

SORRY, THIS SEAT IS TAKEN BY MY AWESOMENESS.

5
SUPER
FUN
SOLO
DATES

Get ready to hang with your favorite person: you.

BY CAITLIN CARLSON

The most intimate relationship you'll have in life is with yourself. So, doesn't it make sense to spend some quality time with, well, you? If you haven't tried it, heading out on a solo date might sound a little weird. But research shows there are mind, body, and hottie-meeting benefits to going it alone. Behold, some ideas for treating numero uno to a good time.

1

Read and Sip at a Wine Bar

This combines two things you probably already love: a glass of buttery chardonnay and a funny-AF or gripping-as-hell novel. Step one: Pop into your local bookstore (or grab your Kindle), then take your pick. (In the LOL category, we suggest Sarah Dunn's *The Arrangement*, about a couple who experiment with open marriage.) Step two: Head to a local wine bar. Rebecca Ratner, PhD, a professor of marketing at the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland, says that having a good read in hand helps people feel more comfortable when they're alone in public. So, settle into the plot and the bartender's offer of a second glass of vino on the house (wink).

2

Craft Your Ass Off

Yeah, knitting and crocheting used to be for grannies only, but not anymore. Nowadays, at least one-third of women ages 25 to 34 regularly whip out their needles, according to

TOM SCHIRMACHER/AUGUST

the Craft Yarn Council. But instead of dragging a plus-one to a class or group near you, make your own boho crop top in peace. Bonus: You'll reap health benefits too! "Knitting's two-handed rhythmic movements distract and calm your mind, helping to reduce stress and anxiety," says Betsan Corkhill, author of *Knit for Health & Wellness*. In fact, research shows that learning any new skill can amp up your brain power, so if needlework isn't your thing, go to a jewelry-making or pottery class.

3

Duh—Go to the Movies

Don't wait for your friends' schedules to clear up before seeing the latest blockbuster (our pick: *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales*, out May 26). Some

theaters are now making the experience a bit more baller by offering beer and wine—even gourmet meals—plus comfy, reclining seats. AMC Dine-In, now available in at least 14 states and growing, is taking things a step further with a full cocktail bar plus top eats, like crispy brussels sprouts and crab and avocado sushi rolls, that are delivered right to your seat.

4

Head Out for a Sweat Session

Rent a bike and go for a long ride, hit the driving range, or go horseback riding. According to studies coauthored by Thomas Plante, PhD, a professor of psychology at Santa Clara University, people who work out alone are less fatigued than those who exercise

with others, and getting those endorphins flowing while indulging in Mother Nature will help you enjoy fitness more—thereby upping your likelihood of busting a move more often. Or if you need to be

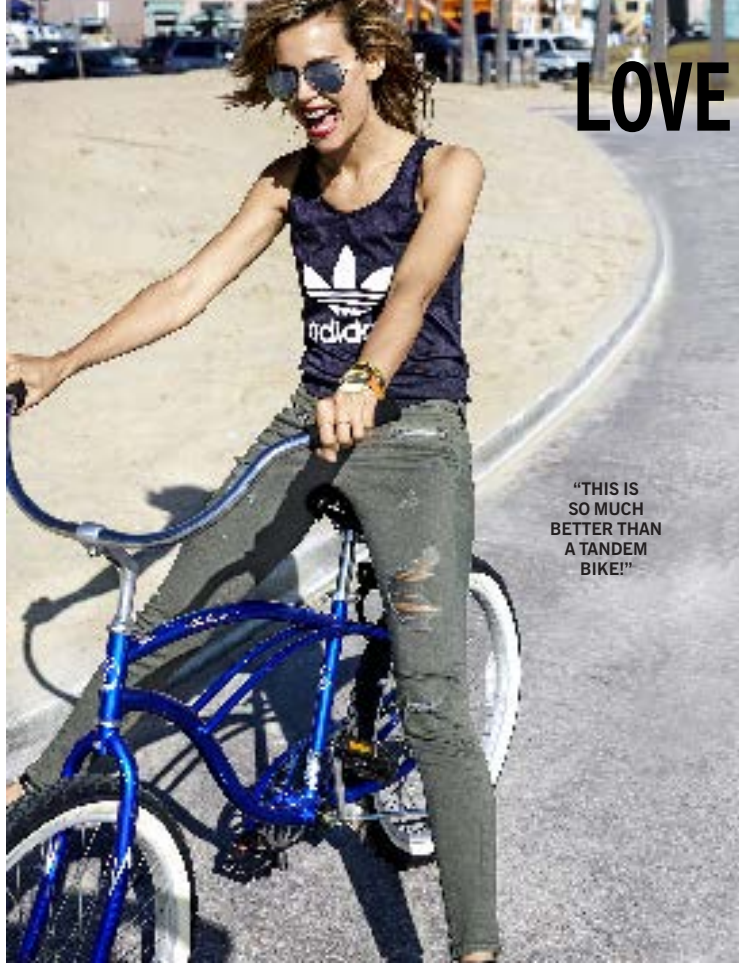
a little more motivated, sign up for a dance cardio class. Your fit classmates can fire up your competitive edge to step up your own calorie burn, says Plante.

5

Have an Epic Spa Day

You deserve a pampering session every now and then. By choosing to go solo, you'll get thoroughly immersed in the experience, says psychotherapist Amy Morin, author of *13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do*: "Being alone offers more rest and renewal because you can pay better attention to how

you're feeling, physically and emotionally." If you have a big self-care budget, book appointments for the whole shebang of services: a facial, massage, and mani-pedi. Or opt for just a Swedish massage: Research has found that just one 45-minute session can reduce stress and strengthen your immune system, leaving you feeling totally fresh and Zenned out. Plus, many spas grant you access to their gym, sauna, steam room, or pools when you buy one treatment, so you can still make a whole day out of chillaxing and spoiling your best date ever: aka, you. ■



"THIS IS SO MUCH BETTER THAN A TANDEM BIKE!"

PUT DOWN YOUR PHONE!

It's rude when you're on a date—even with yourself. And using it as a social crutch won't help you enjoy the moment. "Our phones tend to function as security blankets. We rely on them as a way to deflect anxiety," explains Sharon Begley, author of *Can't Just Stop: An Investigation of Compulsions*. Practice going phone-free in everyday gatherings to remind your brain that anxiety is manageable. Then you'll be more relaxed when you're out alone.