

girls' night out

18 terrific things to do when it's just the girls

Two weeks in advance of the comedy show I've been dying to attend I contact six girlfriends, hoping they can join me. All are mothers of young children and everyone would like to go, but only two can make it happen. Unfortunately, on the morning of our planned night out one friend has a sore throat; the other has a sick child. That leaves me solo. My husband laughs as I head out alone, determined to have fun. And I am reminded why it's so hard for women to get out together.

Responsibilities at work and home make it difficult to arrange much-needed outings with our girlfriends.

But if we don't make time for ourselves, no one else will.

Here are 18 suggestions for fun things women can do together on those rare nights out.

By Erin Mantz

Photo by Stacy
Zarin-Goldberg

POKER SET UP BY ULTIMATE ENTERTAINMENT / CATERING BY MYTHYME CATERERS OF KENSINGTON

#14 Poker Party

Front table: (from left) Tonya Olson of Bethesda, Valerye Stochak of Bethesda, Nicole Cohen of Fairfax and Debbie Teicher of Bethesda.

Back Table: (from left) Carol Frensilli, Katey Lazarchik, Karen Kirwin and Lisa Fisher, all of Bethesda.



1 LAUGH OUT LOUD at the 'Laugh Riot' on Friday and Saturday nights at the Bethesda Hyatt.

For \$10 and a two-drink minimum, you'll be entertained by local standup comics. The comics get the audience involved—and audience members are invited up after the show to tell their own jokes. Anyone who goes onstage gets a lion sticker that says, "I was very brave!"

Hyatt Regency Bethesda
7400 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda
301-657-1234
www.bethesda.hyatt.com

2 TAKE A DANCE CLASS at Joy of Motion.

Grab your girlfriends and get into the groove at the Joy of Motion dance center in Bethesda. All levels are welcome; you don't have to be a professional dancer. In Hip Hop class, "You can feel like a rock star," says Katherine Watier of Rockville. "The choreography is similar to what you see in the latest music videos. It's also a really great workout." She's an experienced dancer, but recently took girlfriends who were new to dance and says they had a blast.

Joy of Motion
Air Rights Building, East Tower, 7315 Wisconsin Ave., Suite 180E, Bethesda
301-986-0016
www.joyofmotion.org

3 Host a PRIVATE SHOPPING PARTY and shop like a star at the Denim Bar.

How is this for a unique experience? You and your friends find the perfect pair of jeans while eating snacks and sipping drinks as savvy and stylish salespeople give you the star treatment. Trying on jeans can be tough, but here you can party while receiving expert opinions on fit and style. Jan Eisner of Bethesda hosted a private shopping party for 20 friends and she says they are still thanking her.

"Like I did a lot of the work," Eisner jokes. "It was so easy for me. I just chose the night and Denim Bar provided sushi and drinks. I just showed up and everything was perfect. How often do you host a party and get to relax? Plus, it was so nice not to have to try on 20 pairs of jeans. The sales people knew the intricacies of the brands and guided each of us to the right one." Call for pricing.

The Denim Bar
4939 Cordell Ave., Bethesda
301-986-5260
www.thedenimbar.net

4 Kick off the week at 'LIVE MUSIC MONDAYS' at Irish Inn at Glen Echo.

This welcoming, lively spot exudes so much charm and comfort that it's the perfect spot for catching up with friends. Each Monday from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., you can hear and sing traditional Irish tunes and eat fish and chips. A dessert tip: Leave room for the unbelievable Warm Chocolate and Sour Cherry Cake.

The Irish Inn at Glen Echo
6119 Tulane Ave., Glen Echo
301-229-6600
www.irishinnlenglenecho.com

5 Host a HANDWRITING-ANALYSIS PARTY.

Learn more about yourself and your friends through handwriting analysis. Graphologist Jane Elkin travels from Annapolis to Bethesda-area homes and will perform one-on-one scrawl analyses for you and your friends. You may be astounded to hear her describe accurately your passions, sensitivities and fears. You'll think she knows you as well as your best friend does. The cost is \$100 per hour with a two-hour minimum.

