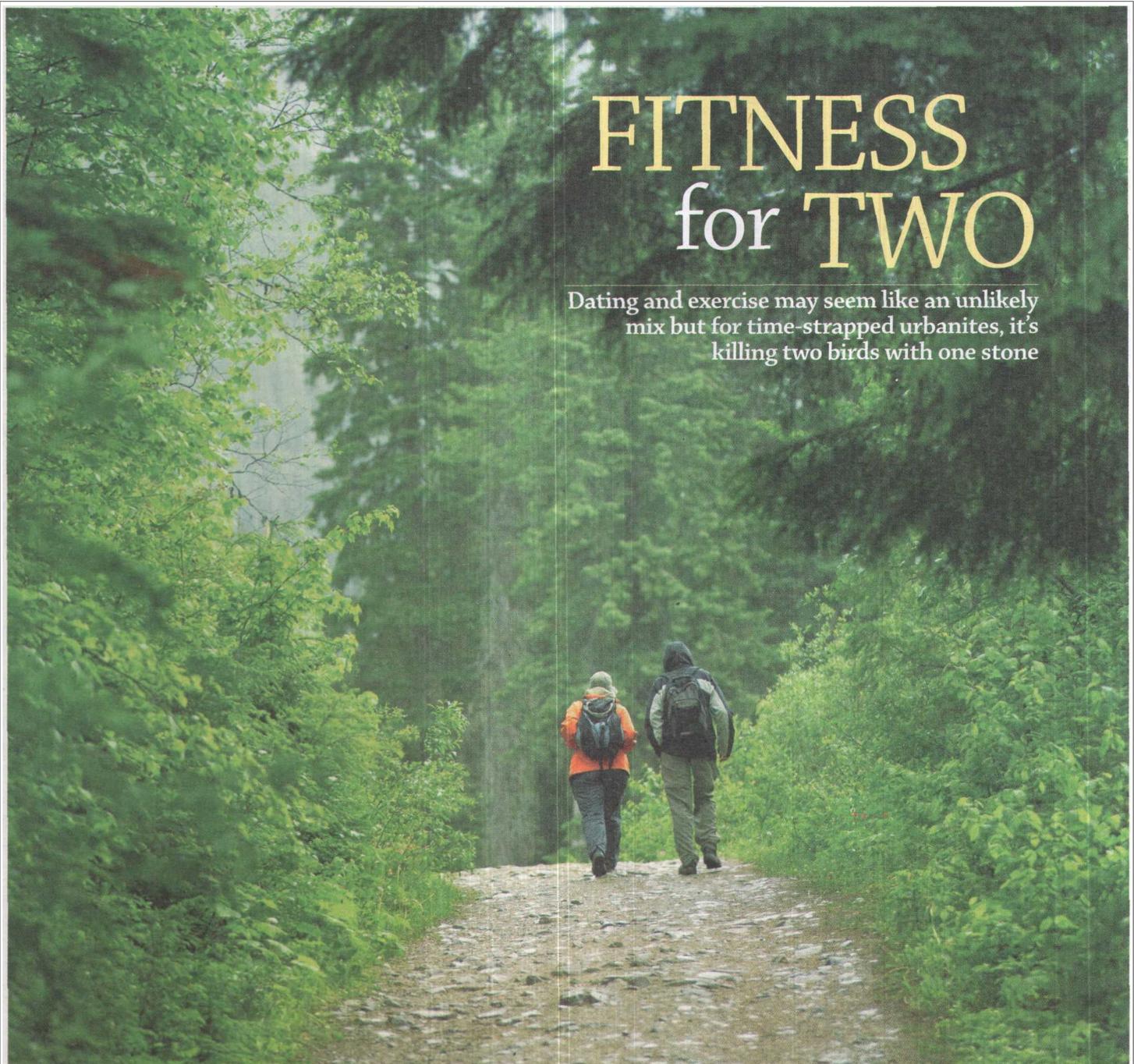


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by **Elaine Lau**
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Ah, the ecstasy of blossoming love — there's really nothing quite like it. But dating, as we all know, places a lot of demands on our time (and our hearts and emotions as well but that's a separate matter entirely). Already, as busy urbanites juggle the demands of work and life, it is sometimes a challenge to find time to maintain a fitness routine, and with a romantic relationship thrown into the mix, time given to working out often gets sidelined.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Dating

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and exercise can go together — literally.

