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Dîner en Bank: How Much It Really Costs to Attend D.C.'s Flash Mob Picnic



It costs \$37 (plus an \$8 "membership" fee) just to attend Dîner en Blanc, the flash mob phenomenon in which thousands gather in cities across the globe to picnic in all white. For that much, participants receive the exclusive opportunity to spend even more money. After all, the ticket price doesn't include any food, drinks, or even tables and chairs. Instead, everyone must haul their own meal and table settings following strict guidelines (no ivory! no beer! dress elegantly!). The costs can add up fast. Just take a look at the lists of expenses shared by a handful of attendees.

\$40 two folding chairs from Ikea

\$20 white shadow stripe jacquard tablecloth from Ikea

\$10 white oblong serving dish from Ikea

\$70 groceries for mushroom and lentil pâté "faux gras"; Sicilian eggplant and pine nut caponata; and prosciutto, sage, and feta involtini

\$65 polished cotton Trashy Diva dress from eBay

\$425 custom hat from Louise Green millinery

Total: \$625

\$100 all-white picnic menu of cheese and crackers, crab meat tortellini, and cheesecake from Trader Joe's
\$6.95 white duct tape from Home Depot ("I was really spooked that the charcoal grey trim on our borrowed folding chairs would get us kicked out.")
\$50 white tablecloth, white napkins, battery-operated candles, glass votive holders, glass pitcher, and glass vase from Target
\$8 Essie "Blanc" nail polish from Target
\$30 white sneakers from H&M
\$49.95 white shirt from Gap
\$9 cab home
Total: \$253.90

\$30 Coleman folding table from Amazon
\$24 two white chairs from BizChair
\$9 two white plates from Crate and Barrel outlet
\$24 white tablecloth and four white linen napkins from Target
\$3 white crate to carry items
\$29 folding hand truck from Home Depot
\$16 bottle of Apothic white wine purchased through Dîner en Blanc
\$8 two Dîner en Blanc handprinted cookies
\$55 Great Gatsby food basket purchased through Dîner en Blanc
\$26 white Kangol hat from K&G
\$21 white slacks from Jos A. Bank
\$14 white belt from K&G
\$7.50 white socks from The Mall at Prince Georges
\$26 white shirt from Macy's
\$39 white shoes from Strike
\$29 white pants from The Limited
\$20 white shirt from The Limited
\$20 white sandals from Lord & Taylor
\$8 two Metro cards
\$10 white bouquet of flowers from Whole Foods
\$8 white LED candles from Home Depot
\$9 Fiji Water, Coke Zero, ice, and Styrofoam cooler from CVS
Total: \$435.50

\$285.53 four bottles of Champagne and two bottles white wine
\$75 white pants, white shoes, and a white belt ("Wife's dress was so expensive she wouldn't say how much it cost.")
\$140 groceries for four including caprese salad, charcuterie, cheeses, grilled flank steak with chimichurri, roasted potatoes, and grilled asparagus
\$175 white table, two chairs, linen, table decor, LED candles, and cheap glassware
\$40 cigars
Total: \$715.53

\$12.98 off-white men's jeans from Target
\$15 white tablecloth
\$17.50 rental for two white chairs
\$36 table ("We actually bought because the rental one weighed about 40 pounds.")
\$40 groceries for veggie pasta, cheese and crackers, and salad
Total: \$121.48

\$50 long strapless maxi dress by Guess
\$11 accessories (earrings, bracelets, and necklace) from Charming Charlie
\$58 per couple for cheese plate, salad, main entree, and dessert
\$17 centerpiece from Michaels consisting of vases with water beads and LED lights
\$15 white tablecloth, white napkins, glass water bottle, and serving platter from Goodwill and Freecycle
\$1.98 lace tablecloth
\$6 white chairs from HMS Party Rentals
Total: \$158.98

\$43 white pants, white tank top, and white blouse
\$5 Metro fare
\$51 dinner from Whole Foods including caña de cabra, some soft French cheese, caviar, London broil, hummus, crackers, watermelon, ginger peach lemonade, water bottle, and lebna
Total: \$99