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IMAGES, OSINT, SOCIAL MEDIA, TOOLS, UNCATEGORIZED

# Searching Instagram

Recently I presented at the ‘Dutch Osint Conference 2019’ (this year a closed event, but hopefully next year is going to be open for all!) about how to search on Instagram. I wanted to share with you the presentation I gave so you would be able to do basic searches on Instagram too.

It might look as a ‘long read’, but there are many pictures in the story, so don’t let the length of the blog scare you 😊 And also check out **part 2!**

## Before we start...

Although it’s not necessary to have an Instagram account in order to do some OSINT on Instagram, it might come in handy whenever you want to follow certain hashtags or profiles.

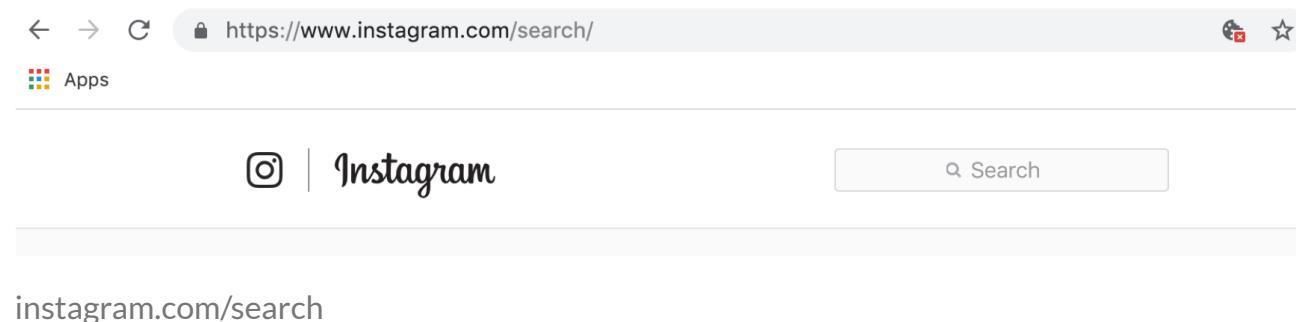
Creating an account is possible via the mobile app, but you can also use the website to create a profile. You can use your email or your Facebook account to create an account.

For most of what I'm showing you, you won't need a log in. If you need to log in, I'll show this little blue 'Log In' button in the top left of the screenshot.

## Search bar

Just visit any random Instagram-profile in order to find the search bar on top. You don't need to be logged on for this.

E.g. [Instagram.com/search](https://www.instagram.com/search/) will give you a private profile, but you'll see the search bar appearing on top.

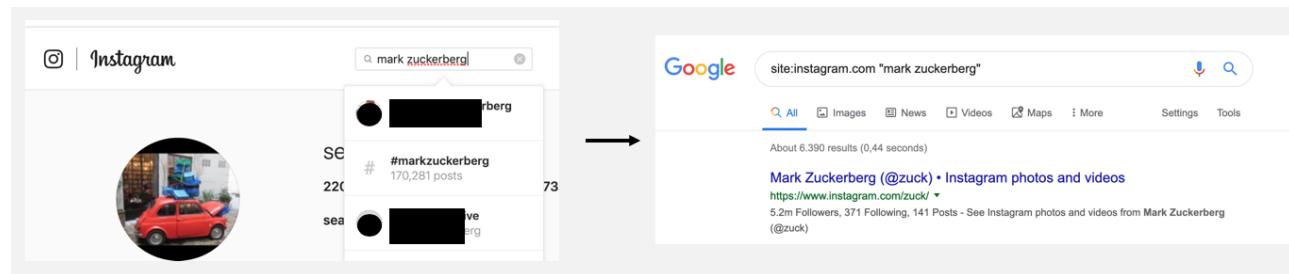


instagram.com/search

## Searching for people

Searching for people on Instagram might not be so efficient as it seems.

E.g. when looking for ‘Mark Zuckerberg’, I get a random profile before the actual real ‘Mark Zuckerberg’. Google, or any other search engine, might be a better source to use. Use Google Dorks like ‘site:Instagram.com “mark zuckerberg”.



Left: search results in Instagram  
Right: search results in Google

There are also a lot of websites that offer you the possibility to search for content on Instagram. **Picdeer.com** is one of many that offer you the option to search for users.

This makes it a little easier since the hashtags and users aren’t mixed up in the search results like Instagram.com is showing you. Now you’ll see a list of hashtags on the left hand side and users on the right.

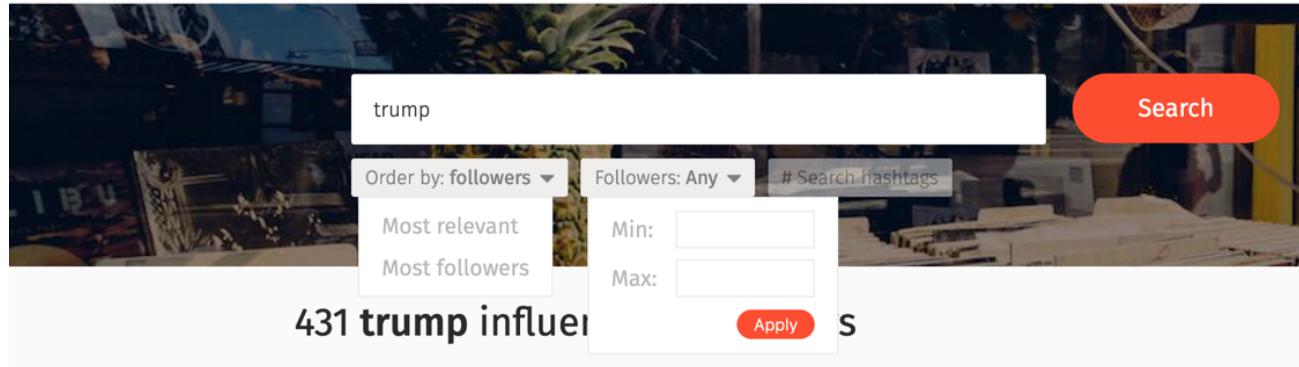
Again, there are many many more sites like this; [pictame.com](#), [sometag.com](#) are one of many.

The screenshot shows the Picdeer.com homepage with a brown header bar containing navigation links: Home, Popular, Search, Statistics, Instagram Lists, and About. Below the header is a logo of a white deer head and the text "Browse Instagram content with Picdeer". The main content area has two sections: "Tags for mark zuckerberg" on the left and "Users for mark zuckerberg" on the right. Under "Tags", there are three items: "#markzuckerberg" (170.281 posts), "#markzuckerbergmemes" (4.298 posts), and "#markzuckerbergquotes" (567 posts). Under "Users", there are two user profiles: "Mark Zuckerberg" (@zuck) with a profile picture showing him smiling, and another user whose profile picture is blacked out. The entire screenshot is framed by a white border.

Search results on Picdeer.com

If you are looking for a certain type of users, let's say people who belong to a group or follow a religion, it might be interesting to search for what people state in their bio. [Searchmy.bio](#) helps you do just that. This search engine will only search in the bio-section of user profiles.

You can sort ‘most followers’ or ‘most relevant’, choose a minimum or maximum of followers in your results and choose to include hashtags too.



Searchmy.bio

When you've found a profile of your interest, there are some helpful addons you could use.

Starting with '**Helpertools for Instagram**', a Google Chrome addon.

In the example below I've used the profile of Mark Zuckerberg, **@zuck**. 'Helptools for Instagram' is a partly free. I haven't used the paid version yet. There are a couple of options which are really nice; you can compare two profiles with each other. Those profiles do need to be open in order for the tool to work its magic. Depending on the amount of following/followers, it can sometimes take a while. This is because Helpertools has put in a 'pause' to prevent Instagram from detecting the tool.

