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LATIN AMERICAN FILM COMMISSIONS
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FILMING
IN LATIN AMERICA'S
BIG CITIES

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FILMING IN LATIN AMERICA'S BIG CITIES

Dynamic. Chaotic. Culturally active. Architecturally attractive. The big cities in Latin America are often the setting for national and international shootings. This poses constant challenges for the Film Commissions that strive to offer services in order to facilitate the producers' work, and at the same time look for ways to make the cities attractive and competitive since they understand the benefits of turning them into film sets. We offer an overview of the work of Film Commissions in some of the most crowded cities in the region. By Cynthia García Calvo.

With more than 12 million inhabitants, São Paulo is one of the main megacities in Latin America. The chaos is constant. Air traffic is increasing . The dynamism of the city never stops. Given this scenario, the São Paulo Film Commission has sought to organize the shootings with the help of technology. Its official website is a user-friendly tool that allows filming permits to be requested, specifying the corresponding fees that vary according to the type of production. In addition, it also has an app that provides access to public locations that are available, and in a second phase will include private locations as well.

"The three main difficulties to shoot in this giant metropolis are without a doubt the traffic, the management of public places and the population", points out Tammy Weiss, coordinator of the São Paulo Film Commission that reports to Spcine, a government-owned company that focuses on the development and promotion of the audiovisual industry. In the case of traffic, the challenge is to make a shooting compatible with the number of events that take place in the city, public transport, bike lanes and everything related to the daily movement of one of the most populated cities in the world. In the case of the

use of public places and their relationship with the population, the institution works on raising awareness so that people understand the importance of allowing filming in their streets.

According to data from the São Paulo Film Commission, in a year and a half around 1,400 audiovisual productions took place in 5,270 locations, generating more than 30 thousand jobs. Advertising has the highest number of requests (665), followed by short films and TV programs, with 207 and 125 each respectively. Further back, documentaries (94) and feature films (56), with an important presence of a growing sector: web series (60). Recent productions include the Brazilian series for Netflix "3%" and the national feature "Nada a perder" ("Nothing to lose"), shot for five months in no less than 82 locations in the city.

Despite the great demand at a national level, São Paulo now aims to get attention of projects from abroad. "We are in the process of looking for incentive mechanisms via cash rebate and tax rebate to attract the international market," says Weiss, who remembers in particular two major challenges with foreign productions: the series "Sense 8", which demanded management and

coordination work for three months so they could film at the LGBT parade, and an advertisement that required closing one of the main avenues of the city in order to create an apocalyptic setting.

The capital of Mexico is the second most populated city in Latin America. CFilma, the Film Commission of Mexico City, is in charge of facilitating and making filming more friendly in a city of 9 million inhabitants, with a metropolitan area of more than 20 million inhabitants.

"The main challenge for our committee has been to bring productions closer to the public and ensure that the shootings develop in peace," notes Mauricio Maiolo Aguinaco Rodríguez, General Manager of CFilma. "This has been achieved with the implementation of security protocols, civil protection and strict adherence to civic culture, which help productions reduce their impact in the community in which they take place," he adds. One of the examples of these actions are the agreements reached to implement signage that identifies the filming on public roads and facilitate the free circulation of pedestrians and vehicles, thus reducing the number of neighborhood complaints and relieving the traffic flow. "The result of these actions has been the creation of a new and growing film culture," he states.

The Zócalo Capitalino, Ángel de la Independencia, Paseo de la Reforma, Alameda Central, Kiosco Morisco, Parque España, Parque México and the center of Coyoacán, Tlalpan or Xochimilc are the most requested locations for audiovisual productions, mostly advertising and television. However, cinema has a strong presence. This year, a blockbuster like "Godzilla: King of the Monsters" made a stop in Mexico City. The pre-production in Mexico -which won the tug of war with Guatemala- lasted two months. The shooting took place in the Historic Center of the city and had more than 700 extras, the use of different drones and the construction of an air fuselage of 14 meters. On the screen, this will be shown in just five minutes.