Jane C. Elkin, certified handwriting analyst
ABC Graphology
410-757-1008
www.abccgraphology.com

6 Play a SPORT together.

Whatever your sport, there's probably a clinic or team for you in the Bethesda area. Lisa Fisher of Bethesda meets her girlfriends at Wyngate Elementary School gym every Tuesday night to play basketball. These "Hotshot Moms," as the group calls themselves, rent the space from the Montgomery County Public Schools. "We cheer when one of us makes a basket and we don't keep score, so it takes the pressure off," Fisher says. There's also www.meetup.com, where Bethesda-area women form groups and outings for intermediate tennis, indoor volleyball and more.

7 SING A SONG at Tommy Joe's 'Karaoke Tuesdays.'

It's almost impossible not to loosen up and laugh on a night like this. Girlfriends flock to this popular spot on Tuesdays from 8 p.m. to midnight. Corona is on special for \$3.25 and you can indulge in dinner or just appetizers while you and your friends build up the courage to go up to the microphone.

Tommy Joe's Restaurant
4714 Montgomery Lane, Bethesda
301-654-3801
www.tommyjoes.com

8 TASTE WINES at Grapeseed Bistro.

Girlfriends can gather around the bar and choose from more than 100 different wines by the glass and half-glass. If you have more time or want to extend your night out, reserve a table for a "Tasting Menu" dinner on Friday or Saturday night, when chef and owner Jeff Heine-man whips up a five- to six-course meal and recommends a wine for each dish. You may even learn some of the nuances of matching food and wine during the dining experience.

Grapeseed Bistro
4865 Cordell Ave., Bethesda
301-986-9592
www.grapeseedbistro.com

Join the **BETHESDA ART WALK.**

From 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. on the second Friday of each month, you can visit 13 downtown Bethesda galleries and view art ranging from modern to mixed media. (Guided tours are offered for the September and October dates.)

Bethesda Art Walk
301-215-6660
www.bethesda.org

Try **CAKE DECORATING** at Just Cakes.

Never be embarrassed by your homemade cakes again! Cooking classes are all the rage for kids right now, but grown-ups are not forgotten at Just Cakes. Attend a cake decorating class with your girlfriends and bring wine to drink as you decorate. You can also book a private class.

Just Cakes
4849 Rugby Ave., Bethesda
301-718-5111
www.justcakes.net

CATCH A SHOW at the Round House Theatre or Strathmore.

See "A Lesson Before Dying" at Round House Theatre Sept. 19-Oct. 14, or the new adaptation of "Treasure Island" Nov. 28-Dec. 30. Welcome Strathmore's fall season by attending "Wine, Women and Song" on Sept. 8, where you can enjoy food and wine tasting, music, a live auction and artist-in-residence performances to support Strathmore's arts education and community programs.

Round House Theatre (two locations)
4545 East-West Highway, Bethesda
8641 Colesville Road, Silver Spring
240-644-1100
www.roundhousetheatre.org

The Mansion at Strathmore
10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda
301-581-5100
www.strathmore.org

DO FONDUE at the Melting Pot's ladies night.

On the second Tuesday of every month, ladies enjoy a four-course meal for just \$30 per person. You start with cheese and end with chocolate—a perfectly indulgent night out with the girls. The night tends to sell out, so make reservations early.

The Melting Pot
9021 Gaither Road, Gaithersburg
301-519-3638
www.meltingpot.com

Host a **POKER OR CASINO NIGHT.**

Companies like Ultimate Entertainment of Rockville will send a professional dealer and blackjack table to your home. "It's kind of a vacation... for one evening," says dealer Valerie Greenfield of Gaithersburg. "I prefer blackjack, because it's a very social game and has good odds."

