



*your engagement session*

A LOVE STORY  
IN PHOTOGRAPHS



# The Beginning of Your Story



Engagement sessions are one of the first big milestones in your wedding journey. They're a fun, relaxed way for us to get to know each other while helping you get comfortable in front of the camera before your wedding day.

Many couples tell me they feel nervous or awkward heading into their session, but I promise it will be fun! I'll guide you throughout the session with simple prompts and direction so you can focus on each other and enjoy the experience.

Read through this guide now, and give it another quick glance about a week before your session.

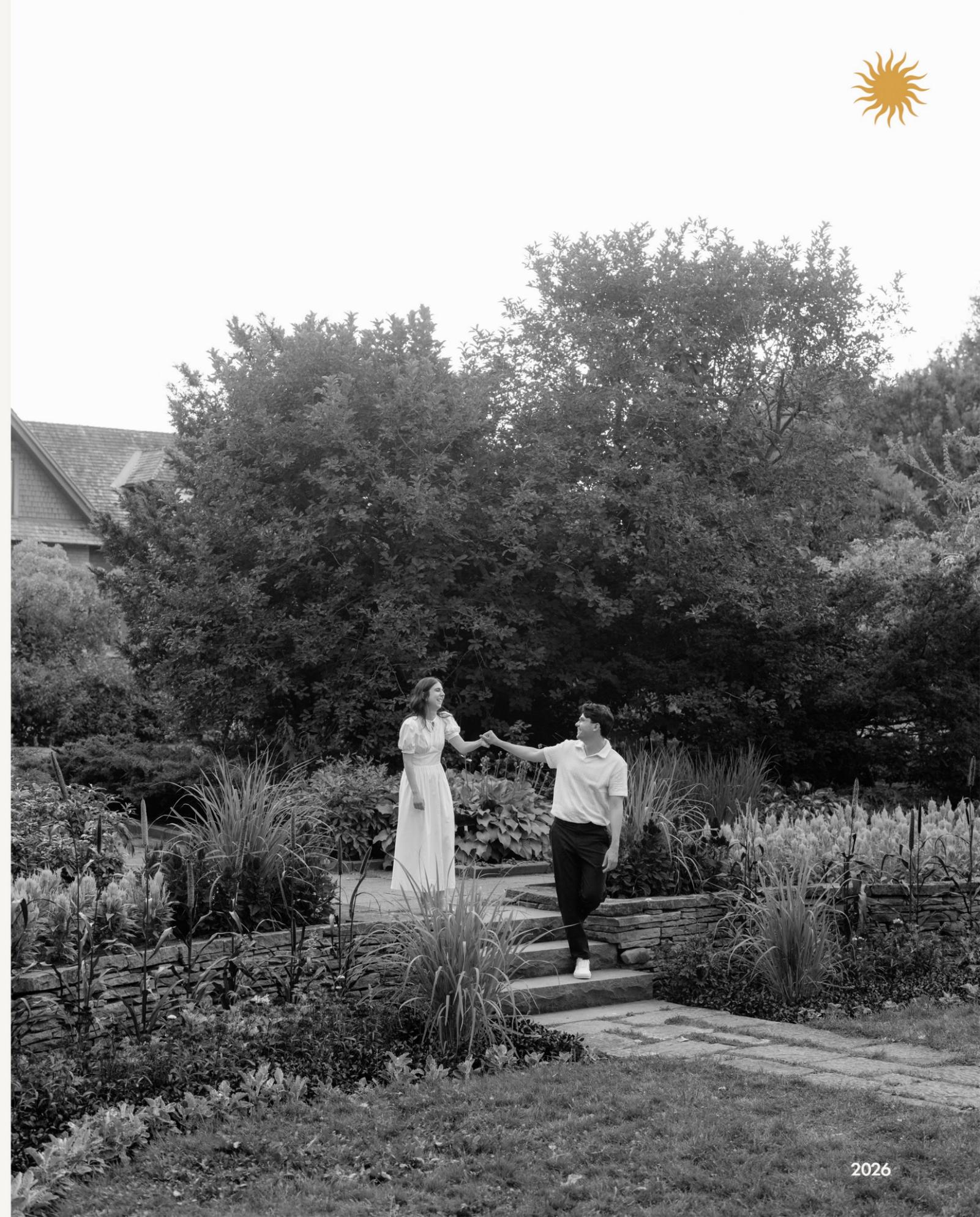


## A Relaxed, Natural Experience

My engagement sessions are designed to feel natural and easy. The most beautiful images tend to come from quiet, natural moments together.

