

# CAFÉS – A GREAT ENVIRONMENT FOR A PHOTOSHOOT

Quick Guide  
Written by Ľudmila Borošová





Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

I don't know what your relationship is with cafés, but I am obsessed with discovering all the cute little corners of my town serving the black gold. But let's admit it, many times we are not going for that caffeine kick; we are paying for the whole experience of relaxing in the beautiful oasis. Each café competes with others for the cutest interior design, various themes, and stylish Instagram looks. Why not use it to your advantage and turn cafés into your studio?

For this photoshoot, I kindly asked my best friend to pose, so it was as natural and non-styled as it could be! And I encourage you to do the same. Do you regularly meet your friend to gossip over a cup of coffee? Bring your camera with you! Your portfolio will thank you.

Today, we'll cover:

- Why considering cafés as places for photoshoots is a great idea
- How to maintain a good relationship with the staff
- The best practices to keep in mind

There are many reasons why I would consider cafés as the number one choice if a client preferred to shoot indoors. Whether it's due to difficult weather conditions or just preference, I want to show you how to use it to your benefit!






Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

## IT'S A HAPPY PLACE

Many of my clients are concerned about posing. It's normal – most of the time you won't shoot the idyllic Instagram models, but rather "regular" people who don't have much experience in front of the camera. And that's fine! You need to make them enjoy the moment and take them to their happy place to relax - or at least calm them down with their favorite latte and cake. They will completely forget to worry about the photoshoot!

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## IT'S A NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Sometimes, you need to take a break from the overly styled photoshoots. I know it's all fun and exciting, but give your creativity a little break. With café photoshoots, you can't really be all over the place being extra with your camera. This is more of a "blend in" style, where you need to fit in with other people just enjoying their drink. Let's think of this style as a sort of documentary.

As mentioned before, if your client is stressing too much about posing, just tell them to enjoy their morning cup of coffee, and your documentary magic will do the rest.





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## IT'S A SAVER FROM BAD WEATHER CONDITIONS

Waking up to a full-on storm when you're about to shoot outside is a disaster, and I feel you! You're already sweaty and about to tell your client that it needs to be canceled. But what if you have a backup plan? Like one of the most beautiful cafés in the neighborhood? Have a list of cafés where you have approval to take pictures and let the client make the choice!

Going to a place for the first time and politely asking shouldn't be a problem, but if you are working with a paying client, you can't afford being refused. If you're using the café regularly as your backup, it can be a problem for the staff, so ask ahead.



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## IT'S INSTAGRAM EXPOSURE HEAVEN

I mean... have you ever not liked a picture of someone chilling in a café? This will rock your client's Instagram game. And not only that - by posting these pictures on your photography page, you're able to tag the business. They will appreciate your professional photos and understand the craft and quality you put into each photo. This will lead to more trust to shoot there again! Think about the possibilities! If the client agrees, they can repost the pictures. And much more. This will open doors to shooting all kinds of small businesses and vendors! Word of mouth travels faster than light between small companies, so make the most of it!

## SPEAKING OF BUSINESSES, ALWAYS MAKE SURE YOU'RE NOT CROSSING ANY LINES!

While I'm sure that owners find it flattering when people decide to do a photoshoot in their place, you need to make sure you're on the same page. If possible, ask the staff upon arrival. Sometimes, you will need to ask the owner as well. If they refuse, it's possible they are only protecting the experience of other clients.

- **Pick the ideal time.** Plan your photoshoot accordingly and make sure that it's not too crowded when you visit. Ask the staff about the busiest times or become a regular customer.

- **Read the situation.** This is crucial to maintaining a good atmosphere on the spot. Do the customers look disturbed? Are they giving you "the look"? Are you in their personal space? Do they feel like they are in the picture? It can lead to many uncomfortable situations.
- **Be quick.** You need to be at least somewhat comfortable behind the camera to make sure you don't create a professional studio out of the café. I suggest the photoshoot (especially inside) shouldn't take more than 15 minutes.



## MAKE THE MOST OUT OF LIMITED TIME WITH THESE PHOTO TIPS

### **Plan the places in advance**

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There's only a limited number of cute spots in the café, so think them through and sit down strategically! You will get the best results when you know all of your alternatives. Is there a book corner? Can you incorporate a plant into the shot? What about sitting in a window?

