

Outdoor adventure for Valentines – and a fly fishing show comes to town!



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February is here, and that brings outdoor adventurers face to face with two exciting opportunities. For one thing...

Valentine's Day is coming!

What? Valentine's Day? Tradition says it's celebrated with flowers, candy and dinner at a restaurant. But what if you want to do something a little different? If you're looking for an alternative way to celebrate Valentine's Day this year, check out the Valentine's-themed activities planned this month at several of Georgia's state parks. You just might find the perfect adventure to enjoy with someone you love. Here's a look at some of the Valentine's opportunities awaiting you at Georgia's state parks. Most events have a fee and require preregistration, and you'll also need a state park parking pass. **A full-moon kayak tour** at Laura S. Walker State Park in Waycross (Feb. 10) – Keep an eye out for owls, frogs, alligators and other nocturnal wildlife during this ranger-led paddle. Reservations are required. Call 912-287-4900.

Civil War-themed dinner and dance at Fort McAllister State Park in Richmond Hill (Feb. 11) – In addition to the dinner and dance, history enthusiasts will also enjoy a candlelit tour, cannon firing and of course the beautiful low-country setting. Make reservations by calling 912-727-2339. **Luminary-lit riverside stroll** at Chattahoochee Bend State Park near Newnan (Feb. 11). Couples will enjoy strolling along the river as luminaries light the way. The evening hike ends with a campfire at the park's observation tower. The hike is self-guided for a quiet and romantic experience, so bring a flashlight and sturdy shoes. Last admission is at 7:25 p.m. Register in advance by calling 770-254-7271.

Couples-only archery class at Panola Mountain State Park near Stockbridge (Feb. 11) – Here's your chance to enjoy a truly unique Valentine's experience while channeling your inner Cupid. All equipment is provided, and couples must register in advance by calling 770-389-7801. **Valentine's Weekend at High Falls near Jackson, Ga.** – On Feb. 11 and Feb. 12, discover the wacky ways animals show their love for one another, or keep those healthy New Year's resolutions with an exhilarating hike. Join a park naturalist for one or all of these family-friendly programs. Call 478-993-3053.

Love is in the "Scare" Valentine's Tour at Magnolia Springs State Park, Millen Ga. (Feb. 11) – Looking for something other than roses and chocolates? Check out a History and Haunts tour with guest authors and lecturers. Then walk the trails of Camp Lawton, once the world's largest prison, holding hands with your sweetheart. Call 478-982-1660.

Valentine's Day Couples Hike at Panola Mountain State Park near Stockbridge (Feb. 11) – Enjoy a sunset hike at Panola Mountain State Park. For even more fun, compete with your sweetheart in a series of team-building games to see who knows their companion best. Reservations required. Call 770-389-7801.

Learn the story of the hidden heart-shaped stone at from Fort Mountain State Park near Chatsworth (Feb. 14). Here's a little background: During the 1930s, a Civilian Conservation Corps mason carved a heart-shaped stone for his sweetheart, setting it into a fire tower. The lad's romantic gesture must have won her heart, because they were married 59 years. Enjoy this ranger-led hike to see the stone and hear about their love story. Call 706-422-1932.

Sunset dinner and train excursion on the Sam Shortline Excursion Train in Cordele (Feb. 14). Departing from Georgia Veterans State Park, you'll take a short ride and stop over beautiful Lake Blackshear as the sun is setting. After dinner, enjoy a nighttime train ride through the Sumter County countryside before returning to the park. Reservations required. Call 229-276-0755.

Or just snuggle up by a fire – Of course, nothing says romance as much as snuggling up together by a dancing fire, and Georgia's State Parks offer plenty of opportunities to do that too. Various parks offer cozy cabins and "glamping" yurts as well as modern too. Accommodations for Valentine's Day or for other February weekends are still available at many parks. To learn more, visit GeorgiaStateParks.org. Overnight accommodations can be booked online or by calling 800-864-7275.

Atlanta Fly Fishing Show Feb. 3-4
There's good news for fly fishing enthusiasts this weekend – the Atlanta Fly Fishing Show is back this year. Set for Feb. 3-4 (note that that's a Friday and Saturday), the show boasts a line-up of programs, demonstrations and exhibitors that's sure to delight the heart of fly fishers far and wide. This exciting fly fishing extravaganza will be held at the Infinite Energy Center, formerly the Gwinnett Center, at 6400 Sugarloaf Parkway in Duluth. Admission to the show is \$15 for one day and \$25 for both days. With a military ID, admission is \$10. Children under 12 get in for \$2, and kids under 5 are free. Scouts under 16 in uniform also get in free. Show hours are 9 a.m.-6 p.m. on Friday and 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. on Saturday. In addition to the exhibits and presentations, highlights include free fly fishing instruction at the International Federation of Fly Fishers Learning Center located at the IFFF booth. There, you can learn basic fly cast, fly tying and knot tying each day. On Friday evening only, at 6:30 p.m., you can also enjoy the International Fly Fishing Film Festival. Tickets may be purchased at the site or in advance online. For more info and a complete schedule of show events, visit flyfishingshow.com/Atlanta. Hope to see you there!