. If all goes well, bring your date home and unleash your inner animal.

Blue Zoo Aquarium (South Gate of Workers Stadium, 工人体育场南门, Tel: 6591-3397), **Beijing Zoo** (137 Xiwai Dajie, 西外大街137号, Tel: 6831-4411), **Coco Pet** (69-3 Gulou Dongdajie, 鼓楼东大街69-3, Tel: 136-7102-2099), **Pet Conspiracy** (Web: www.myspace.com/thePETconspiracy), **Afunti** (The Opposite House, The Village Building 1, 11 Sanlitun Beilu, 三里屯路11号三里屯Village 1号楼, Tel: 6410-5240), **Amilal** (48 Shoubi Hutong, 寿比胡同48号院内, Tel: 8404-1416)

Find our Top 10 Best Beijing Date Restaurants and share some of your own at www.cityweekend.com.cn/bjdate

The Local Hook Up

Li Yan on dating local girls

First things first, 80 percent of you foreign guys have no intention of a long-term relationship with a Chinese girl. Maybe 20 percent of you are open to real relationships and even marriage here. I'll use this space to talk to that 20 percent. I've wasted enough time talking to the other 80.

Respect is key. Respect the girl. Respect the culture. And don't play around. On a first date, Chinese girls are always curious to see if a Western guy will treat. It's about respect, not money. It's our culture. If you don't have enough, go to a cheaper restaurant. Don't cheapen the girl.

Make the girl's friends and family like you, too. By being a gentleman, you give her face. Pour drinks for her and her friends. If a girl asks you to meet her family, show respect by bringing a gift. Family is the heart of our culture. If you don't have a good relationship with the family, the girl will always feel something is missing.

The secret is to treat her like someone you love, which means to respect her. In Chinese culture, the man always takes care of the woman he loves. You don't want to mess with 5,000 years of dating history.

Li Yan recently co-organized the Face Bar bachelor auction. She writes about relationships and works in business development in Beijing.



Howie Wang on dating local guys

It seems few ordinary Chinese guys have the chance to date a foreign girl—except maybe those who have lived abroad, or are artists or rock stars. Chinese men are no doubt interested in dating foreign girls. But, foreign girls tell me, Chinese men often seem less than confident, especially with a beautiful, young Western lady. Most Chinese men don't want women to be too strong or independent. A local guy may feel uncomfortable if his girlfriend is richer and has a better job than him. It touches on the pride of Chinese culture.

Ladies, try to understand our culture before you date locally. Guys want to be the one who is in control, especially when in public. Never quarrel or disagree with him in front of his friends—at least in the beginning. Be patient when he is building his image during the first several dates. Let him feel you aren't any different than Chinese girls.

Chinese guys are not better or worse than Western men. Some of them want to be Casanovas, some of them are shy, and some even still believe in love. After all, the standard for the right boyfriend should be the same as anywhere else in the world: he should care about you more than any other guy.

Howie Wang writes about culture for publications like *Beijing Today*. He's also lead singer of the Beijing band Elenore (www.douban.com/artist/elenore).



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