

SHOWCASING THE GLOBAL PRODUCTION INDUSTRY

# LOCATION

INTERNATIONAL 2023



Greece offers the volcanic landscape of the island of Milos, the perfect film set for another world

# DISCOVER EUROPE'S OTHER WORLDS

ACROSS ITS 44 COUNTRIES AND ITS ASTONISHING VARIETY OF ARCHITECTURE AND HUGELY VARIED LANDSCAPES, EUROPE CAN PRETTY MUCH OFFER THE WHOLE WORLD TO ANY PRODUCTION, AND A LOT OF OTHER WORLDS TOO. **GARY SMITH** REPORTS



and industry, and cultural history, make it an outstanding destination for film productions.”

Lying to the south-east of Iceland is Norway, known for its stunning fjords, but perhaps less well-known as a stand-in for India: “*Mission Impossible: Fallout* had Norway doubling for Kashmir,” film commissioner for Norway, Meghan Beaton, says. “And more recently, *Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning Part One*, features Tom Cruise’s most daring stunt yet, driving a motorcycle straight off a Norwegian mountain. In this scene, the mountains, scenery and railway are doubling for locations in Eastern Europe. We can also do otherworldly, with *Dune* using Norway to double as Caladan, the home planet of House of Atreides.”

## MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: FALLOUT HAD NORWAY DOUBLING FOR KASHMIR

MEGHAN BEATON

Norwegian locations can double for anywhere in the Nordics and any other countries and regions with snow, ice, mountain and fjords — for example Canada, New Zealand, Alaska, Russia, the Alps and more. But compared with most of these regions, Norwegian nature is highly accessible. “Norway doubles brilliantly for the Colorado Rockies, Canada and Alaska,” says Andrew Macdonald, producer of Alex Garland’s directorial debut, *Ex Machina*. “It felt a bit like Scotland, where I’m from, but Scotland on super drugs. There are these incredible vertical hills, waterfalls everywhere and deep, deep fjords.” The Juvet Landscape Hotel, an architectural marvel surrounded by untamed pristine wilderness — and where *Ex Machina* was filmed — is ranked as one of most stunning movie locations in the world and is located in the Valldal valley surrounded by fjords, forests and waterfalls. Similarly the Kistefos Museum, which comprises ultra-modern architecture and one of northern Europe’s biggest contemporary sculpture parks, offers a futuristic look that people might not consider to be typically Norwegian.

“Urban areas of Oslo can double for modern European cities — and the hyper-modern architecture in Oslo and so much of the Norwegian landscape are together becoming well-known for stories set in the future,” Beaton adds. “What producers who have filmed in Norway really appreciate is that everything just works. We offer stunning locations, experienced crew with a can-do attitude — and infrastructure that makes the natural locations easily accessible. Norway boasts over 50 airports and first-rate mobile and internet coverage throughout the country, even in remote areas.”

Panos Kouanis, CEO of EKOME, the Greek National Centre of Audiovisual Media and Communication, believes that Greece has something for any and every production. “Greece offers a variety of locations such as mountains, canyons, deserted areas, sandy beaches, medieval castles, urban landscapes and ancient monuments,” Kouanis says. “It provides an ideal blend of urban as well as rural landscapes, and it’s all bathed in the unique Greek light all year round. Moreover, the distances between locations are small, allowing filming in a variety of locations over a short time frame. A natural film set, Greece offers the volcanic landscapes of the islands of Milos and Nisyros, the waterfalls in Thasos and

Serbia has excellent mountain and rural areas



## HOLLYWOOD LOVES SERBIA

“SERBIA has excellent mountain and rural areas, plenty of urban locations including some classic brutalism, as well as classical interiors and exteriors,” Ivana Miković, managing director at Firefly Productions in Belgrade, says. “Also, our new studio will be fully operational around June 2023, which will enable us to host much more prominent, high-budget productions.”

Thanks to a broad range of architectural styles and highly competent crews, Belgrade regularly doubles for Paris, Moscow and Berlin and hosts a regular stream of high- and low-budget productions — both films and TV series, some featuring Hollywood A-listers, with Daniel Craig in Serbia last year filming scenes for *Glass Onion*.



Vineyards right next to the city that offer a great view over Vienna

## VIENNA IS JUST VIENNA

YOU PROBABLY wouldn’t be surprised to hear that one place that doesn’t do much doubling is Vienna. Given that its look is so globally known and defines a historical epoch, a lot of productions want to leverage its period charm. “In the last three years we’ve only had international productions filming in Vienna where Vienna was being Vienna,” the Vienna Film Commission’s Marijana Stoisits says. “But looking beyond the classic city centre, there’s modern architec-

ture along the waterfront on the Danube, where filming for Sam Hargrave’s *Extraction II* took place. We also have several palaces that could be anywhere in Europe and vineyards right next to the city that also offer a great view over Vienna. Plus there’s the super-modern University of Economics campus designed by Zaha Hadid and we have residential areas that are emblematic of the 19th century, and could be anywhere in central Europe.”



