

# 10 Free Entertainment Activities for Seniors

## The Only Price of Admission for These Great Activities is Ingenuity

Whether you're saving for retirement, living on a fixed income, or just looking for new ways to be smart about how you spend your money, consider the many ways that you can trim your entertainment budget and actually increase your fun. Here are 10 of the best ideas I've found.

**Gallery openings and art walks** – Attend art gallery openings, which usually include wine, hors d'oeuvres, and a chance to meet the artists and gallery owners. Many communities also host monthly "art walks," which allow you to join other art lovers to tour a number of local galleries on the same evening.

**Open mic nights** – Check out local coffee houses and pubs that regularly provide an open microphone and performance venue to amateur and aspiring musicians. It's a great way to support local artists and to hear some of the freshest sounds around—or maybe even sign up and join in the fun.

**Free nights at museums** – Many museums offer free admission at least one night each week. Same art, same exhibits, but no admission fee.

**Volunteer to usher** – Many professional theater, opera and dance companies use volunteer ushers to help stretch tight budgets. For passing out programs and helping the paying customers find their seats, you will receive free admission to the performance, an inside look at what happens before the curtain goes up, and the opportunity to provide hands-on support to a dynamic arts organization in your community.

**Literary readings** – When authors go on tour to promote their books, they may be heading to a bookstore near you. Check your local newspaper and public library for information about upcoming readings, where you'll have a chance to meet the authors and sample their new work.

**Free lectures and community events** – Colleges and universities, especially those that receive public funding, are great community resources that offer a wide range of events and services at little or no cost. Community and nonprofit organizations also host many free events and activities. Check libraries, newspaper listings, and neighborhood bulletin boards for schedules.

**Free lunchtime concerts** – During nice weather, many communities offer free lunchtime concerts in pleasant locations where there is a high concentration of office workers and a lot of pedestrian traffic. Pack a picnic or a brown bag lunch, grab a friend, and tap your feet to some good music while you enjoy the sunshine and the energy of the city.

**Join a book club or discussion group** – Whether you organize your own with a small group of friends, discover an established group through your local library or bookstore, or plug into a national movement like the Socrates cafés (whose members use the Socratic method to discuss important life issues), book clubs and discussion groups offer a great way to exchange ideas and gain new insights.

**Be a tourist at home** – We all establish routines and patterns, get into ruts, and eventually see only a narrow slice of our own community. Make a conscious effort to step off your usual path, and take a day to explore a neighborhood or nearby attraction that you have never visited or haven't seen lately.

**Go to the library** – Still the single greatest resource in almost any community, the public library offers a rich collection of books and magazines, research and reference materials, and free Internet access. Whether you just drop in to check out a book you can read on the bus, attend a public meeting about a critical local issue, or spend a rainy afternoon surfing the Web, your local library is a great place to find free entertainment.

Source: Sharon O'Brien, About.com Guide