But my favorite option is a small option which might not catch your eye at first; ‘Business account’.

In Marks case, it’s marked as ‘false’ which means he doesn’t have one.

Having a ‘Business account’ is something different than a ‘verified’ account. Changing your profile to ‘business’ is a setting you can personally change. Instagram does not verify any of the information.

The screenshot shows a web-based Instagram analysis tool. On the left, under the heading '1. Analyze' for the user 'zuck', there is a section for 'Business account' which is marked as 'false'. An arrow points from this section to the right side of the interface. The right side shows sections for 'COUNT LIKES/COMMENTS!', 'FOLLOW/UNFOLLOW TOOL!', 'LIKE THE POSTS!', and '4. Find Common Users'.

**1. Analyze**

Username: zuck

Scope:

- All
- Following
- Followers

Limit the amount of followers/following: 0

Id: 314216

Follows you: false

Private: false

Last post date: 17/05/2019, 10:07:33...

Business account: false

**GET LIST OF USERS!**

Create a list of users (followers and following) of your or another account. You are not able to create a list of the private account you do not follow.

**1. Analyze**

**COUNT LIKES/COMMENTS!**

Count the likes/comments in your profile or somebody else public profile or private profile you can follow. This can help to find more engaged users.

**2. Follow/Unfollow**

**FOLLOW/UNFOLLOW TOOL!**

After creating lists of users you can specify User IDs or User Names to follow and unfollow with specific time intervals.

**3. Like The Posts**

**LIKE THE POSTS!**

Like all the posts in your feed or of a specific user or with a specific hashtag (premium).

**4. Find Common Users**

Username: zuck

Second user: <<YOU>>

**FIND COMMON USERS!**

**BLOCK/UNBLOCK TOOL!**

**README!**

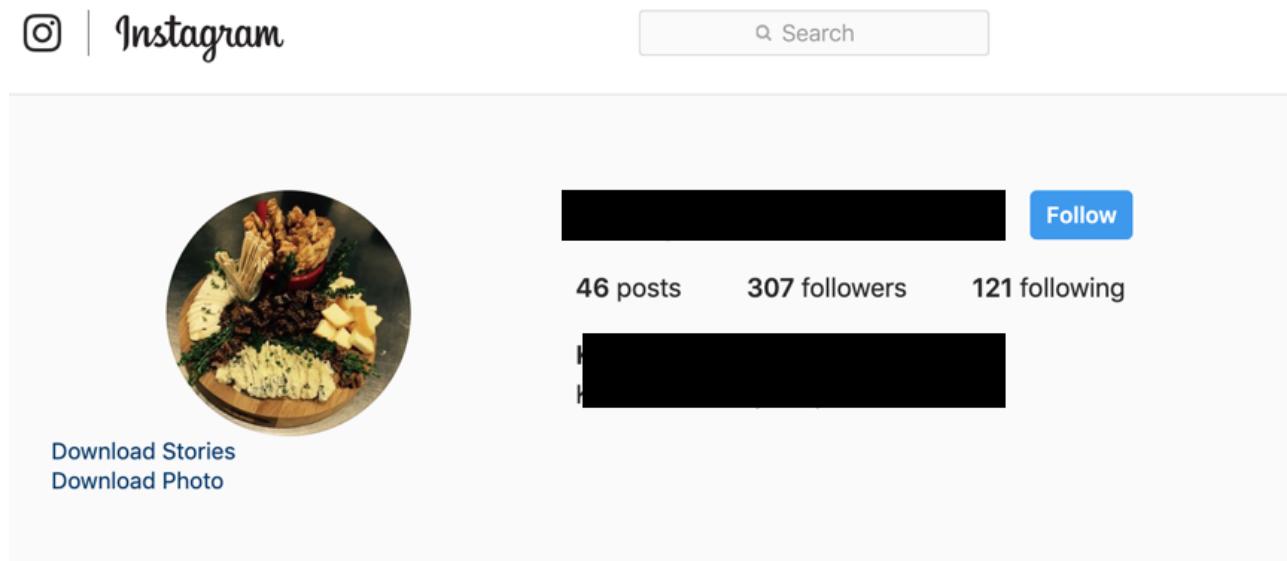
**OPTIONS!**

**FULL DESCRIPTION!**

Results from 'Helpertools for Instagram'

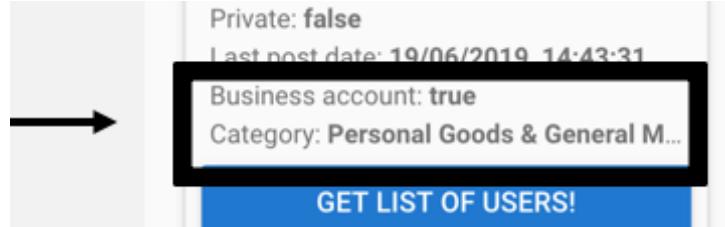
So Marks account is not a business account. So we want to look at an account which is.

Let's take a look at an account of a local cheese shop in the Netherlands; take a look at the profile; can you see any contact details? Nope!



No contact details are shown

Let's check Helpertools to see if it is a business account...



Yes it is!

We can even see which category they've put their profile in. But wait, there is more!

To see more info, you'll now need to create a profile or **log on** to your profile. On a **mobile phone** (or good emulator) with an internet connection.

So know that we know it's a business profile, we can look into more information.

So we now open the mobile app and are logged on. (I've used an Android app).

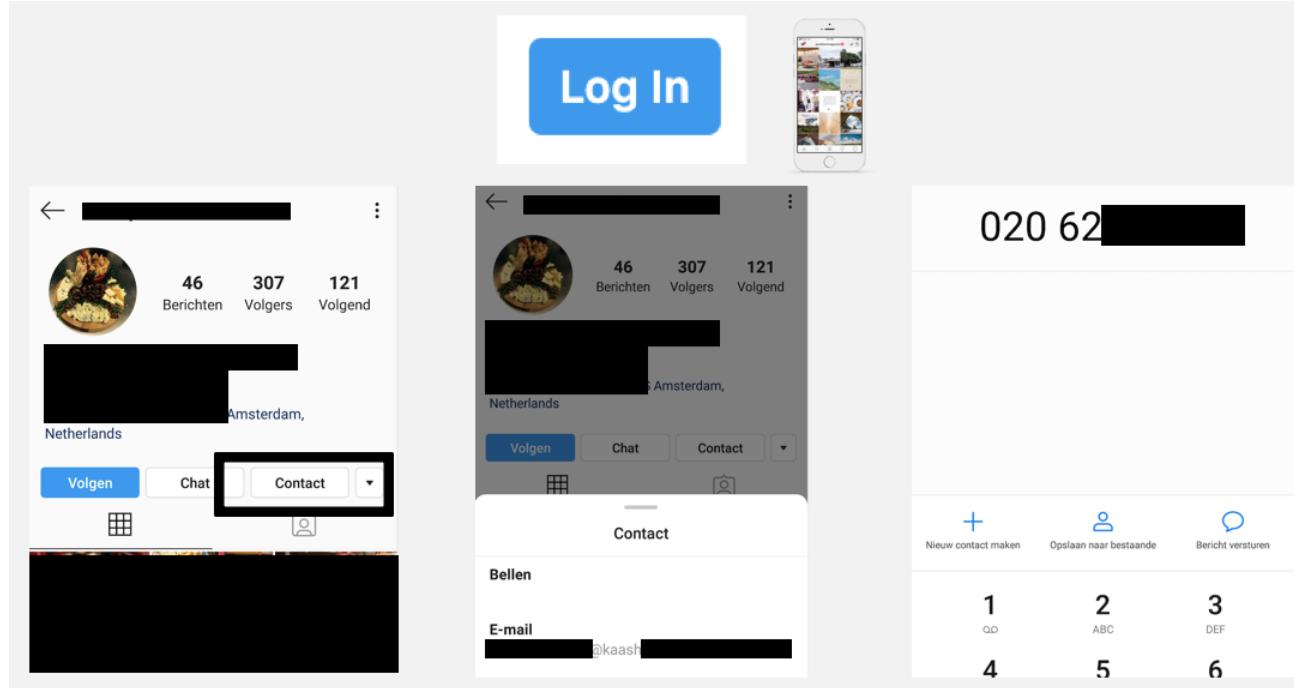
Visiting the profile of the cheese shop you'll now see some buttons under the bio. One of them is 'Contact'. If click on 'Contact' a pop-up will appear and show you any contact details linked to the profile (which

are filled in by the owner). So now we see an email address which wasn't visible before!