BIG CITIES, BIG CHALLENGES

For Steve Solot, Executive Director of the Brazilian Network of Film Commissions (REBRAFIC) and International Consultant of Film Commissions, "the main challenges of shooting in large urban areas is to get in a timely manner the permits to film in public and private spaces. Several Film Commissions have created windows to manage online permits that are very useful, and those that do not have this electronic service should be able to offer an efficient and fast permit management service." According to Solot, another



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important issue is that the productions need to have liability insurance, something that must be sent before requesting the filming permit and has a value that can amount to 1 million dollars.

Big international shootings are usually on the radar of the Film Commissions, but the challenges of receiving a production from a major are many, being the neighbors one of the most sensitive issues. The problems caused during the filming of "Rome" due to the closure of the avenues with the heaviest traffic in Mexico City led to an apology from the city's Film Commission and the producers responsible for the upcoming film by Alfonso Cuarón. Set in the 70s, the streets, buildings and places of Roma, Navarte and Tabacalera play a key role in the first film shot in the Mexican capital by the Oscar-winning director since the success of "Y tu mamá también" ("And your Mother too"), in 2001.

BASet is the electronic management system of filming permits in public spaces of Buenos Aires, one of the most demanded Latin American capitals for audiovisual productions. Until October 2017, 423 productions were filmed in public spa-

ces of Buenos Aires. "Currently the Buenos Aires Films Commission offers a catalog of locations in the city, gives advice on how to shoot in the city, provides an agile management of film permits and advice on logistical issues for the entry of personnel and equipment to Argentina", lists Florencia Stivelmaher, Operational Manager of the Audiovisual District.

The Buenos Aires Film Commission came into operation at the end of 2009 with the aim of turning the city into a center of regional production. "The familiar and historical difficulties have to do with coordinating that, in this city of traffic and complex movement, great productions, mainly of international cinema, take place, since they generate work, investment and tourism to the city", explains Stivelmaher. Among the major foreign productions that have been filmed in the city in recent years are "Focus", starring Will Smith; "Cologne", with Emma Watson, or the recent "Operation Finale" by Chris Weitz, a story about the capture of the Nazi Adolf Eichmann with Ben Kingsley as the main character. In addition, there is always intense national production that chooses Buenos Aires as the scene for its scripts.





Rio, eu te amo

In recent years, Chile has bet heavily on becoming a world class film set. The National Film Commission has carried out different actions to make the country competitive and to lighten the load of filming in Santiago, both the epicenter of national audiovisual production and a shooting destination increasingly demanded internationally. The capital of Chile has been working with the Film Friendly program by Chile Film Commission (FCCh), consisting of the standardization of filming permits, friendly rates and information for the development of shootings.

Although the landscapes are usually the great attraction of Chile, the capital also presents its advantages. "Santiago has the grace of being a chameleon location. The central area of Chile has varied and extreme locations in a small piece of land," indicates Joyce Zylberberg, the Commission Director. One of the main attractions are the ski resorts, such as Valle Nevado, place in which one of Latin America's most successful films of 2017 takes place: "La Cordillera" ("Summit"), starring Ricardo Darín.

Zylberberg points out that during 2017, the work of FCCh has been distinguished by the agreements that it has reached with Customs and the Internal Revenue Service in order to free from taxes almost all the equipment and supplies used to produce, such as cameras, lenses and filters.

"It was a great challenge to be able to standardize languages, but the benefits are already noticeable," she concludes.

Bogotá has been one of the last Latin American capitals to launch its Film Commission. Created in 2014, it is a program run by Cinemateca Distrital-Gerencia de las Artes Audiovisuales of Idartes that during its first stage has focused its efforts on implementing the Unified Permit for Audiovisual Filming (PUFA), a mechanism that allows to present the documentation, permits and authorizations for a shooting in public built space and areas of the city in a fast and efficient way.

