

# Creative ways to ring in the new year

Counting down the hours until the new year can be exciting, as the world anxiously anticipates the adventures in store for the months ahead.

Celebrating the new year dates back thousands of years to the ancient Babylonians, who celebrated a new year come the first full moon after the spring equinox. The new year is now commemorated in various ways across the globe. According to History.com, one million people gather in New York City's Time Square to watch the famed crystal ball drop each year. Across the pond in London, celebrants watch thousands of individual fireworks launch over the Thames River. In Sydney, Australia, roughly one million people line the shoreline each year to watch a fireworks show over the famed harbor.

To match the excitement of New Year's festivities, each year party hosts and host-

esses are on the lookout for innovative ways to entertain and ensure everyone has a blast.

Following are a few ways to do just that as you and your guests prepare to close the book on 2018 and usher in 2019.

- **Go bowling.** New Year's Eve probably isn't a big league night, so it's likely you can reserve a number of lanes. Book in advance to take advantage of affordable food and drink packages.

Some alleys now offer more than just bowling, with live music or deejay entertainment

as well. You do not have to be a professional bowler, either, as the goal of bowling with friends is to simply have some fun and make some lasting memories.

- **Try a "first".**

There is a first time for everything, and why not try something you have been thinking about doing for some time on the first day of the new year? Maybe you're ready to tap into your adventurous side and try

skydiving. Or, you may be looking to travel abroad to experience something you have



longed to see, such as the Egyptian pyramids or the city lights in the romantic city of Paris.

- **Cheer for every time zone.** Thanks to the various time zones across the globe, "Happy New Year" is shouted multiple times throughout the night on New Year's Eve. TimeandDate.com notes that, depending on how you define the time zone and if you include the International Date Line, there are 24 or 25 standard time zones. That gives revelers 25 opportunities to usher in the new year. Choose a country in each time zone, and then employ that country's cultural traditions to celebrate the new year.

- **Design a scavenger hunt.** A fun activity for both adults and children, scavenger hunts can send guests in search of clues and answers based on things that happened over the previous 12 months. Include photos and other mementos when preparing clues.

## Make holiday shopping excursions special

As they fulfill the social obligations of the holiday season, many people find themselves spending less time at home. Consumer Reports notes that individuals spend a great deal of time shopping for gifts come the holiday season. Americans engage in 15 hours of shopping on average, with women spending twice as long as their male counterparts (20 hours versus 10). In addition, the average person devotes 10 or more hours to wrapping and returning gifts.

Holiday shopping can monopolize people's time away from home during the months of November and December, and some shoppers wonder how they become so disconnected from other activities, including family time, that they cherish throughout the rest of the year. One way to tackle holiday shopping without sacrificing time with family and friends is to make holiday shopping a social event.

- **Invite friends or family along.** Recreate the days of your youth when it was fun to meet friends at the mall and scour the shops. Plan a meeting location and have an itinerary in place. Divide shopping lists so that everyone shares the task

of shopping and fatigue doesn't set in prematurely.

- **Make lunch or dinner part of the day.** Incorporate refueling into your shopping plans. Failure to eat or drink can lead to hunger pangs and test shoppers' patience, two factors that are seldom conducive to successful shopping. Having an end goal to meet friends or family at a nearby restaurant — even a dining location right within the mall — can inspire intrepid shoppers to get their work done promptly. Reward yourself for a job well done over a tasty meal and maybe a cocktail.

Just be sure to indulge responsibly.

- **Break up the day with a flick.** Many malls also play home to movie theaters. Plan your shopping around the movie schedule so you can take a two-hour break to rest and relax in the theater. Chances are you'll come out of the film relaxed, refreshed and ready to tackle the rest of your shopping list.

- **Make it a date night.** The thought of shopping may not conjure up ideas of romance, but if time is short, couples can use shopping excursions as an opportunity to spend time together. Visit a coffee shop or a bar for a nightcap afterward and enjoy some one-on-one time. Parents can enlist the help of a babysitter to keep children entertained while they enjoy some uninterrupted time with each other.

Shopping fills the days leading to the holidays. Make the most of such excursions by inviting friends and family along.



Holiday shopping can be even more fun when it takes place with a group of girlfriends.

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