But wait, there is another button 'Call' (Bellen), and this will show you the phone number!

So from going to zero contact details, we now have an email address and phone number.

Remember; when just looking at the profile via the website, we would have missed this information!



1. Open the mobile app while being logged on
2. Open the profile and check the 'Contact' tab
3. Press 'call' (bellen) to see a phone number or 'Email' to see the email address

If you want to do an analysis of a profile, **statflux.com** might be able to help you out there a little. It will show you some details which you are able to find on the profile, but it also gives you insight in some other details like average likes and comments.

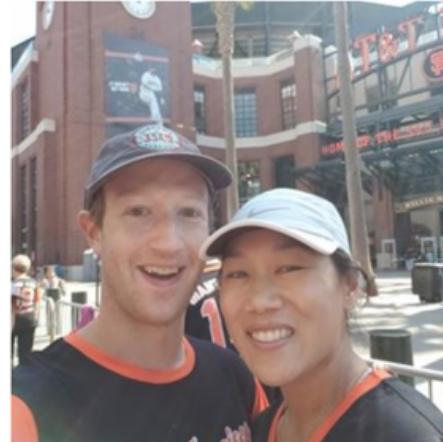
It also gives you the 'Most liked' and the 'Most comments' posts.

When looking at a profile with a lot of posts and you don't know which post might be interesting for you, Statflux.com can help you out.

 Most Liked



 Most Comments



Example of @zuck on Statflux.com

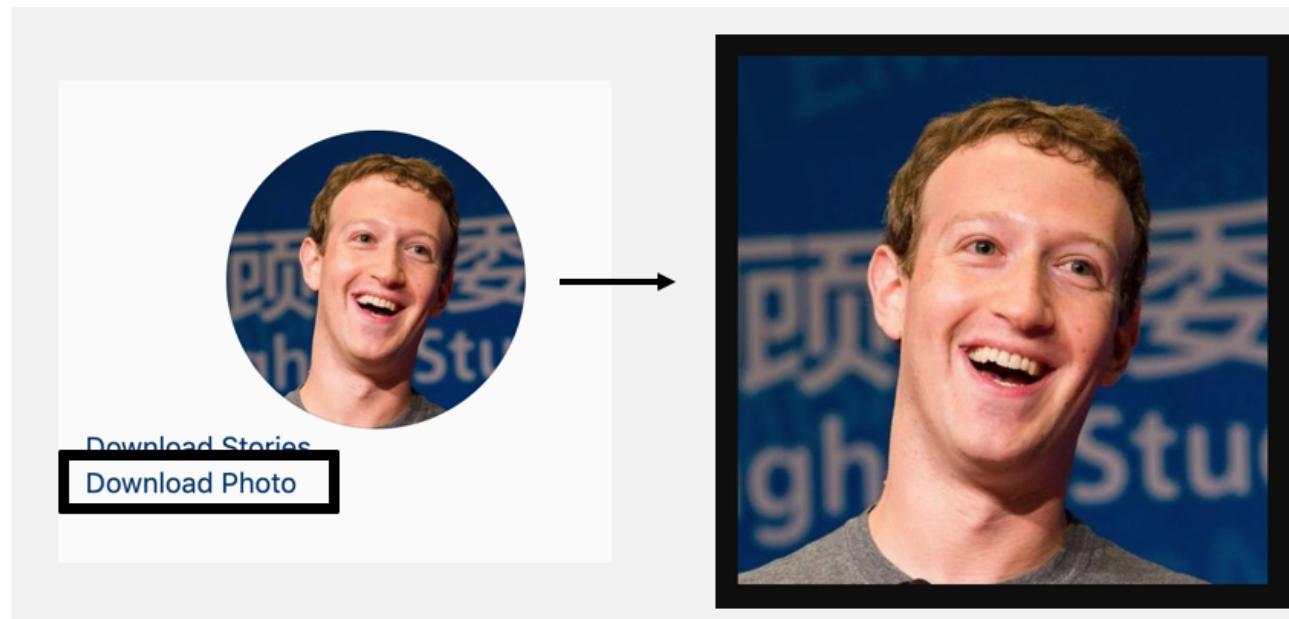
## Enlarging profile pictures and downloading pictures of an account

Instagram has a cropped profile picture (circle). But sometimes you want to have the full photo because this will give just a little more details about what's happening in the back of the photo or maybe who else is in the picture.

There is a way to retrieve this from the source code, but the addon '**DownAlbum**' does the trick too.

Not only can it help you with Instagram, but it also works for Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, Ask.fm and Weibo. DownAlbum can help you enlarge a profile picture very easy;

When installed, just underneath the profile picture there will appear a button 'Download photo'. Click on the link and a new page will open, showing you the larger profile picture which you can use to further investigate.



Example of 'DownAlbum'

‘DownAlbum’ offers you an option to download photos too. When you click on a photo, the text ‘Download Photo’ will appear. When clicking it, it will open a new page showing you a slightly larger photo. Just right click and save the photo.

Another option is the website ‘[instasave.io](https://instasave.io)’, type in the username of the profile you’re interested in and hit the ‘download’ button beneath each photo to save the photo.

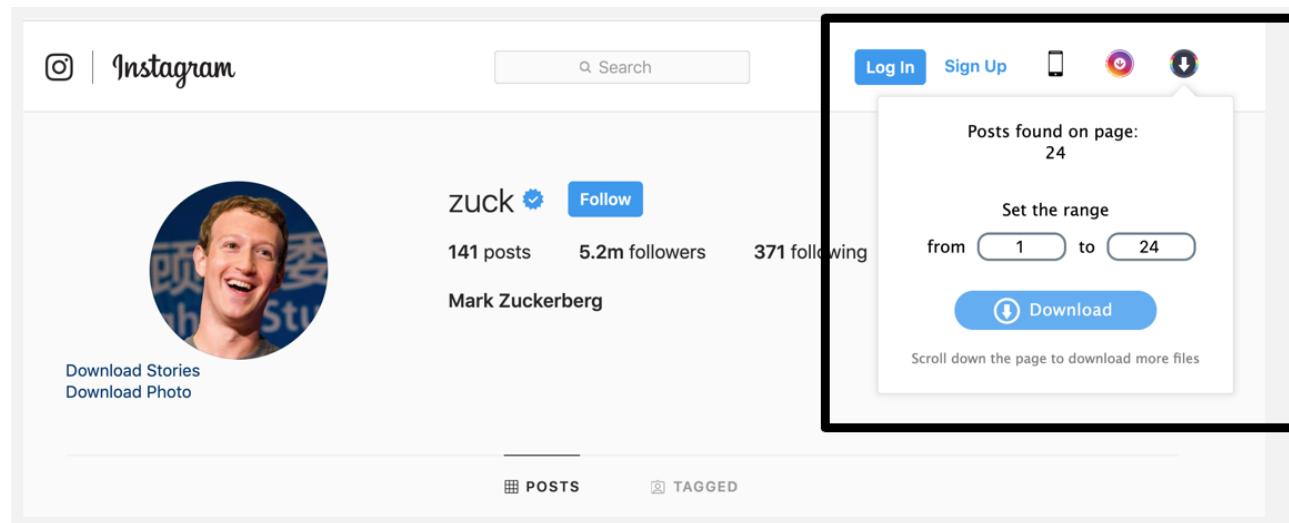
Both options are just a one-by-one downloader.