Rather than stiff posing, I use gentle prompts that encourage movement and interaction so your photos feel genuine and relaxed. We'll spend the session exploring, chatting, laughing, and capturing moments that reflect who you are together.

Most sessions take place around sunset when the light is at its best, so timing is important. Arriving a few minutes early helps ensure we have the full amount of beautiful light to work with. Sessions are typically one hour long and edited images are delivered within 14 days of your session.





## Considering the Season

Each season brings its own character to engagement photos, from the colours of the landscape to the timing of the light. There's no single "best" season, but understanding how things change throughout the year can help you decide what feels right.

Early May is often still quite brown and can be a little chilly. By mid to late May, spring usually arrives in full, with fresh greenery and more comfortable temperatures.

Spring and summer sessions also benefit from later sunset times, which means later start times. For couples who work a typical 9–5 schedule, this often makes things easier since you won't need to leave work early to get ready and travel to your location. Summer evenings can be quite warm, but that's also what makes them perfect for lighter fabrics and flowing dresses.



By September and October, the light shifts earlier in the evening and session start times move earlier as well. Fall colours can be beautiful, but the weather can also be unpredictable, so it's helpful to plan a couple of outfit options in case the day ends up warmer or colder than expected.

The colours of the landscape also change throughout the year. Spring often brings vibrant greens, late summer tends to feel softer and more neutral, and fall introduces warm gold tones. These natural palettes are part of what makes seasonal photos feel authentic and rooted in time.

If you're hoping for a downtown or urban session, my favourite months are May and June, when later sunsets allow us to photograph after the evening rush and enjoy quieter streets before the summer tourist season arrives. October sessions are reserved for locations in nature so we can make the most of the often-too-brief fall foliage.

Your engagement session doesn't need to match your wedding location or season. In fact, choosing something different can create a beautiful balance in your overall gallery. An urban engagement session paired with a rural fall wedding, or a nature-filled session before a city wedding day, gives us the chance to create two very different sets of images that reflect different sides of your story. Ultimately, the best choice is simply the one that aligns with your vision and feels most exciting to you.



## Choosing the Perfect Location

The location you choose plays a big role in the overall feel of your engagement photos, so it's worth choosing somewhere that feels like a natural fit for the two of you. Most couples choose either a beautiful spot in nature or an urban setting downtown.

Nature sessions tend to feel quiet, romantic, and more intimate. They're a lovely choice for couples who want their session to feel relaxed and private, with space to slow down and simply be together. Urban sessions, on the other hand, usually feel more energetic and lively. They can be a great fit for couples who love the city, are drawn to architecture and movement, or feel excited by a more editorial atmosphere. It's also worth keeping in mind that downtown sessions usually come with onlookers, foot traffic, and activity around you.

There's no single right choice. The best setting is simply one that feels aligned with your personalities and the atmosphere you want your photos to have. A meaningful location can be especially lovely, but it doesn't need to be somewhere sentimental to feel personal.

If you're dreaming of a downtown Ottawa session, I recommend choosing a date in May or June, when later sunsets help us avoid the evening rush and the summer tourist season hasn't yet arrived. October sessions are typically reserved for outdoor locations, often in Gatineau Park, so we can make the most of the fall colour.

If you're unsure what feels right, I'm always happy to suggest locations based on the season and the overall vibe you're drawn to.



Some popular location options:

- Downtown Ottawa (NAC/Chateau Laurier area)
- My Secret Gatineau Park Location
- Mackenzie King Estate
- The Ornamental Gardens
- Patterson Creek Park
- Aylmer Beach
- Old Chelsea Square
- Wakefield River
- Museum of History (outside)



## A Quiet, Intimate Setting

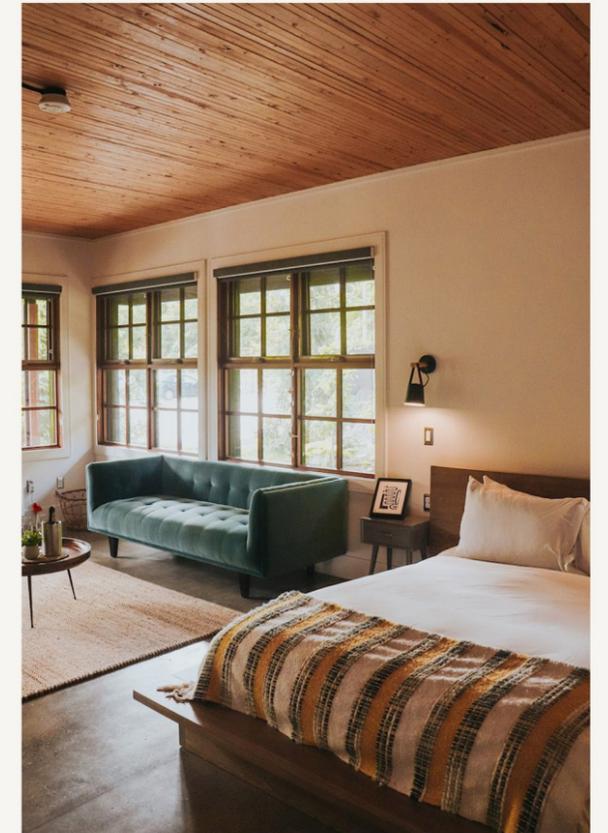
Less traditional engagement session locations can feel especially intimate and relaxed. Soft window light, interesting textures, and cozy spaces often create images that feel quiet, personal, and a little editorial.