SPECTATORS THAT BECOME TOURISTS

However, the economic impact of becoming a shooting location goes beyond the profits generated by the different services involved in the filming of a film or commercial, and reaches one of the key areas of today's economy: tourism. This is a topic on the agenda of Film Commissioners from around the world, and it was discussed in 2015 at Cineposium, the Annual International Congress of Commissioners. Organized in Barcelona by the Association of Film Commissioners International (AFCI), the event focused its agenda on the analysis and reflection on film and tourism "to work on the synergies and strategies that the Film Commissioners and the audiovisual and tourism industry have to build in order to

motivate each other and generate quality content and visitors ".

On that occasion, one of the case studies that caught the most attention was the tourist impact generated by the television series "Games of Thrones" in Northern Ireland that, according to data handled by the heads of the Film Commission in that country, generates about 20,000 new visitors every year. The Congress also analyzed the creation of film routes, tours that go over different locations of films and series such as those that are already available for tourists in Paris (Set in Paris), Barcelona (Barcelona Movie Walks) or New York and Boston (On Location Tours).

The synergy between cinema and tourism seems to be unbeatable and some studios in the sector maintain that 20% of tourists decide to visit a place after having seen it on film or television. In Latin America there are several examples of international shootings that were set and shot

in the big cities of the region, such as the James Bond movies in Rio de Janeiro ("Moonraker") or in Mexico City ("Specter"). In both big productions and smaller ones, Commissions work actively so that their most symbolic places are shown on the big screen or live broadcasts. A good example of this has been the work done by the Rio Film Commission during the past Olympic Games, creating 15 Press Areas in emblematic parts of the city for live journalism.

Another example of the tourist value that a film can give to a city is "Rio, eu te amo" ("Rio, I love you"), a collective film that belongs to the series "Cities of Love", franchise that has so far been filmed in three big cities: Paris, New York and Rio de Janeiro. In the Brazilian episode, the city of Rio de Janeiro and its different areas are the link between ten love stories directed by renowned directors such as Paolo Sorrentino, José Padilha, Guillermo Arriaga, Fernando Meirelles and John Turturro, among others.

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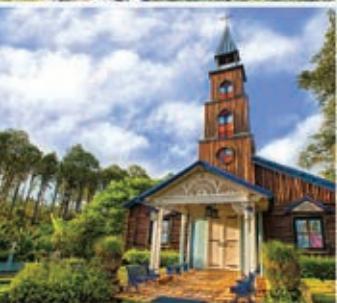
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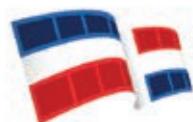


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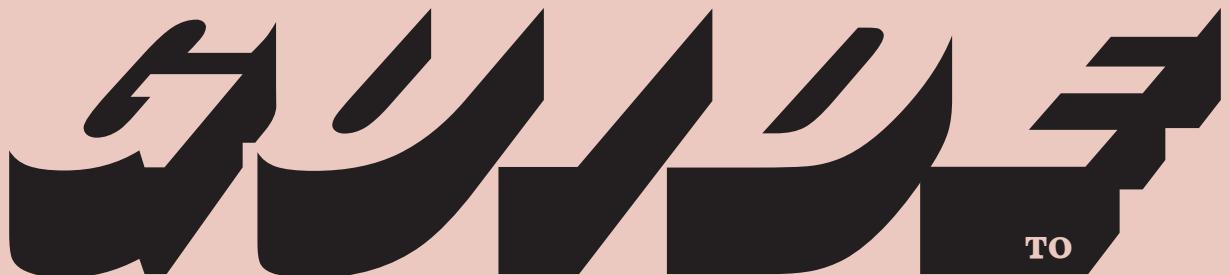
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In addition to providing technical assistance and information to help foreign productions that are shot in Chile, the Commission creates strategic alliances with national and international events to promote the country as a filming destination. It has recently designed a support program for high-impact audiovisual investments that will provide an incentive to those international productions that are filmed in Chile and spend in the country more than 2 million dollars.