Do you want to download all possible photos on a profile?

There is a Google Chrome addon called ‘[Downloader for Instagram + Direct Message](#)’ which can help you bulk download photos.

When the addon is installed, you’ll see a button in the upright corner. Choose the far right button in order to download the complete profile. Make sure to have load the page fully in order to download everything. As you see in this example; Zuckerberg has 141 posts, but the tool indicates there are only 24. If you load the page completely, you’ll be able to download all the photos. You can customise the range.

Also: don't forget the 'Tagged' section on Instagram! This does require that you log in, but sometimes gives you great insight in other pictures. The 'Tagged' section can be found under the bio, next to the 'Posts' section.



Shown on the right: Downloader for Instagram + Direct Message

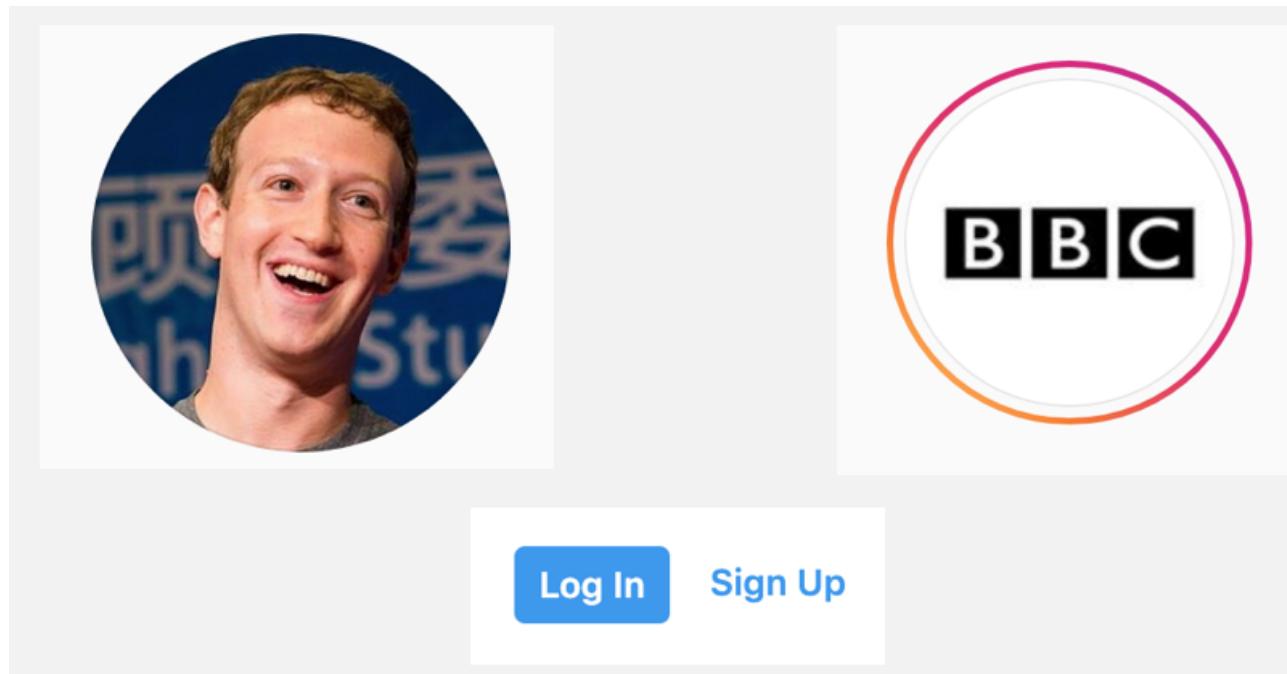
## Instagram Stories

Instagram Stories are Snapchat-like short video's or photo's. You can edit the video/photo with stickers, text, color and GIFs. (Want to know more about 'Stories'? Check out [this article](#) for Buffer by [Ash Read](#)) Standard the stories are visible for 24 hours, but you can 'Highlight'

them people can see it for a longer period of time. Those ‘Highlights’ can be categorised.

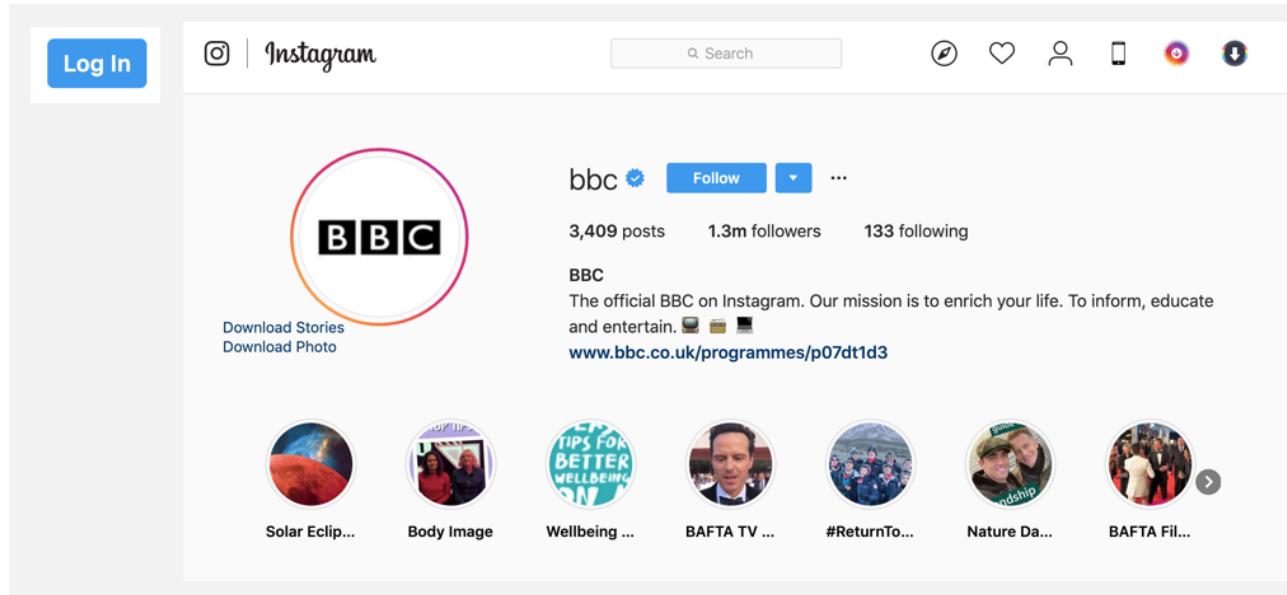
You can recognise if a profile has stories by looking at the profile picture. If there is a coloured circle around it, it indicates that the profile has stories.

If you want to view those stories, you’ll have to log in.



Left: @zuck's profile does not have a story  
Right: @bbc profile has got a story

Sometimes profiles have those highlighted stories categorised. You'll see those stories just underneath the bio.  
Click on a category to view the stories.



