

SERBIA

An aerial photograph of a river valley in Serbia. A large dam with a stone archway is visible on the left, with a small building on top. A long, dark metal truss bridge spans the river in the center. The surrounding area is densely forested with green trees, and a paved road runs along the right side of the river. The sun is reflecting off the water in the center of the river.

WINNING THE
HEARTS OF INDIAN
FILM MAKERS



Belgrade locations have been incarnated as many cities, doubling for Paris, Moscow, Rome, Barcelona, Baltimore, Stockholm through hundreds of TVCs and feature films. With decades of international filmmaking tradition, Serbian locations and their warm welcoming crew have started winning the hearts of Indian film makers as the audiences enjoyed breath-taking action scenes of films like 'Oopiri' and 'Vivegam' shot on the streets of the Serbian capital. In 'Soorma', all the European scenes were shot in Serbia including in-stadium shots. While, media tends to title it "New York of the Balkans", those who have experienced Belgrade spirit firmly state "This is Belgrade!"

Growth of the tourism sector is another driving factor. With over 100 hotels opened around the country in the last two years, there are many hotels that favor film crews, offering cuisine and amenities to pamper the needs of film travelers when on location. Serbia has High English Proficiency Index so the language is never a barrier to work.

25% Incentives & Visa Free Regime

The crucial game changer for Serbia was the introduction of 25% cash rebate for film. For feature films the minimum expenditure in order to qualify is USD 350,000.

Total of 24 feature titles benefitted from this programme including 'Kotigoba 3', 'Vivegam', 'Chekka Chivantha Vaanam' and 'Uri: The Surgical Strike'.

With a variety of locations, local talents and growing film infrastructure, Serbia has demonstrated the ability to double as almost every European capital making it a successful servicing destination for Indian films in the past four years. Film incentives, support features, documentary films, TV series and post-production. Serbia is also one of the few handful countries to give access to cash rebate for TV commercials, which has so far applied to 60 projects. Due to the no visa regime introduced for India, Serbia is being rediscovered with 10 Indian film projects shot in the past 3 year. All major film centers in Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore experienced shooting in Serbia with over 100 shooting days only in 2018.

Globally filmmakers are showing interest in brutalist, dystopian locations like the socialist architecture of New Belgrade. The most ambitious residential project of the 70s in Europe now serves as a signature cityscape of socialist realism. It has been portrayed in numerous Serbian feature dramas and TV series gaining its reputation for hip hop and young culture. The (in) famous 'blocks' are inevitable checkpoint on any film makers scouting list.

Apart from urban locations film makers are equally prone to Serbian landscapes. Tara Mountain replaced notorious mountain Aokigahara in the horror film 'Forest'. Diverse lakes, forests, fortresses and yet undiscovered locations are a fun part in the location hunt for film makers. Smederevo Fortress is all time favorite for any medieval theme project as one of the largest and best-preserved fortifications in Europe. As the restorations of the Golubac Fortress are finishing, the sight of the dreamy towers lying on the bank of Danube, just before the Iron Gate, is a future hotspot for fantasy films.

For whatever that you can't find in real locations, Serbian production designers are ready to build in studio or digitally create in a well-established visual effects and CG industry. Serbian VFX studios have already tapped into Indian market with 'Bahubali 2', 'Thugs of Hindostan' and '2.0'.

Poster Location for Netflix

A slate of Netflix Originals had shown a glimpse into Serbian locations disguised as worldwide locations. The first one to be on the film poster is Airport City Belgrade. The old pre-WW airport site has been developed into a business district of New Belgrade and with CG touch turned into a site of alien invasion in the film 'Extinction'.

Old Mountain - Serbian Kashmir

The area of Old Mountain (Stara Planina) close to Bulgarian border has gained popularity with Indian crews shooting at its numerous springs, waterfalls, lakes, gorges and peaks that have been almost untapped by film crews. Old Mountain has successfully doubled for Kashmir in Mani Ratnam's 'Kaatru Veliyidai' and more recently in 'Uri: The Surgical Strike', the debut film of talented director Aditya Dhar. Kashmiri born Aditya was impressed with the resemblance of Slavic mystical mountain to Kashmir. In a friendly conversation this area got nicknamed 'Serbian Kashmir'.

Production of Uri: The Surgical Strike demanded enormous efforts regarding production design, stunts and SFX. The production designers once again confirmed their talent and professionalism. Sets made throughout Serbia managed to represent Uri in Kashmir, Myanmar and Pakistani bases.

This would be impossible without the support of local government and institutions to the film crew. Clockwork Film Production, the Serbian line producer owes its greatest gratitude to the Serbian Army and Ministry of Defense, which once again demonstrated its expertise and readiness to cooperate with foreign film producers. This is the third foreign film that was filmed at Batajnica Military Airport. One of the locations of this film also includes the military barracks in Pozarevac.

About Serbia Film Commission

Serbia Film Commission is industry-based organization, meaning that it is an independent organization established by production companies, studio facilities, service providers and film professionals. Our network includes hotel industry and business sector advisors. We collaborate closely with National Tourism Office, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture as well as business associations and number of international partners and diplomatic missions.

Serbia Film Commission launched Film Friendly programme back in 2012 aimed to map film locations and facilitate permitting procedures within public offices. National and local tourism offices across the country proved to be main partners in this process. The current online database offers over 500 locations and is growing constantly.

About Film Center Serbia

Film Center Serbia is a national film fund under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia, providing support for preparation, development, production, distribution and promotion of Serbian films as well as co-production support. Film Center Serbia is also the administrative body for film incentives acting as a liaison office between applicants for cash rebate and the Ministry of Economy that governs the incentive fund.

