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# WHAT'S UP

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5



# LAST-MINUTE *Homemade Card Ideas* for Valentine's Day

By Courtney Woodruff



*M*y son's first Valentine's Day at school in Germany left me scrambling at the last minute. I'd made it to the base Exchange too late—the traditional boxes of themed sign-and-tear cards I remember giving away to my classmates when I was a little girl had long-since been sold out. So, I did what any slightly frazzled mom with good intentions would do... I took a deep breath, brushed off my frustration and improvised.

Still trying to come up with a Valentine's Day card game plan for your child's class? Let me help.

# 1. Download free printables

Pinterest—the resource moms tend to either love or hate for its endless amount of inspiration—has free printable Valentine's Day cards for kids. Simply download, print, sign and cut! If you feel like going the extra mile, you can even attach it to a piece of your child's favorite candy.



# 2. Say cheese

Snap a photo of your child with his or her arm outstretched (as if he/she is holding an invisible balloon). Upload it to a free editing program like [Picmonkey.com](http://Picmonkey.com), and add text and clipart to your liking. Print the image at an instant kiosk (if you don't know where to find one in your community, ask crafting gurus on a local Facebook page). Cut a thin line on the top and bottom of your child's photographed fist with an X-Acto knife or a sharp pair of scissors. Insert lollipop, and your child is ready to pass them out to his or her friends. Check out this adorable example on [JugglingWithKids.com](http://JugglingWithKids.com).

# 3. Get crafty

Take an inventory of what you already have around the house (construction paper, home-made Playdoh ingredients, crayons, paint, snacks, bags of leftover candy, etc.) and come up with a quick-and-easy craft activity. You get to spend quality time with your child while he or she gets to make unique Valentine's Day cards to share with friends. Win-win. Visit [SavingByDesign.com](http://SavingByDesign.com) for inspiration. Looking for food-free alternatives? There are tons of crafty ideas on [LilAllergyAdvocates.com](http://LilAllergyAdvocates.com).



# 4. Bake a batch

Encourage your child to help you bake a batch of his or her favorite sweet treat (cookies, brownies, rice cereal treats, etc.). Once they've cooled, place them in bags and attach a home-made label. Easy peasy.



# 5. Give a healthy sweet treat

Attach pairs of googly eyes to oranges or bananas. You can even draw faces or write messages on the skins with a permanent marker. Or bag them and attach clever sayings. My favorites for bananas are "I've picked you for my Valentine" and "Let's never split!" For oranges, choose something like "Orange you glad we're friends?" or "Peel the love, Valentine!"





# *PHOTO* of the month

Located on the western side of Sardinia's Costa Verde, Spiaggia di Scivu provides it all—beauty, unspoiled nature and a dreamy getaway. Divided by a small reef, the waters on this beach can be quite choppy due to rough winds.

Photo by Steven Gammon.

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*a day at*

# THE ICE-SKATING RINK

By Anna Leigh Bagiackas

**A**s soon as the snow falls, many of us can't wait to grab our sleds, don winter boots, stocking hats and mittens and find the nearest hill to tear down. But sometimes we don't want to wait for that elusive snowfall to enjoy our favorite winter sports, so it's time to plan for a day at the skating rink. Whether you're a comfortable skater or have yet to take a voluntary step onto the ice, a day skating will be one to remember, especially in Germany.

While you may have gotten your ice-skating fix during the holiday season, you can still find a number of rinks open, when it may be a little harder to get excited about wearing the previously mentioned warm clothes. Luckily, there are skating rinks sprinkled all over the region. You can find indoor rinks, outdoor open-air skating settings and even ice discos—perfect for a family or friends' day trip this winter.

Ice rinks in Germany offer a variety of services and activities available for guests, such as skate rentals, lessons, special equipment for young children and reservations for games like hockey and ice stock sport, a game similar to curling. Be sure to do your research before you head out the door, as skating rinks differ in the length of their season as well as what restrictions are in place for entry and reservations.

