

6 ways to celebrate Valentine's Day in Lake Geneva



Lake Geneva, Wis., is rolling out the romance in February with a slew of hotel packages, Valentine's dinner menus and more.

By **Lori Rackl**
Chicago Tribune

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Looking for a quick and easy Valentine's Day getaway?
Lake Geneva, Wis., might be your perfect match.

This resort town an hour-and-a-half's drive from Chicago is rolling out the romance in February with a slew of hotel packages, special dinner menus and more.

If you can't find a baby sitter, don't despair: Winterfest, the biggest event of the season, offers lots of family fun through Feb. 12; www.visitlakegeneva.com/winterfest.

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Modern love

Old-schoolers might remember The Ridge Hotel as the former Interlaken Resort, but today they'd be hard-pressed to recognize this 146-room property overlooking Lake Como.

A recent \$4.5 million makeover transformed much of the Ridge — especially the main restaurant and spacious lobby, now home to a coffee and wine bar — into a sleek, contemporary resort less than 4 miles from downtown Lake Geneva.

The Eat, Drink, Love package, available Feb. 10-19, starts at \$209 and includes overnight accommodations for two, sparkling wine and truffles on arrival, a \$100 dinner credit at Crafted Americana and 20 percent off spa services. Sweetening the deal are skate rentals for a spin on the outdoor ice rink (weather permitting), and all the fixings to make s'mores by the fire pits.

Velvety chocolate mousse tops off Chef Ricky Lund's four-course, \$75-a-person prix-fixe Valentine's Day dinner (Feb. 10-14) at the hip and stylish Crafted Americana.

W4240 Wisconsin State Highway 50, 800-225-5558, www.ridgelakegeneva.com

Get cooking

Convivial chef John Bogan has been running hands-on classes out of his Lake Geneva School of Cooking since 2008.

For Valentine's Day, he's whipped up some couples classes Feb. 11-14, when a maximum of 24 guests will roll up their sleeves and help prepare their romantic, four-course dinner with wine tasting, priced at \$85-\$95 a person.

A Tuscany-inspired menu is on tap Feb. 11, when Bogan also will lead a family-friendly chocolate workshop at noon for \$75 a person, including a light lunch and sweets buffet.

727 Geneva St., 262-248-3933, www.lakegenevaschoolofcooking.com

Ski and splurge

Take a ride in a horse-drawn sleigh, hit the slopes, lace up some skates — there's no shortage of outdoor activities at the 1,300-acre Grand Geneva Resort & Spa.

The sprawling resort has put together several couples packages, including one for lovebirds with deep pockets: Starting at \$2,650, the Luxe & Love offer gets you two nights in a premier suite, a couples massage and facials, dinner and Champagne brought to your room, and a souvenir in the form of a gold heart-shaped charm necklace. Available Feb. 17-19; reservations must be made at least seven days in advance.

The Snowbuddy I'd Rather Love package, valid Sunday to Thursday through Feb. 28, includes one night in a deluxe room, a pair of lift tickets and rental equipment for skiing or snowboarding, two apres-ski cocktails and sweet treats from Richmond, Ill.-based Anderson's Candy Shop. Prices start at \$659.

7036 Grand Geneva Way, 800-558-3417, www.grandgeneva.com

Paint and sip

Let your significant other be your muse during a love-themed painting class at Studio Winery, a fun and funky spot that opened in an old machine shop about five years ago. It's owned by musician and winemaker Doug Jackson and his wife, Kathy, an award-winning artist who designs the labels for the wine, produced on-site with grapes sourced from the Midwest and Washington state.

Kathy will guide the Feb. 12 painting class from noon to 3 p.m., where \$45 covers the supplies you'll need to create your work of art — plus a glass of wine for inspiration.

Pop in year-round 4-8 p.m. Saturdays for live music.

401 Sheridan Springs Road, 262-348-9100, www.studiowinery.com

Hunt for your food

Geneva National Resort's premier restaurant, Hunt Club Steakhouse, is tucked away in a century-old home reincarnated as a casually upscale eatery. Clubby without being stuffy, the cozy steak joint has a prime location in the woods near the golf resort's Gary Player-designed course.

Chef Ryne Harwick helms the kitchen, putting just as much passion into creative seafood dishes, salads and starters as he does with the requisite beef. The desserts don't disappoint, and neither does the expansive wine list, a perennial Wine Spectator award winner.

Choose from blue cheese-encrusted New York strip, Cornish game hen or roasted scallops with mascarpone and herb polenta — a few of the delicacies on Harwick's special three-course menu (\$65), Feb. 10-14.

555 Hunt Club Court, 262-245-7200, www.huntclubsteakhouse.com

A cold drink

Enjoy an adult snow cone while you can at the temporary Fire & Ice Lounge (Feb. 2-4 and Feb. 9-11) on the front lawn of Baker House 1885, a four-room inn and restaurant with stunning views of Geneva Lake.

Always a popular draw during Winterfest, the al fresco lounge is kicking the party up a notch this year with a fur bikini-wearing DJ and room to mix and mingle in transparent igloo domes.

Warm up inside the Gilded Age mansion; it has 13 working fireplaces, and the intimate Ringmaster's Roost bar is a great place to relax over a hot toddy.

Saturday afternoon tea service and Sunday brunch are available year-round, and Baker House is offering an \$80-a-person Valentine's dinner Feb. 18.

327 Wrigley Drive, 262-248-4700, www.historichotelsflakegeneva.com

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