Some couples choose their home or a family cottage, while others rent a charming cabin or an Airbnb. Studio rentals can also be a wonderful option, offering a quiet environment that lends itself beautifully to a more editorial style of photography. Spaces with large windows or good natural light tend to photograph especially beautifully.

Restaurants, bars, and coffee shops can certainly have a beautiful atmosphere, but they can be more difficult to coordinate. I generally only recommend these settings if we're able to use the space while it's closed. Photographing in an open venue can be challenging, since there's no guarantee we'll have access to the right table or lighting, and it can be difficult to move freely without disturbing other guests.

A beautiful hotel room can often create a very similar atmosphere to a bar, while giving us far more privacy and flexibility. It allows us to work comfortably with the light and space, without the unpredictability that comes with photographing in a busy public setting.

Because indoor locations can be a bit darker, these sessions are sometimes scheduled earlier in the day rather than at sunset to ensure we have enough beautiful natural light to work with. Any bookings or fees associated with your chosen space would be arranged and covered by you.



A few inspiring intimate settings:

- Lofts du Village
- Le Germain Hotel
- Quay Studio
- Your Home or Cottage
- Amarah Studio
- Skye Studio
- Prunella Cabins
- Hilton Lac Leamy
- A cool Airbnb rental

# Planning a Restaurant Session

If you decide to include a restaurant, coffee shop, patio, or bar in your engagement session, the first step is reaching out to the venue directly for permission to photograph in their space. Policies vary, and some locations may have restrictions or charge a fee. All arrangements would be handled by you.

In most cases, I recommend spending no more than about twenty minutes inside, and sometimes even just five minutes of quick photos can work beautifully. We'd then head outside to wander the surrounding neighbourhood, so it's worth choosing a spot where you also love the look of the surrounding streets or nearby scenery.

Some casual venues, like coffee shops, may be completely relaxed about it and happy for us to pop in whenever there's space. Others, particularly more formal restaurants or busy patios, may want a more structured plan with a confirmed time and point of contact. Either way, it's worth a quick message ahead of time so there are no surprises on the day.

When you reach out, here are a few things to confirm:

- Permission to photograph in the space
- Any photography restrictions (flash use, seating limitations, etc.)
- Whether the venue will be open during our session time
- Any fees involved
- Their rescheduling policy in case of bad weather
- Who our point of contact will be when we arrive

Taking a few minutes to confirm these details ahead of time helps ensure the session starts smoothly so we can focus on making the most of our time together.





# Dressing for the Moment

The most important thing when choosing outfits is that you feel comfortable and confident. When you feel good in what you're wearing, it naturally comes through in your photos.

Aim for outfits that coordinate rather than matching exactly. Neutral tones and textures that complement each other tend to photograph beautifully while still allowing each of you to express your own style. Clothing that fits well and allows you to move comfortably is always best. Please make sure you're able to comfortably sit down in your chosen outfit.

Engagement photos are also a lovely opportunity to dress up a little. While your outfits should still suit the setting, choosing something slightly more elevated than your everyday clothes often photographs beautifully and helps the session feel a little more special.

If you're unsure where to start, looking through Pinterest for engagement sessions in a similar setting to what you have planned can be a great source of outfit inspiration.

It's also worth considering the season and location when planning what to wear, as well as choosing shoes that are comfortable and appropriate for the terrain.

Some couples like bringing two outfits for a little variety, often starting with something casual and finishing with a more dressed-up look. If you decide to do this, it's helpful to think ahead about where you'll change so the transition feels easy and doesn't take too much time during our session.





## Some Thoughtful Touches

If you'd like to bring something along, small additions can really elevate your gallery. A bottle of champagne, a bouquet of flowers, a cozy blanket, or even something playful like a pizza can add personality and variety to your photos.