The Kistefos Museum in Norway offers a futuristic look

Papigkio, the canyon of Samaria and Crete's exotic beaches, alongside the Peloponese, the historic centres of Corfu or Rhodes and their surrounding villages, which can be adapted to be pretty much anywhere you want."

Locations that have been used to double for other places include Athens doubling for Tehran in all three seasons of Apple's espionage series *Tehran*; and Attica standing in for Mallorca for the series *Backstrom*. "There's also the action movie *Dirty Angels*, where the city of Thessaloniki doubled for Afghanistan and also for Miami in director Richard Hughes' mob movie *The Enforcer*," Kouanis says. "The Thessaloniki region also doubled for a US army base in *The Expendables 4*, and David Cronenberg's *Crimes of the Future* turned Athens into a dystopian city of the not-so-distant future."

And then there are the crews, facilities and more: "As well as the competitive incentives, the variety of locations and sunlight throughout the year, Greece offers high-end studios, great hospitality and infrastructure, well-trained and multilingual crews, a network of film offices supporting productions' needs, a safe working environment and, of course, exceptional gastronomy and the chance to combine work with leisure. David Cronenberg and Rian Johnson [*Glass Onion*] have spoken very positively about Greek crews and

professionals, while they also enjoyed the benefits of Greek hospitality," Kouanis says. "An unexpected bonus of this country is that anyone wishing to write scenes set in Greece will discover endless possibilities. The country, its history, heritage and modern culture are an amazing source of inspiration that many productions have benefitted from, including *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, *Mama Mia*, *Mediterraneo* and *Le Grand Bleu* to name just a few. In fact, US production company Millennium Media's upcoming film *The Bricklayer*, starring Aaron Eckhart and Nina Dobrev, which shot in Thessaloniki, is actually about Greece and takes place in Thessaloniki."

## DAVID CRONENBERG AND RIAN JOHNSON HAVE SPOKEN VERY POSITIVELY ABOUT GREEK CREWS

PANOS KOUANIS

According to Jonathan Mees of the Netherlands Film Commission, doubling for Dunkirk in Northern France — for Christopher Nolan's 2017 film *Dunkirk* — was one of the

a meticulous recreation of interiors and exteriors of Britain and Wales in the 70s, 80s and 90s, which was achieved using demanding, but our amazing set-builders and crews rose to the challenge. Also, the Polish-New Zealand co-production *Joika*, shot in Warsaw, which was doubling as Moscow for the purposes of the production.”

Aside from the capital city, one of the most easily transformed Polish cities is Wrocław. The city imitated Prague in Petr Kazda's and Tomáš Weinreb's *I, Olga Hepnarová*; cold-war Berlin in Steven Spielberg's *Bridge of Spies*; and in Paweł

Pawlikowski's *Cold War*; as well as Rotterdam in Mike van Diem's film *Character*.

“Gdansk, one of the most beautiful Polish cities, featured in the Oscar-winning adaptation of *The Tin Drum*, as well as in Kathryn Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty*, where the Gdansk quay housed a secret CIA headquarters,” Strój adds. “Then there's Przemysł, a small town on the Polish-Ukrainian border with a rich history and a concentration of well-preserved original buildings, where you can shoot stories set in the past. History has left a clear mark on the city's architecture, hence the similarity to Lviv, but the 19th-century style also allows Przemysł to double for places such as Vilnius.”



Florence Pugh as Charlie Ross at the Acropolis of Athens for the BBC's *The Little Drummer Girl*

## GLOBAL DRAMA SERIES CHOOSE GREECE

“**SERIES ONE** of *Tehran* shot with Athens doubling for Iran, and series two where Glenn Close joined the show, was also filmed in Athens. *Tehran* series three filmed in our capital from January to July 2023. The thriller *Do Not Hesitate* chose the mountains on the island of Crete to showcase Syria. More specifically, they used the Nida Plateau in this suspense drama, which was produced by

Lemming Film and US production company Heretic Films, Greek Film Centre's Stavroula Geronimakis says. Leontine Petit, the film's producer, says: “We did not expect to find such great locations in Greece, or even in Europe, for this project. The shoot went beyond our expectations and we're looking forward to coming back with new projects.” “Millennium Media's gangster

movie *The Enforcer* – a.k.a. *Barra-cuda*, starring Antonio Banderas – was shot in summer 2021 and had Thessaloniki doubling as Miami,” Geronimakis says. “The BBC's *The Little Drummer Girl* series used Elefsina to double for Lebanon and also Nikaia in Athens for Palestine. That shoot took place in 2018 with the filmmakers also securing scenes at the Acropolis in Athens.”