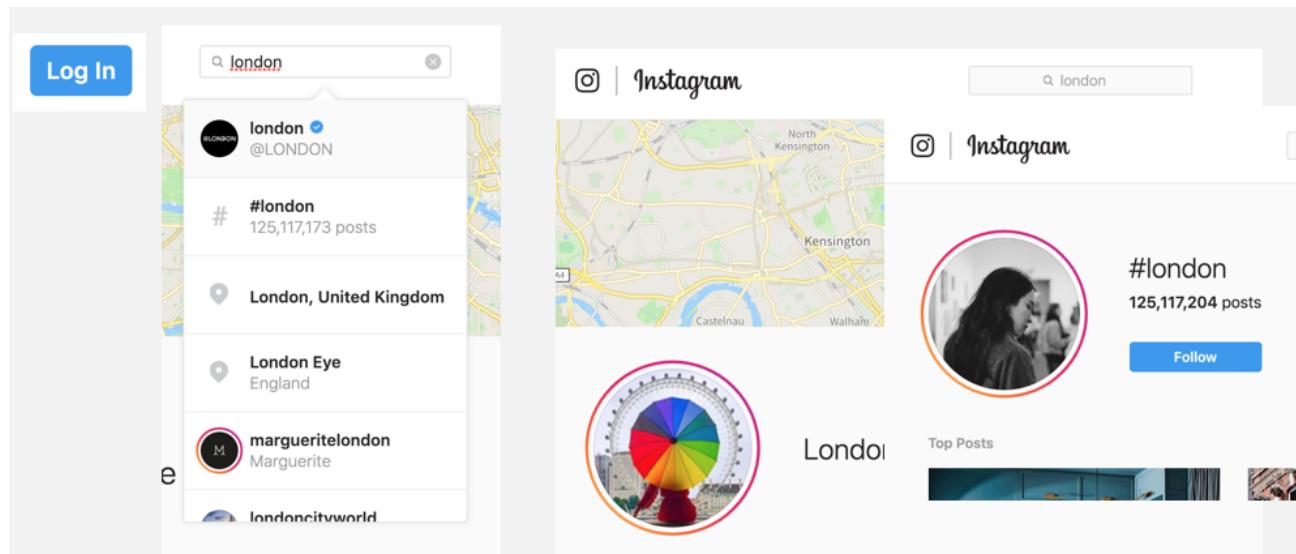
Below the bio you'll find the categorised highlights

## Searching for Stories

Searching for stories is only possible if the stories are tagged with a location or hashtag.

The website offers you an opportunity to search for the stories; if you

search for a hashtag or location in the search bar on top of the website, you'll see one round photo with the coloured circle around it. Click on the photo in order to see the stories matching that specific tag or location.



Search results on Instagram

Searching for stories is a little bit easier, I think, when using the Google Chrome addon '**Downloader for Instagram**'.

When installed, in the top right, you'll see a small icon with the Instagram colours.

Click on the logo in order to open up a new page where you'll see the

menu as seen on the screenshot; you'll now have the option to look at your friends stories, their top live video's, locations and do some searches.

I've searched for the hashtag 'Amsterdam' and selected the one with the little flag at the end.

The screenshot shows a mobile application interface for 'Downloader for Instagram'. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'Log In' button, 'Friends' icon, 'Top lives' icon, 'Locations' icon, and a 'Search' bar containing the text 'amsterdam'. Below the search bar are three buttons: 'Find users', 'Find tags', and 'Find places'. The search results are listed below, each consisting of a hashtag icon (#), a tag name, and a black eye icon to its right. The result 'amsterdam' is highlighted with a blue background, while the others are white. The highlighted result has a small flag icon next to it.

Hashtag	Action
#amsterdam	Eye icon (highlighted)
#amsterdamfood	Eye icon
#amsterdamtattoo	Eye icon
#amsterdam	Eye icon (highlighted, with flag)
#amsterdammer	Eye icon

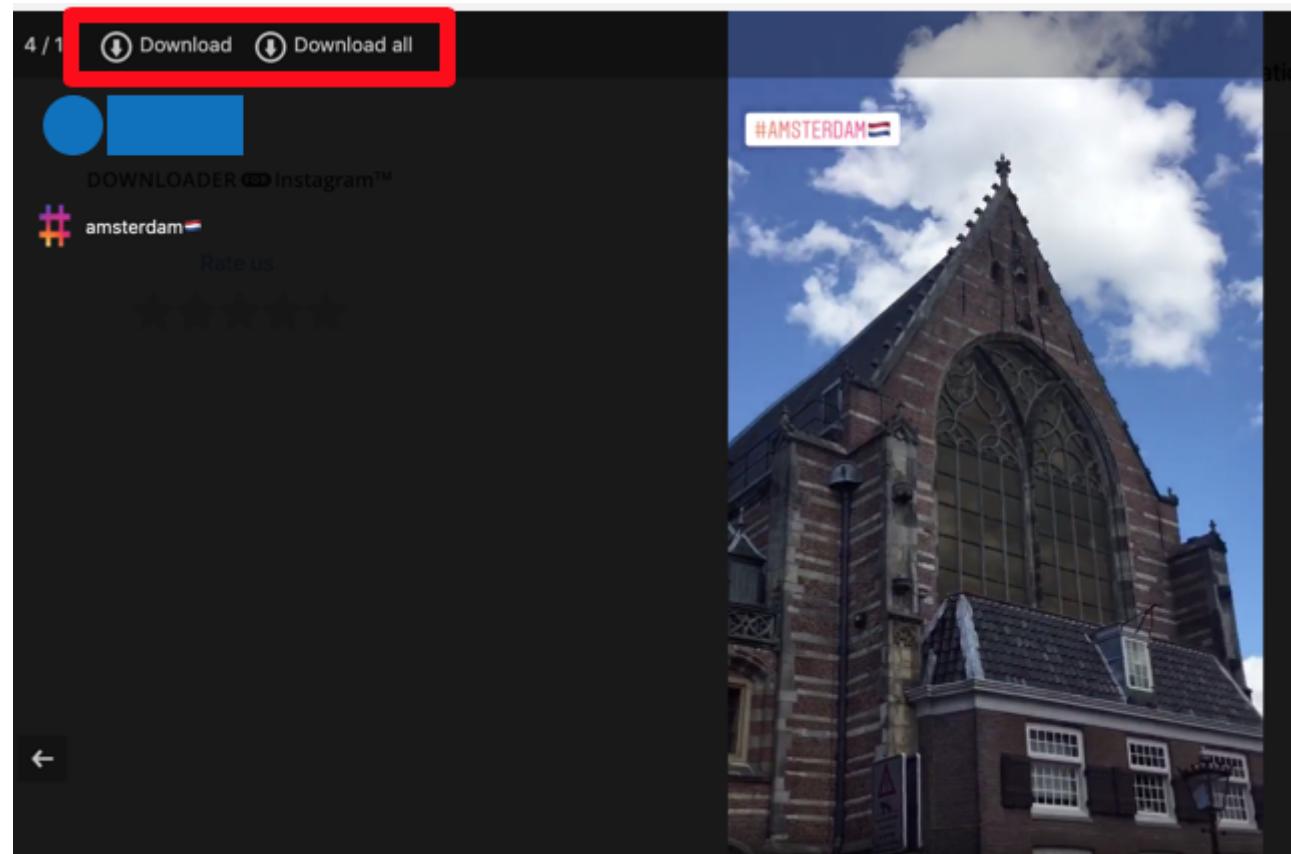
Search results with 'Downloader for Instagram'

When I just click on the result, you won't immediately see the Stories. Click on the little black eye-icon, and you'll see the stories immediately.

By using the arrows (left and right key) you can switch between the stories.

The user who uploaded the story is shown on the left (in the screenshot blurred in blue).

And very helpful; Downloader for Instagram gives you (in the top left) again the opportunity to download just one or all stories connected to the hashtag.