### **Don't be afraid to switch seats**

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Take advantage of everything you already planned in step one. You might think it's silly running around and switching seats to get all the pictures, but if you do it mindfully, no one will care. And you will have tons of great content!



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

*My model sitting in the book corner. Always take advantage of decorations you already have!*






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## Keep the latte art

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Take a few pictures where the freshly made latte art is visible. Act quickly – the milk foam will drop sooner than you think. It adds amazing detail to the picture, so make sure you choose a barista who knows how to create stunning art!

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## Know your lens

It's important to choose the best lens for your indoor shooting. The light conditions aren't always perfect, and you need to be prepared with a low aperture! It doesn't only help with the brightness; it also keeps away the distracting elements (and customers) in the background.

Do you see the difference? I shot the top photo with my 24mm lens, while the bottom photo was shot with my 85mm lens. Only a slight change of angles and lenses can lead to magic! In the first picture, you can clearly see the customer in the back and the background isn't flattering at all. While this would be a great lens to use if we had something interesting going on, the 85mm is clearly a better choice. I decided to frame my picture with a plant, bringing up the coziness levels!



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*Reading enthusiast vs. observer: which one is your model?*

## Don't be afraid to go out

Many cafés have seating outside. Natural light will look fantastic in your pictures and you can play with the surroundings. If it's a cozy small garden, you can let your model read a book or work on their laptop. On the other hand, busy streets will match the personality of the observers. Make your choice!





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## Be a storyteller

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It's all in the details... so shoot them! Your model should be the main focus, without a doubt, but there are some small details you shouldn't miss; for example, the way she holds the coffee, the details on her outfit, or even a tattoo.

This might seem like an ordinary picture, but it captures a few of the details your model would appreciate; for example, her tattoo, her purse, her nails, and her coffee.



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## Do not over style it


I asked my friend (the model) to bring a book from the café so she could read it outside. "That would look so cool!" I said. She replied: "But I want to be on my phone. That's what I do when I sit here in the mornings!" Simply put, let your models just be themselves. Sure, you can help them with props, but do not make them someone else just for the sake of a nice café picture.

## Experiment with angles

Some angles aren't the most obvious ones. Try incorporating the walls or plants into the frame. They will bring up the special vibe! Can you see in the images on the left what a difference it makes?



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## **Make it a café crawl**

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Who says that you should stick with just one location? If you still don't have enough of the vibe, walk to the café around the corner. You will have a rich variety of backgrounds in your photoshoot and double caffeine boost! That sounds like a good idea to me!

## **Edit colors to make it pop**

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I like to edit the "café pictures" with a very moody preset. What helps me achieve the look is pushing up the highlights and the whites (usually the mug is bright) and bringing up the brown tones. Whatever my style is, I am not trying to push it to all of my photoshoots. You shouldn't be afraid to experiment with colors!

### **Self-Check Quiz:**

- 1) Name three reasons why cafés are a great indoor option for photoshoots.
- 2) What are some of the good manners to use in small businesses when you do a photo shoot there?
- 3) Can you use this partnership to boost your Instagram?
- 4) How long can you shoot inside the café?
- 5) Is it encouraged to switch seats or even cafés during the photoshoot?
- 6) Why does the choice of your lens matter?
- 7) What does it mean to be a storyteller?
- 8) Should you stick to your typical color palette while editing?

### **Assignment:**

- Find inspiring images shot with a model in a café with different poses and save them in a folder for inspiration.
- Research what kind of cafés you have in your city. What does their interior look like? Do they have a garden or other exterior space? Find inspirational pictures under the Instagram location or hashtags.
- Pick three places and kindly ask the owners about the shooting possibilities. Bear in mind the current world situation and hygienic rules of your own country.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ludmila is a Slovak photographer focusing on portraiture. She does photography while finishing her Master's degree in Business Administration, specializing in Entrepreneurship. She is based in Prague, Czech Republic, but loves to travel around the world and share her stories, as well as her photoshoots, on her blog.

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