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Five new trends for finding love

If you brought in the new year without locking lips with a special someone, chances are you're among the many singles resolving to find Mr. or Mrs. Right in the next 12 months.

Here are five of the hottest dating trends to watch for in 2005:

■ **Solo travel:** Look for more companies coming on board with travel packages designed for singles. Diane Redfern started



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The Sexes

the Connecting Solo Travel Network back in 1990. "It's a central resource that looks for opportunities for singles to travel comfortably and economically on their own and it includes companies that are dating-oriented." Diane's membership-based website (www.cstn.org) advertises more than 350 such trips from a multitude of companies.

They include fastdatertravel.com, a New York company specializing in a kind of vacation speed-dating. Singles can take a Caribbean cruises, a ski getaway to Aspen or a golf trip to Scottsdale, Ariz., all while meeting other singles (and not fretting over the usual "based on double occupancy" brochures).

■ **Blind dates with a twist:** You've done the chat rooms, dating services and pretty much everything else out there, but I'll bet you've never tried a Dinner-in-the-Dark party. Originating in New York and making its way across the States, it's the latest on the socializing scene.

Offered by cosmoparty.com, Dinner-in-the-Dark is an interesting new way of hooking people up. You gather at a venue where you are paired with a dinner companion in pitch blackness. You dine blindly, and your partner isn't revealed until dessert arrives.

The program — touted as a way to get to know a potential partner without looks being the first impression — is coming to Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, so it's only a matter of time before Calgary singles dine in the dark.

■ **IDIGU:** Huge in Japan and spreading like wildfire, text-message-dating brings a high-tech tool to the singles' world. It's a portable, inexpensive, safe and definitive way to target exactly what you're looking for and pursue on your own terms.

Canadian-based Mobilehookup launched in May of 2004 and is now introducing a North American first — Talk Now voice/SMS technology allowing two mobile users to hook up anonymously via the telephone. Your privacy is maintained while you get to know each other.

■ **Speed-dating evolution:** What was once a novel idea is today almost mainstream: Get a group of guys and girls together and allow them quick sessions to chat and see if they can make a connection. Calgary has a number of speed dating services, including Six Minute Dates.

Christine Hart, who runs the service with business partner Dana Blonde, says the company is always looking for new ways to enhance and improve. "We feel like we're on the edge of greatness," said Hart. With a new speed-dating venue (Zodiak, 515 10 St. S.W.) and a new monthly speed-dating/wine tasting event, Hart and Blonde say the old "meat-market" stigmas are fading away. "We've expanded into Vancouver with our

first event coming up on Jan. 18," Hart says. "We're also in the process of developing added online feature. We've been watching other companies in the States that have very successfully added these types of features."

■ **Reality TV:** Built on the success of such shows as *The Bachelor* and *Bachelorette* (plus lesser reality mind candy such as *Elimidate*), look for more of the same on the

tube. Though nothing can be divulged at this point, I can say this — look for some new local dating programs in the coming months.

No doubt I'll have all the details in *The Sexes* once the "leaks" are confirmed. Happy dating in 2005!

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