**For those in the KMC and Rhein-Main areas, here are a few skating rinks to check out if you're looking for a day trip to enjoy winter:**

## *Kaiserslautern*

Located in the hall of the Gartenschau Kaiserslautern, KL on ICE is typically open until mid-February and is very convenient for those in the KMC. With its central location in the city, a good meal following a day skating is never far away.

## *Wiesbaden*

The Henkell ice rink is an open-air rink in Wiesbaden. In addition to opportunities to try your hand at ice stock sport with friends, you can also attend lively ice discos with contemporary music and special lighting shows.

## *Zweibrücken*

With lots of public ice time available, this indoor skating rink is a great option for families (maybe after a morning of shopping at the outlets?). Saturday nights are reserved for ice discos and the American-style diner Flyer's is perfectly located next to the rink to refuel or hang out while the rest of the family skates up a storm.

## *Darmstadt*

Eishalle Darmstadt is an indoor rink with food, snacks and drinks available for purchase. Visit their website to learn about special events, hockey and scheduled ice discos.

## *Frankfurt*

One of the larger winter sport complexes, Eis-sporthalle Frankfurt has been home to hockey and skating since 1981. A fun atmosphere with food and drinks available, it's also easily accessible via train.

## *Heddesheim*

While a little further drive, this is the only open-air ice rink in North Baden with a beautiful view to accompany your day or evening of skating. The rink is available for birthday parties and hosts ice discos on Saturday nights. ■



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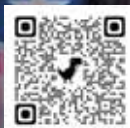
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# A Visit the Azores

## A LAND THAT ONCE WAS

By Kristy Alpert

*Forlornly nestled among the azure waters of the Atlantic Ocean, the Azores islands are all at once strangely familiar and entirely foreign. Powerful salty waves crash harshly against dark volcanic stone on one coastline, while hearty herds of cattle graze freely within the low stone-stacked walls of pristinely maintained green pastures.*

This grouping of islands could be worlds away judging by the unpolluted landscape and rustic remnants of settlers past, but in reality, a trip to this Portuguese province only takes about four and a half hours from Frankfurt International Airport, making the islands the perfect place to escape for a few days without wasting precious vacation time in the air.

The Azores are made up of nine separate islands that were completely uninhabited up until the Portuguese discovered them in the early half of the 15th century. Not one person had previously stepped foot on the islands until those first sailors walked ashore from their boats, literally laying the path toward what would become one of the world's most underrated oceanfront retreats.

Although more than five centuries have passed since the first group of Portuguese pilgrims

settled on the islands, the Azores have remained relatively un-influenced by mainstream Western culture, adding to its charm as a raw and unsoiled paradise. Temperatures fluctuate only slightly throughout the year between 14°C and 22°C, and one look around the scenic landscape proves exactly why the word stress isn't part of the local vocabulary. Sapphire blue and emerald green lakes dot the countryside between vibrant farmlands and volcanic craters, while seamlessly trickling into quaint cobblestoned villages.

Ferryboats and regional flights charter visitors to and from these sparsely situated islands. No two islands in the Azores are alike in terms of ambience and environment, and, although there is a uniform sense of commonality and harmony throughout the archipelago, each of the nine islands play their own unique role in the story of the Azores.



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## *São Miguel*

Also known as “The Green Island,” São Miguel is by far the most popular island to start with when visiting the Azores. It is the largest in terms of land and has the greatest population in the archipelago, with most of the locals residing in the main city of Ponta Delgada. The island is a hub for all types of adventures, and one of the best tour operators in the Azores (Picos de Aventura) operates directly out of Ponta Delgada, offering whale-watching trips, dolphin encounters, hiking guides, canyoning tours, Jeep excursions and more. The only tea plantations in Europe are on this island, and there’s a huge surfing scene over at Praia de Santa Barbara, where it’s not uncommon to see pro surfers lapping up spoons of ice cream with locals and tourists near the beach. The Hotel Talisman and the Hotel Do Colegio are both great spots to stay for experiencing Ponta Delgada’s day markets (make sure to buy some pineapple at the Mercado da Graca), local lunch spots (Sardinha, a.k.a. Mane Cigano, was Anthony Bourdain’s favorite place to munch on fresh fish with locals), and local nightlife scene (check out Cantinho dos Anjos).