Meaningful items can be lovely too, whether that's a guitar, a film camera, bikes, or a special vehicle. The key is simply choosing things that feel natural and personal to you, so they add to the story rather than feeling like props.



## Keeping Things Simple

In general, it's best to travel light. Engagement sessions tend to flow more naturally when we're not juggling extra belongings, so please avoid bringing bags or bulky items you wouldn't want appearing in your photos.

Before we begin, it's also a good idea to empty your pockets of phones, keys, or wallets so they don't show through clothing. I'm always happy to tuck those safely into my camera bag while we shoot.



## Adding a Little Activity

Some couples like incorporating a small activity into their engagement session. It doesn't need to be anything elaborate, and we often only spend a few minutes on it, but it can add a lot of personality and variety to your gallery.

Doing something together can also take a little pressure off being in front of the camera. It gives you an opportunity to naturally interact with each other, which often leads to photos that feel relaxed and genuine.

This could be something simple like sharing a milkshake, ordering a pizza from your favourite shop, playing a quick game of pool, or mixing cocktails together. Some couples might go for a swim together in a lake or spend a few quiet moments in a hot tub towards the end of their session.

The activity itself doesn't need to (and shouldn't) be complicated. The best ideas are usually the ones that feel like something you'd naturally do together on a relaxed evening.

And of course, this is completely optional. Many couples simply enjoy a relaxed portrait session together, which is always just as lovely.



A few simple ideas:

- Opening wine and pouring a glass
- Going in a photo booth together
- Making espressos together at home
- Sitting on a dock together
- Playing cards
- Playing mini golf
- Working on a crossword together
- Playing with your pets
- Skipping stones on a lake
- A bonfire at your cottage
- Riding your bikes together



# Commonly Asked Questions

## *Is there anything we should do before our session?*

Try to leave a little earlier than you think you need to so traffic and parking don't add unnecessary stress. Arriving a few minutes early gives you time to settle in and relax before we begin.

Before we start shooting, it's also a good idea to empty your pockets of phones, keys, or wallets so they don't show through clothing. If we'll be outdoors, bringing bug spray can be helpful as well.

Many couples like to plan something fun afterward too, turning the evening into a date night.

## *What happens if the weather isn't ideal?*

If the forecast calls for heavy rain or extreme temperatures, we can absolutely reschedule your session. I keep a rain date available most weeks for this reason.

Because weather forecasts can be unreliable, we'll wait until the morning of your session to decide whether rescheduling is necessary if the conditions look uncertain.



## *Can we bring our dog to the session?*

Absolutely! If you have a pup who's part of your family, you're very welcome to include them in a few photos.

I usually recommend bringing a friend or family member along who can take your dog for a walk after we've captured those photos. This allows you to relax and focus on each other for the rest of the session.

Please also let me know ahead of time if you're planning to bring your dog, as some locations unfortunately aren't pet-friendly.



## A Few More Questions

### *Can we use two locations for our engagement session?*

I generally recommend choosing one location so we can make the most of our time together. If you're hoping to include two spots, they should be very close together with easy parking at both locations, as time spent travelling between locations would reduce the time we have for photos. Locations within a short walking distance can work well, especially if the route between them is through a nice area where we can continue taking photos along the way.

### *Do you travel outside of Ottawa for sessions?*

I'm based in Wakefield and sessions include up to 100km of travel, which covers a wide range of beautiful locations in and around Ottawa and the Gatineau Hills. There are so many lovely spots within that range that I'd encourage you to explore what's close to home first! If you have something in mind further afield, standard travel fees would apply, but I'd love to help you find a local location you're just as excited about.



### *Should we get hair and makeup done for our session?*

Professional hair and makeup can be a lovely way to feel a little extra confident in front of the camera. If you decide to book it, I recommend treating it as a separate appointment rather than combining it with your wedding trial, since a trial is really meant to test and refine your wedding-day look, so it's best to give that appointment its own time and attention. I'd also recommend booking those appointments earlier in the day and leaving plenty of buffer time before your session, since appointments can run long. Be sure to check the artist's cancellation and rescheduling policy in advance as well, since beauty appointments often can't be changed last minute. In some cases, weather may make it impossible for us to move forward with your session even if you're unable to cancel those appointments.

### *How far in advance should we book, and how do we secure our date?*

There's no need to rush to book right away, but if you have a particular month in mind, I do recommend securing your date sooner rather than later. Some months fill up quickly, and once a month is fully booked I'm not able to add additional dates. Sessions are booked through my online booking calendar and take place on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings from mid May through the end of October.



More than anything, I hope your session feels relaxed, meaningful, and true to who you are together.

I'm so looking forward to capturing this part of your story.

*Anita*