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Costa Rica Film Commission and the institutions that are part of it provide support to visit locations, a catalog of producers and suppliers in the different regions, a system for easy procedures (filming permits, equipment entry and migration paperwork) and assistance in the validation of budgets. Costa Rica also has a fund for co-production and financial support in lodging and other items.

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PERU

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Film in Peru is an initiative that aims to promote and position Peru as a shooting location. Thanks to its geographical diversity and unique places, our country offers amazing settings and mystical landscapes for the staging of incredible productions.

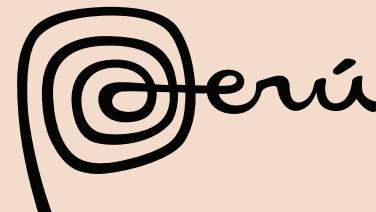
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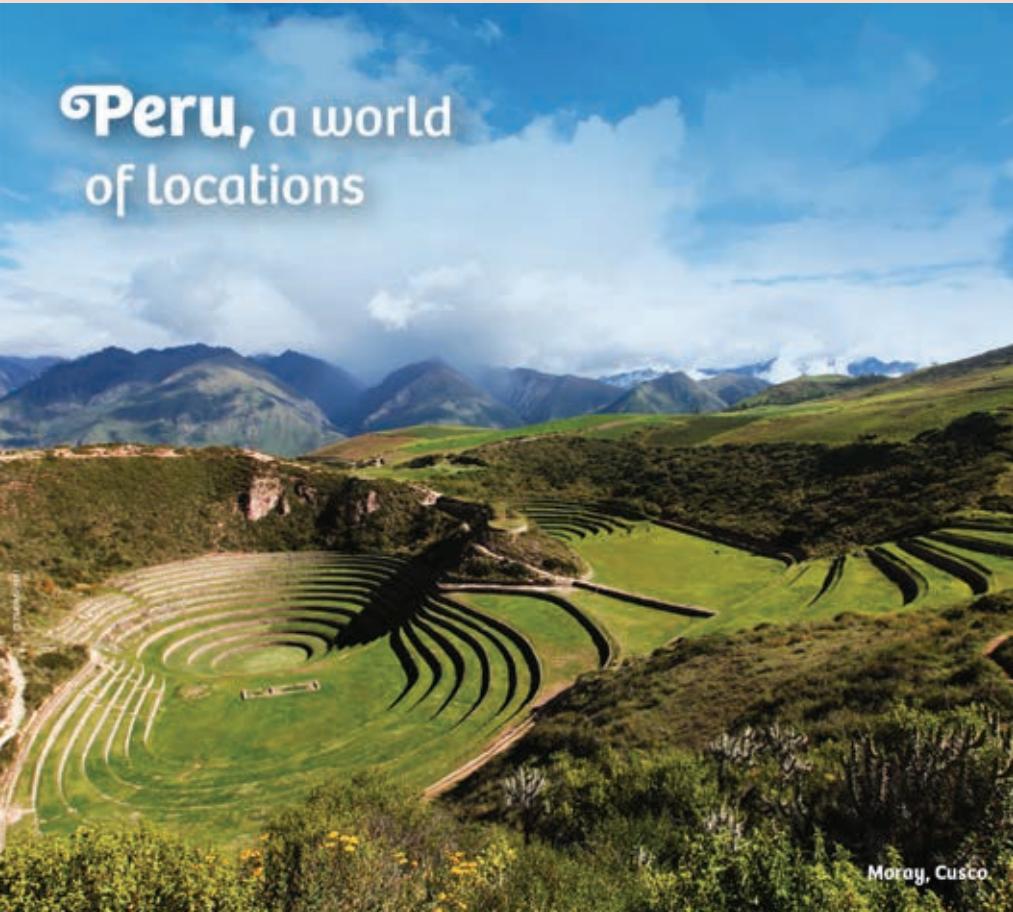
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