## *Pico*

Anyone looking to unwind with some wine will find solace on Pico. The second largest of the islands, Pico is a UNESCO World Heritage site and is home to the highest point of all the Azores, Ponta do Pico, a stratovolcano located 2,351 meters above sea level. It’s the volcanic soil on the island that makes the wines produced here so unique among European blends. Light and mineral whites are sold all over the world, while visitors would do well to stock up on the island’s full-bodied reds before others catch on to the phenomenal vintages that have been bottled every year since 2011. These violet-hued wines are underappreciated by locals and undiscovered by industry heads, and they will age well over the next 8 to 10 years (Read: buy them now before they’re discovered and the price goes up!).



## *Sao Jorge*

This long and lanky island was created by a series of volcanic eruptions in a straight line, creating an almost vertical coastline of cliffs interrupted sporadically by flat areas along the coast called fajãs. The island is great for exploring on foot, but tons of locals tend to take to the sea with sports fishing and scuba diving, luring most people to the water. The other main draw to this island? Cheese. Sao Jorge cheese is famous around the world for its “Queijo de Sao Jorge,” a cow’s milk cheese cured for months until the rind turns the color of honey and the cheese develops an almost peppery aroma that works as an appetizer or a dessert.





## *Santa Maria*

The low altitude of this island sets it apart from its sister islands in the Azores in that it maintains a dry, more Mediterranean type of climate year-round. The island has some of the best beaches in the archipelago and it's said that Christopher Columbus and his crew held a mass to celebrate their discovery of the New World at the church of Nossa Senhora dos Anjos Chapel before returning home to Spain.



## *Terceira*

Despite its size, Terceira is the second most populated island in the Azores and is home to an American Air Force Base in the village of Lajes. The culture is incredibly vibrant on this island, with colorful chapels and ancient castle walls from a former royal prison acting as the backdrop for festivals like the Touradas a Corda (bullfighting on a rope), a Portuguese version of the Running with the Bulls that occurs weekly from May 1 through September 30.



## *Corvo*

Ah, little Corvo. This petite stretch of seven square miles is the smallest in the Azorean archipelago, and daily life on the island is equally as simple. Wooden locks are the main handicraft on the island, and daily activities are centered around watching planes navigate through the peaks and cliffs toward the small airport or hiking down to the two lagoons set deep inside a volcanic crater.



## *Faial*

Although it's referred to as the "Blue Island" due to the abundance of hydrangeas that bloom blue in the central slopes of the island each year, the main activity on Faial actually takes place on another azure part of the island. The tide pools, black sand beaches and busy harbor make the water the place to be in Faial. Swimming, sailing, fishing, windsurfing and more, you name it and you can do it on the water surrounding this island.



## *Flores*

Named for the abundance of ... wait for it ... flowers freckling the countryside, the isle of Flores is a raw and rugged frontier, bursting with a sort of weathered beauty that's amplified by the waterfalls and lakes saturating the landscape. Hiking and canyoning through the diverse terrain on this island is insanely popular and it's worth the trip to explore the seven lagoas (lakes) in the center of the island.



## *Graciosa*

The island of Graciosa is peppered with quaint fishing villages set among ancient streets and grand manor houses and long-standing windmills. The churches on the island date back to the 16th century, and Santo Cristo Church acts as the main landmark for the city of Santa Cruz da Graciosa. Definitely check out the Furna do Enxofre around noon when the sunlight dances around a vaulted cave towering over an underground lake. ■

# 10 THINGS to know about VENICE

By Mary Del Rosario



**1** Venice's Carnival season will be celebrated Feb. 22 to March 1. Venetian masks are iconic to this celebration and "fritole," fried dough balls dusted in sugar, can be found in many bakeries during this time.