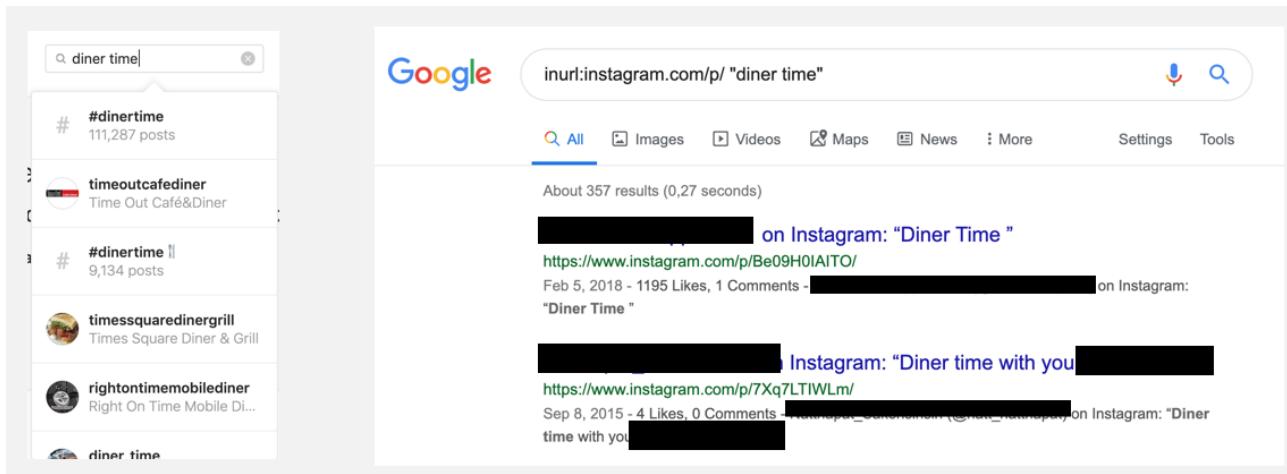
Download the stories by using the buttons in the top right corner

# Searching for keywords

If you're not looking for hashtags, but just words used in general, Instagram might not be the best place to search, as you can see in the screenshot below on the left.

Google, or any other search engine, might be a better solution. For Google use the operator:

*Inurl:instagram.com/p/ "keyword"* (replace ‘keyword’ by any keyword you like). In the example I choose for ‘diner time’.



Left: searching for keywords in Instagram  
Right: searching for keywords in Google

Now you see that one of the results includes the words ‘diner time’. Diner time is not used as a hashtag. So if you would have searched for these keywords in the Instagram search bar, you wouldn’t have found this post.



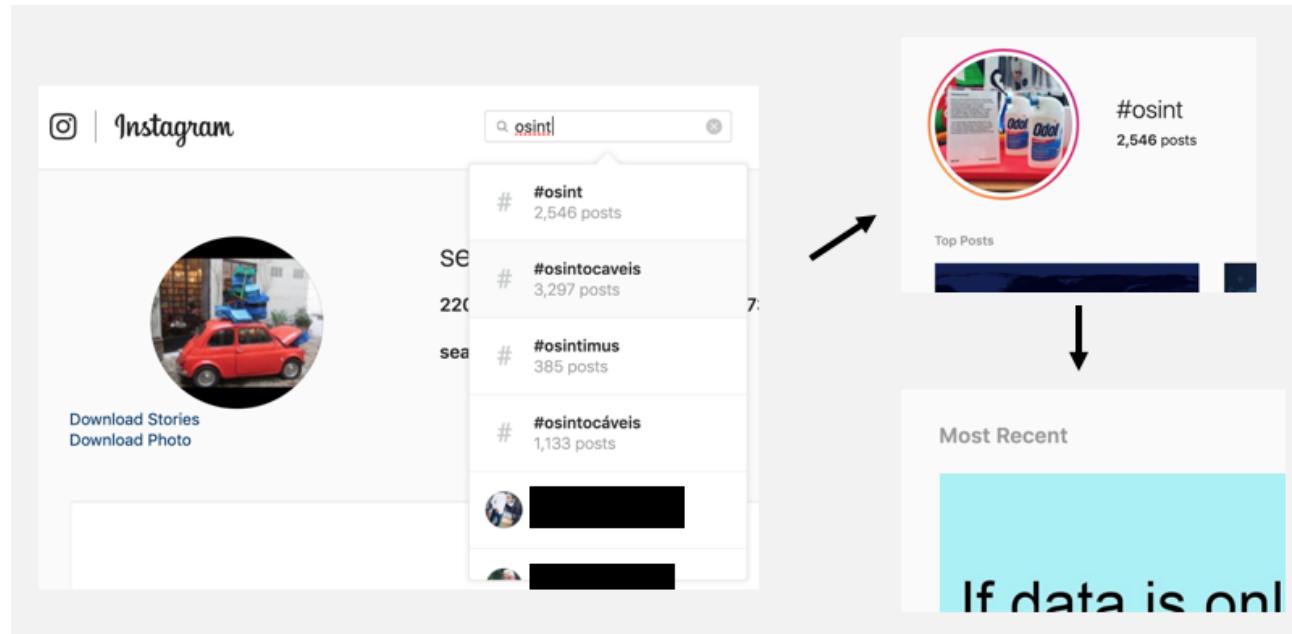
Google search result

## Searching for hashtags

When you’ve selected a result, in this case a hashtag, make sure not just to check to the first few photos. These will be the ‘Top’ (most popular) photos and won’t always give you what you’re looking for. Instead, scroll down to see ‘Most Recent’.

To specifically search for hashtags, use the #-symbol. (e.g. #osint)

Also; there are many, many website to help you search for hashtags used on Instagram. Sites like [pictame.com](#) and [hashatit.com](#) are just a few of them.

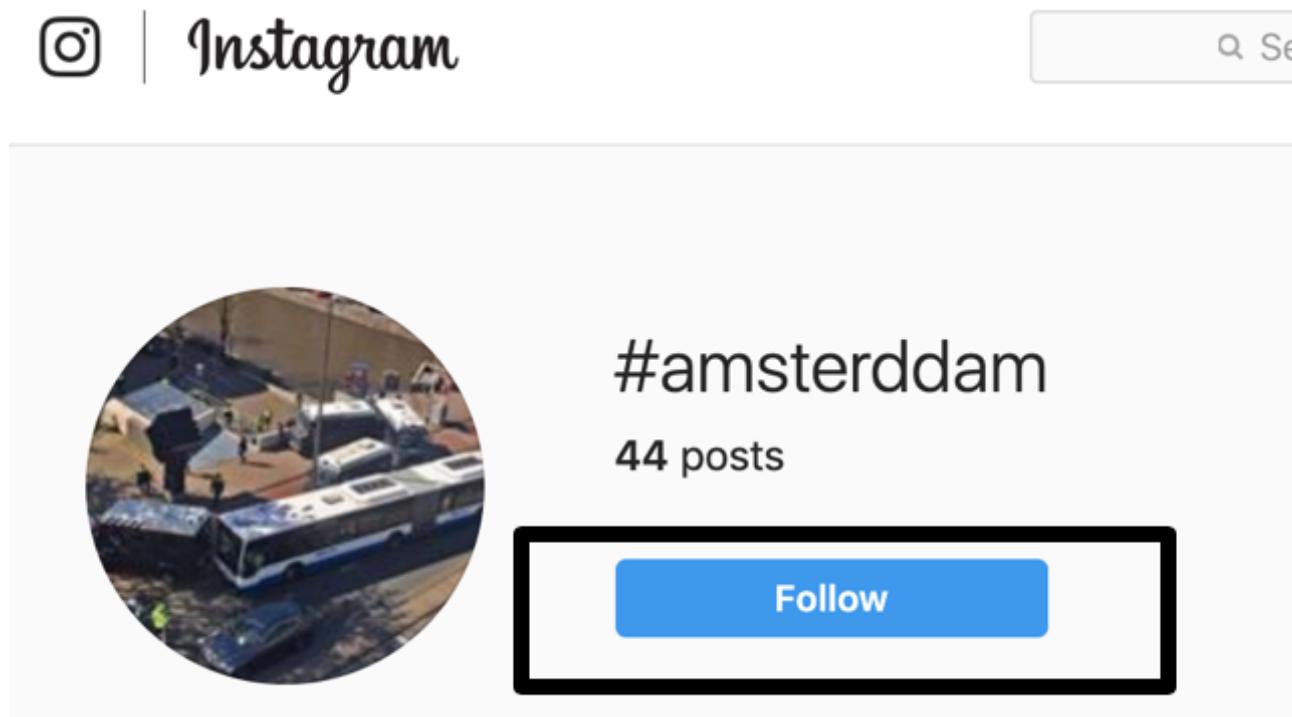


Search of hashtags on Instagram, scroll down to 'Most recent'

## Following hashtags

When you've found a specific hashtag and you want to be kept up to date, make sure to log in and press 'Follow' in order to follow the posts

that are connected to that specific hashtag.  
In order to follow a hashtag, you'll need to log in.