Yes, splurging on romantic dinners, going to the theatre or live music venues is fine and dandy, but all these activities have one thing in common: They are sedentary and, sorry, rather run-of-the-mill. Why not break out of the standard date mould and go on an exercise date instead?

The exercise date gives you and your mate the opportunity to discover and try out new activities, and if you both end up enjoying it, you have yet another thing to add to your shared list of interests and hobbies.

Any form of physical activity releases endorphins, which are chemicals released in the brain that contribute to feelings of euphoria. And when the activity is done with a significant other, you'll start to associate this rhapsodic boost with your partner. That, in turn, creates positive associations in the relationship.

Time spent working out together fosters physical and emotional intimacy. It's a great way to spend quality time together working towards bettering yourselves and having a roaring good time while at it. It also gives you and your partner ample opportunities to work on supporting and encouraging each other, cornerstones of any long-lasting relationship. You will also likely learn a lot more about each other during that time than you would chatting over dinner.

So, what should you do? Well, that depends on what sort of a couple you are. Pick activities that complement both your personalities and workout style.

In search of self and tranquillity

If you and your partner are the meditative, Zen-seeking sort, head out for a time of communing with nature at a forest park or forest reserve. There's just something about being surrounded by lush greenery, engulfed in fresh air and the stillness that only a forest park or reserve can afford that gives you a sense of calmness and serenity. The Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), Bukit Nanas Forest Reserve and Bukit Gasing Forest Park are all excellent for hiking, jogging or walking. And if you're at FRIM, be sure to do the canopy walk, which offers breathtaking vistas from the treetops whichever way you look.

Another activity to try together is yoga.

Whichever type you choose to do, when done in a consistent manner, it will cultivate a greater awareness of your body and your partner's, and better receptivity to subtle shifts in your partner when it comes to lovemaking. Of course, increased flexibility from doing yoga helps in that department as well.

Yoga classes are offered in all major gyms in the Klang Valley, as well as dedicated centres that specialise in this. If your partner is new to yoga, choose a class that won't make him or her too uncomfortable — opt for one that isn't overtly spiritual. You could consider doing a partner yoga class as well.

Loves competition and a challenge

For the couple who find competitiveness thrilling in a relationship, any form of sports would be highly enjoyable. Head for a game of fast-paced racquet sports like tennis, badminton or squash. If you're looking for a real challenge, go for a CrossFit session at PushMore Fitness Centre, where you will be guaranteed an extreme workout that will push you to your limits. Briefly, CrossFit workouts combine gymnastics, weightlifting and metabolic conditioning, and they are often timed.

If you two prefer a slower-paced, more calculated game, and one that would give you ample opportunities to talk, a round of golf is just the thing. Indoor rock climbing at Camp 5 in 1 Utama Shopping Centre, touted as Asia's largest indoor rock climbing gym, is another option to consider.

Just want to have fun

If you're all about fun-seeking and excitement, the possibilities are endless. Head to the Batting Cages at 1 Utama Shopping Centre for stress-relieving, ball-smashing fun, or to the bowling alley to see who can score the most strikes. Get a feel of what trapeze artistes do at a Jukari Fit to Fly class (offered exclusively at CHi Fitness in Centro Mall Klang), a fitness routine developed by Reebok and Canadian circus entertainment group, Cirque du Soleil. If you are both gamers, get the Dance Dance Revolution game or better yet, the Wii Fit.

Whatever you choose to do with your date, just remember that you've got nothing to lose — except for those love handles.

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PushMore Fitness Centre

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1 Jalan Tropicana Selatan 1, PJU 3, PJ
Tel: (03) 7885 0120
www.pushmore.com.my

CHi Fitness

2nd Floor, Centro Mall, 8 Jalan Batu Tiga
Lama, Klang
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www.chi-fitness.com

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