**2** The "Queen of the Adriatic," one of the few nicknames for this city, boasts around 400 bridges with roughly 150 canals. The Grand Canal is the main waterway.



**4** Though a bucket-list experience, be prepared to pay 80 euros for a 40-minute gondola ride. If you're wanting a romantic serenade, it will cost extra.



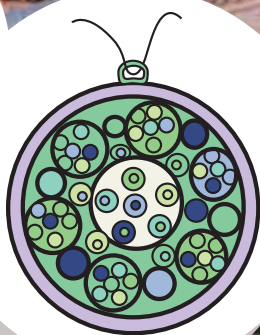
**3** Should you find yourself gliding along the canal in a gondola, appreciate the gondolier, as becoming a licensed gondolier requires immense training.

**5** Since the city's layout was meant to cater around the canals, your chances of getting lost are great—just go with it! Getting lost in Venice is part of the experience.



**6** There are 120 islands in Venice—Burano, a colorful island in the northern Venetian Lagoon—is only a one-and-a-half-hour ferry ride from the city of Venice.

**7** Murano glass and Burano lace are two items you should bring back home with you to remember your trip.



**9** Due to tectonic plates, Venice is sinking at a rate of one millimeter per year.




**8** Touring Italy by car? Park your rental outside the city center and take the train, bus or ferry in, for a more relaxed and less expensive experience.

**10** Many fish dishes to include "risotto al nero di seppia"—risotto with cuttlefish ink and "sarde in saor"—sardines in a sweet and tangy sauce, are popular dishes belonging to this side of Italy.





# MWR GO

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## February brings new horizons with MWR

### Digital Photography Contest

Win great prizes in the U.S. Army's Digital Photography Contest. Entry period continues through March 15, 2022. Enter in various categories including Animals, Design Elements, Digital Darkroom, Military Life, Nature and Landscapes, People and Still Life. For registration information and entry guidelines visit <https://wiesbaden.armymwr.com/calendar/event/digital-photography-contest/5409738/64356>.

### Super Bowl Party

Join fellow football fans to view the annual National Football League showdown on a host of screens at the Wiesbaden Entertainment Center during the WEC's Super Bowl Party on Feb. 6. Call civ (0611) 143-548-9406 for more information.

### Blind Date With a Book

The Wiesbaden Library invites patrons to expand their horizons during Blind Date With a Book Feb. 13-18. Discover new authors, subjects and worlds during this library special — check out a wrapped book selected by the library staff.

### Boot Camp

Join fellow fitness-minded participants for a six-week-long Boot Camp that will get you from ground zero to hero in a matter of weeks. Sessions will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6-7:15 p.m. Feb. 1 through March 17 at the Wiesbaden Sports and Fitness Center. Cost is \$169 per person. Call civ (0611) 143-548-9830.

### Trivia League

It's a new year — time to show off your knowledge of all things and to win prizes — during Trivia League on Feb. 2 at 7 p.m. at the Wiesbaden Entertainment Center Lounge.

### Ukulele Club

Share your love for the ukulele during regular Ukulele Club get-togethers at the Wiesbaden Li-



**Photographers are invited to enter to win prizes in the U.S. Army's Digital Photography Contest. Entry deadline is March 15, 2022.**

brary — every second and fourth Sunday of the month starting at 10 a.m. Meet fellow players, talk about the skills you are working on and share a song (if you feel like it). Concert and soprano ukuleles are available for your use — or bring your own. Stop by the library for more information.

### Hunting Course

Have you ever thought about hunting while in Germany? Outdoor Recreation can help make that a reality — with their U.S. Forces German Hunting Course starting Feb. 1 and running through April 30. Successful course completion provides the right to purchase a German Hunting License and more. Classes meet Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6-9 p.m. Cost is \$259 per person. Stop by Outdoor Recreation or call civ (0611) 143-548-9801 for details.

### Board Game Night

The Warrior Zone in Building 1214 on Clay Kaserne invites single service members to Board Game Night every Tuesday from 6-8:15 p.m. Bring your favorite board game and challenge new friends. Call civ (0611) 143-548-9816.