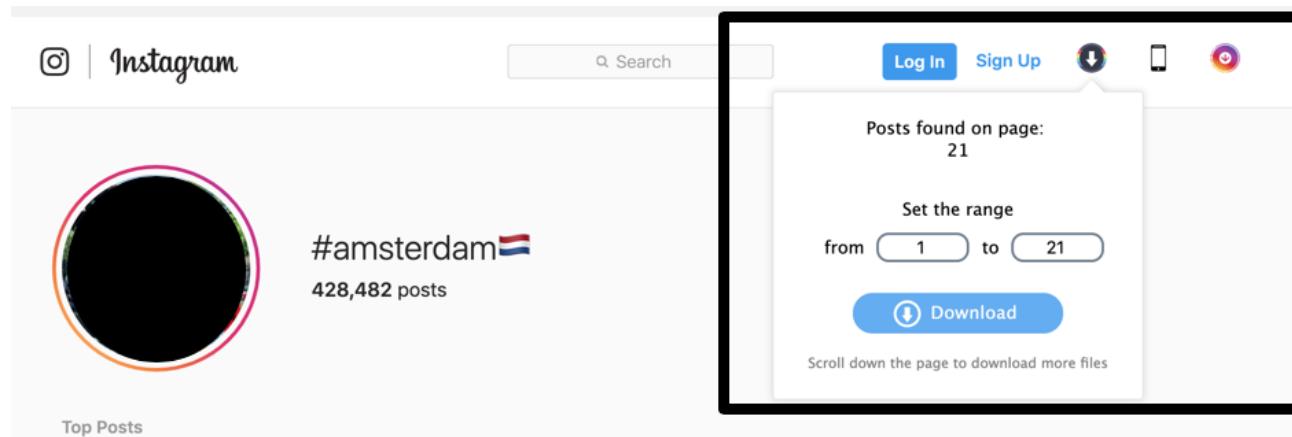


How to follow a hashtag on Instagram

## Download hashtags

Downloading hashtags is very easy when using the Google Chrome addon '[Downloader for Instagram](#)'.

Load the page to the extent that you'd like and use the addon to download the posts linked to the hashtag.



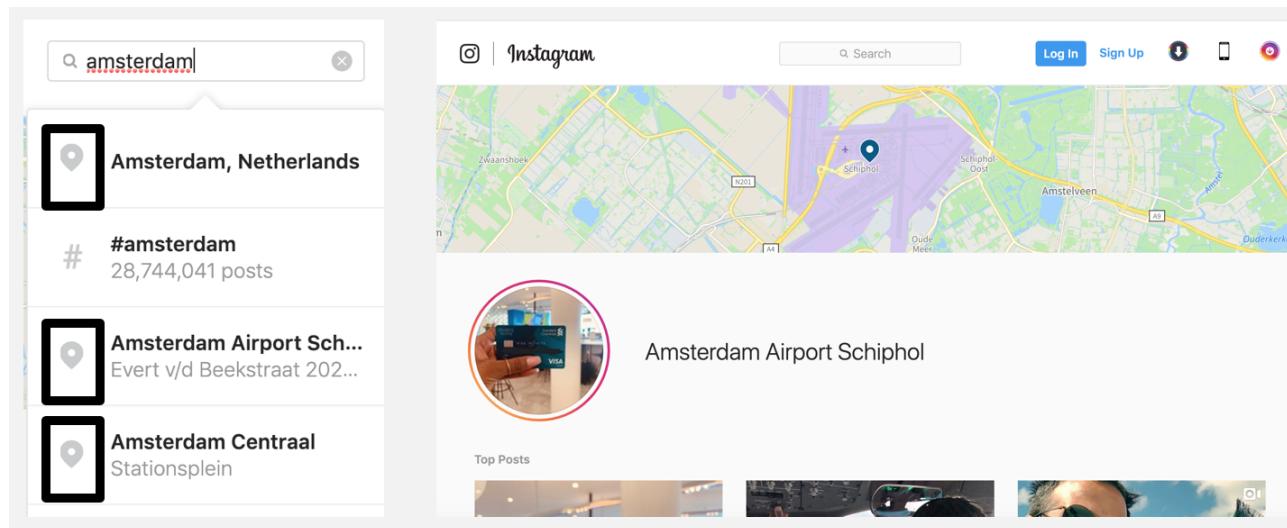
Download the posts tagged with a hashtag by using 'Downloader for Instagram'

## Searching for locations

Searching for locations can be done via the search bar on top of the website. You can recognize a location by the 'drop'-icon.

Select a location to see what Stories are posted from that location and what other posts are from that location.

Attention: you don't physically have to be at that location. You can choose any location you like. So a picture of me, standing in front of Amsterdam Central Station can have the location of Time Square New York, just because I told Instagram the picture was taken there. If you want to add a location to your photo, you'll have to give Instagram permission to your location data.