Get MyThyme Caterers of Kensington to provide dinner—and then everybody, including the hostess, will be able to relax. Ultimate Entertainment Inc. MyThyme
124 Prettyman Drive, Rockville Kensington
301-424-9021 240-498-6115
www.ultimate-entertainment.com/casino.htm www.mythyme.net

Polish your CULINARY SKILLS.

Take a recreational cooking class or host a cooking party at L'Academie de Cuisine in Bethesda. Dozens of classes range from a single session to a series and offer demonstrations and participation. Watch for a "Girls Night Out" class or arrange your own. "Friday Night Food and Fun" and "Elegant Entertaining" are other girlfriend favorites. The dishes are specially selected because they are fun to cook with others or great for future get togethers. Reservations are required, and classes fill up quickly, so check the Web site and join the email list to receive alerts on new classes and events.

L'Academie de Cuisine
5021 Wilson Lane, Bethesda
301-986-9490
www.lacademie.com

Indulge in a SPA NIGHT.

Pedicures, manicures, facials and massages—what better way to pamper yourself? Book your group for one of these beauty services at Bethesda's Elizabeth Arden Red Door Salon & Spa. The spa works with you to arrange special snacks and drinks. The Mosaic Total Body Salon in Bethesda offers similar treatments in a cozy, intimate setting. They don't offer a formal "Girls Night Out" package, but are happy to create one for you, as is hair salon House of Alexis in Bethesda.

Elizabeth Arden Red Door Salon & Spa
Wildwood Shopping Center
10213 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda
240-644-1319
www.reddoorspas.com

Mosaic Total Body Salon
8001 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda
301-986-9151
www.mosaic-bethesda.com

House of Alexis
6906 Arlington Road, Bethesda
301-654-4288

Bowl at STRIKE Bethesda.

Any night can be "Girls' Night Out" here, but try "Night Strike" Mondays, when \$18 includes unlimited glow-in-the-dark bowling and shoes from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. Between turns, nosh on pizza, dozens of appetizers, salads, burgers, wraps and sundaes. You can also order everything from beer and wine to shooters and martinis from the bar. Lanes are first come, first served. Book in advance for groups of eight or more, or for private parties.

STRIKE Bethesda
5353 Westbard Ave., Bethesda
301-652-0955
www.strikebethesda.com

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PAUSE Massage Therapy
6917 Arlington Road, Suite 202
Bethesda, Maryland 301.675.2130
www.PauseAndRelax.com

girls' night out

Bust your CLUTTER.

"You're not the only one with a cluttered closet," promises Pam Klickna of North Potomac. She attended a Clutterbusters!! workshop party and still remembers how a five-minute spice rack redo enabled the hostess to see all her spices for the first time. It's the little things in life that matter. Clutterbusters!! President Betsy Fein of Rockville says that getting organized is fun if you start the process with friends. Girlfriends get together at your house and eat and drink while a professional organizer offers solutions, strategies and products that can make life easier. It's almost like having an HGTV show come into your home.

Clutterbusters!! Rockville
301-309-9614
www.clutterbusters.com

GO AWAY with the girls.

Head to nearby Lansdowne Resort in Virginia for their "Weekend Escape Girlfriends Getaway" and enjoy spa treatments, nearby outlet shopping and winery tours by day, and live music and dinner at night. Try a golf or tennis clinic, cooking class or a dip in the pool. The Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay in Cambridge, Md., also offers spa and golf packages and is close enough for a quick night away with the girls. Even closer to home is D.C.'s Mandarin Oriental, with a much talked about spa and CityZen restaurant.

Lansdowne Resort
44050 Woodridge Parkway, Lansdowne, Va.
877-509-8400
www.lansdowneresort.com

Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay
100 Heron Boulevard at Route 50, Cambridge, Md.
410-901-1234
www.chesapeakebay.hyatt.com

Mandarin Oriental
1330 Maryland Ave., SW, Washington, D.C.
202-554-8588
www.mandarinoriental.com/washington

Writer Erin Mantz lives in Potomac.

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