### Karaoke Contest

The Wiesbaden Entertainment Center Lounge hosts a Karaoke Contest on Feb. 17 starting at 7 p.m. Show off your vocal chops

and compete for cash prizes. Call civ (0611) 143-548-9406 for more information.

### Grief Support Group

Find help among peers during Survivor Outreach Services' Grief and Loss Support Group. The group meets in Building 7780, Apartment 3, in Hainerberg Housing.

The next meeting is Feb. 3 at 11:30 a.m. Anyone who has suffered the loss of a loved one is welcome to attend. Call Army Community Service at civ (0611) 143-548-9201 for more information.

### Teen Book Club

The Wiesbaden Library hosts a monthly Teen Book Club every second Thursday of the month from 3-4 p.m. Share your favorite books and enjoy free snacks. Call civ (0611) 143-548-9821 for details.

### Brake Service Class

Learn how to keep your brakes in top shape during the Automotive Skills Center's Brake Service Class on Feb. 6 at 10:30 a.m. Cost is \$25. Call civ (0611) 143-548-9817 to register.

### Preschool Story Time

The Wiesbaden Library invites preschool-age children (up to age 5) for stories, counting, songs and more — every Thursdays at 10 a.m. Call civ (0611) 143-548-9821 for details.

### Foreign Born Spouse Meeting

Get together with fellow spouses to share experiences, stories and conversation during Army Community Service's monthly Treffpunkt: Foreign Born Spouse Meeting on Feb. 9 from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Call civ (0611) 143-548-9201.





# AZORES SOUVENIR: Chá

Tea is a staple in European kitchens, possibly even surpassing coffee's popularity in certain places. But where does all that tea come from? You might not often stop and consider European tea production compared to other parts of the world. But Europe has a hidden gem when it comes to tea. São Miguel, the Azores' largest island, is home to the only remaining tea plantations in all of Europe.

"Chá," the Portuguese term for tea, has become an important part of São Miguel's identity. Tea is not a native crop to these isolated Portuguese islands. While there is debate about how the first tea seeds actually arrived in the Azores, tea was given a chance when a cold blight wiped out the islands' primary export, oranges. In an effort to save their economy and protect future exports, they planted tea. The island's climate ended up being perfect for tea plants and it flourished. Another bonus? Common pests to tea could not survive in the Azores climate, meaning tea farmers did not need to use pesticides to protect their crops. At the height of its success, the islands had dozens of working tea plantations and they were producing an impressive amount of tea to export across the

world. But after World War II when customs rules changed, tea production quickly decreased, leaving only a couple of tea plantations running.

Producing some of the nicest black and green teas on the market, there are currently two remaining tea companies on São Miguel: Chá Gorreana and Porto Formoso. Gorreana is the oldest and longest-running tea plantation—in business since 1883—and is one of the highlights of a trip to São Miguel. Tourists can visit both tea plantations, where they can experience the beautiful tea fields (which are green all year long), learn about the process from start to finish, understand the best way to brew tea and, of course, taste the tea. If there at the right time, tourists can also join in the annual tradition of harvesting tea at Porto Formoso with other community members at the very beginning of the harvest, the first Saturday in May.

Both tea companies produce organic green and black teas of the highest quality, including Broken Leaf, Orange Pekoe and Pekoe varieties. These varieties differ in what parts of the plant they are made from, leading to different flavors and strengths.

If you're visiting the Azores, it's easy to pick up a bag or two for a great souvenir whether you want to remind yourself of your amazing trip to the islands or share this tea with a friend. But luckily, it's not too hard to track down some of this beloved tea if you are in need of more. Azores teas are exported primarily to mainland Portugal, Germany, the U.S., Canada, Austria, France, Italy, Brazil, Angola and Japan. Once you've found Gorreana or Porto Formoso brands, find your favorite mug, heat up your water and get ready to escape back to the beautiful tea fields of São Miguel, if only just for a moment. ■

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