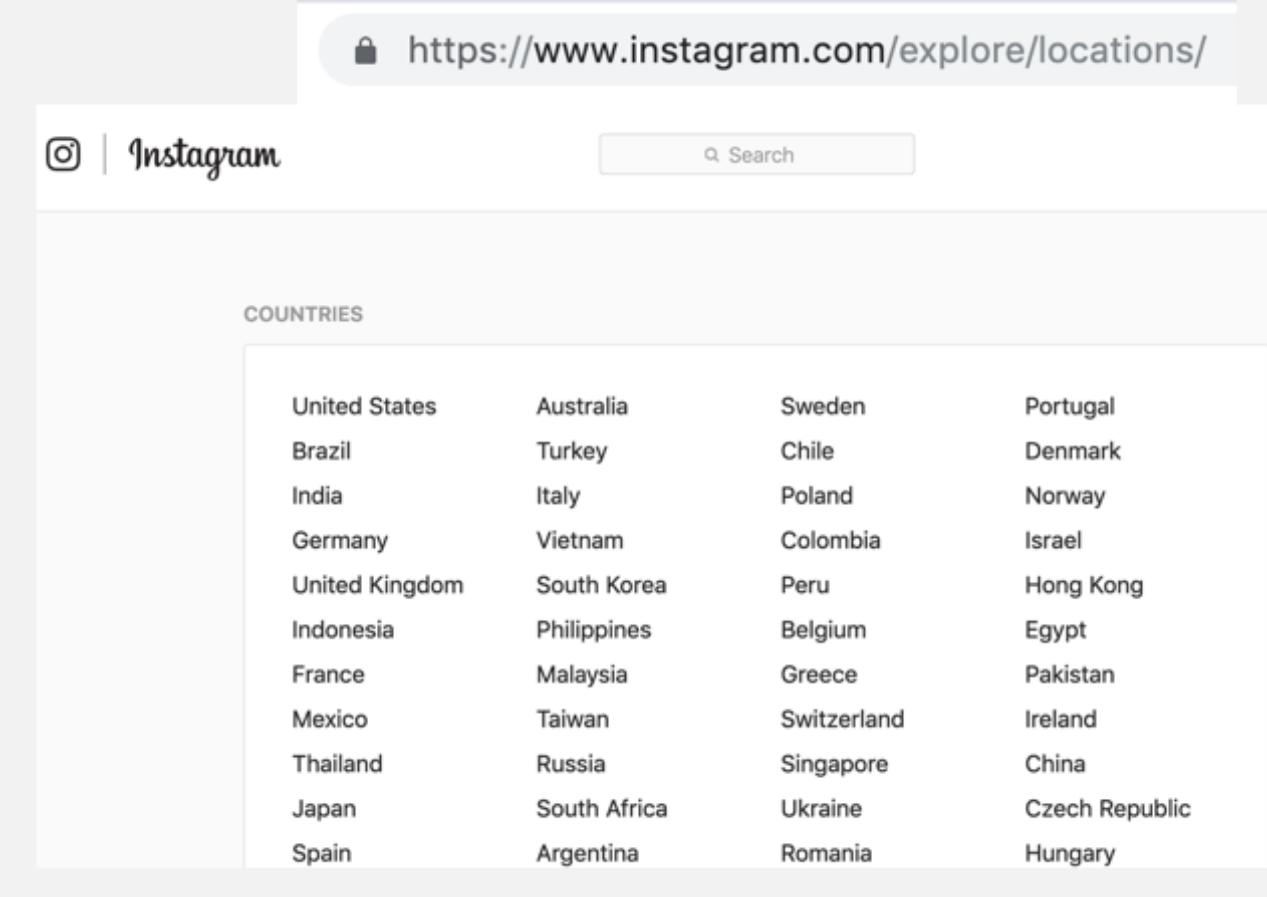


Search results of locations on Instagram

Not sure if the location you're looking for is on Instagram? Or you might not have the right spelling;

Check out [Instagram.com/explore/locations/](https://Instagram.com/explore/locations/)

A list of countries is shown below. Select the country of interest and select a city you're interested in.



The screenshot shows a web browser window for Instagram at the URL <https://www.instagram.com/explore/locations/>. The Instagram logo is visible at the top left, and a search bar is at the top right. Below the header, the word "COUNTRIES" is centered above a grid of 20 country names arranged in four columns. The countries listed are: United States, Australia, Sweden, Portugal; Brazil, Turkey, Chile, Denmark; India, Italy, Poland, Norway; Germany, Vietnam, Colombia, Israel; United Kingdom, South Korea, Peru, Hong Kong; Indonesia, Philippines, Belgium, Egypt; France, Malaysia, Greece, Pakistan; Mexico, Taiwan, Switzerland, Ireland; Thailand, Russia, Singapore, China; Japan, South Africa, Ukraine, Czech Republic; Spain, Argentina, Romania, Hungary. Each country name is a link, as indicated by the blue color and underlines.

United States	Australia	Sweden	Portugal
Brazil	Turkey	Chile	Denmark
India	Italy	Poland	Norway
Germany	Vietnam	Colombia	Israel
United Kingdom	South Korea	Peru	Hong Kong
Indonesia	Philippines	Belgium	Egypt
France	Malaysia	Greece	Pakistan
Mexico	Taiwan	Switzerland	Ireland
Thailand	Russia	Singapore	China
Japan	South Africa	Ukraine	Czech Republic
Spain	Argentina	Romania	Hungary

Filter on country and city in order to see what locations there are in a specific city

# Searching for older posts tagged to a location

An OSINT enthusiast has shared this video with me on how to find Instagram posts of a location, within a certain time frame. I must say that it is quite complex, but even though the video was posted in 2017, it partially still works in 2019!

Check out the video here: <https://youtu.be/FYnfKghpJBw>

And the Python script here:

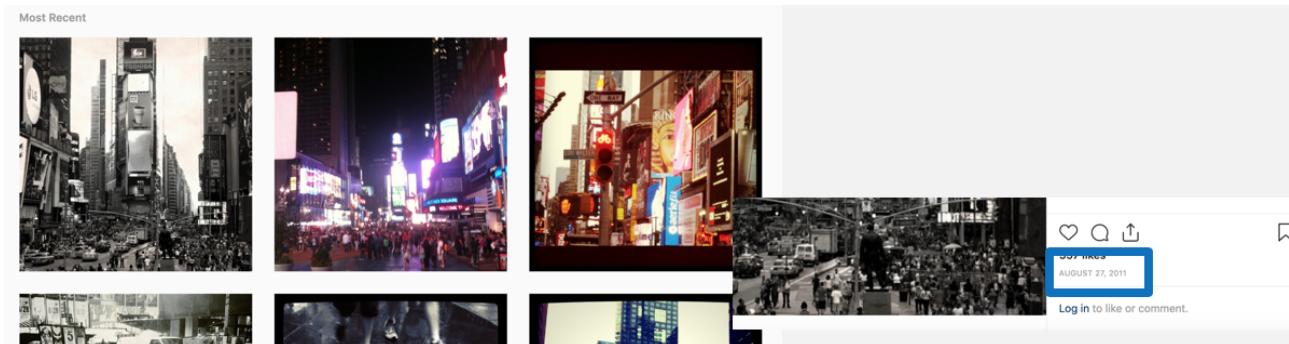
<https://repl.it/repls/FormalYellowgreenLinux>

In the video a mathematical som is explained on how to calculate the date you're interested in. When you've got the date, you can search of the location you're interested in.

Take a look at the URL, at the end you're going to add; '?max\_id=' followed by the number you've calculated

E.G. [https://www.instagram.com/explore/locations/3001373/times-square-new-york-city/?max\\_id=1817012758118400](https://www.instagram.com/explore/locations/3001373/times-square-new-york-city/?max_id=1817012758118400)

Scroll down to the ‘Most recent’ section in order to see the older posts.



The photo on the left is from August 27th 2011, but is shown as the first result in the ‘Most recent’ section

## That's it!

This were some basic methods to search Instagram.

Of course there are about a million other ways, methods, websites, addons and scripts you could use to make searching Instagram easier for you. If your favorite method or trick is not mentioned in the blog above, please feel free to leave a comment below! This way we can all learn 😊

Ready for more?! **Check out part 2** on how to search Instagram!

P.S. Liked this posted? Support us via **Patreon** from just \$1 a month!

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TECHNISETTE

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2019-07-16

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#ADDON, #IMINT, #INSTAGRAM, # INSTAGRAM POSTS, # INSTAGRAM STORIES, # SEARCH, #SEARCH  
INSTAGRAM, #SEARCHING INSTAGRAM, #SOCMINT, #SOURCING

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SHARE THIS:



---

LIKE THIS:



2 bloggers like this.

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## Related



## Searching Instagram - part 2

IN "GEOLOCATION"



## Muting the Twitter algorithm and using basic search operators for better OSINT research

IN "BROWSER"



## The new Facebook Graph Search - part 1

## 3 thoughts on “Searching Instagram”

Avalon

2019-08-16 AT 10:12

Hi I wanted to ask if you know a hack on how to find another account that was tagged onto an instagram story and if there's a search engine for it? So for instance, let's say a fan tagged @kyliejenner onto their instagram story, how do I search for that easily and not for just that fan but for anyone that tags @kyliejenner? Thank you!



REPLY

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technisette

2019-08-18 AT 10:25

Hi Avalon! Thank you for your question. As far as I know there is no solution for searching for tags in Stories. The only tags you can see are tags in (public) posts. but if you found some kind of a workaround, would love to know :)! Thanks! Technisette

 Like

REPLY

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**sagartrivedi**

2019-10-12 AT 07:12

Honestly speaking Very informative and useful article! Thank you so much for taking the time to write such a comprehensive article. I think I got all the information I was looking for. Thanks for this wonderful piece of article and keep posting.

 Like

REPLY

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PREVIOUS

**How to search effectively and efficiently – Part I: basic principles, tips and tricks for OSINT**

NEXT

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