

## Island locations: Distant destinations

Filmmakers brave elements and remote locales to shoot where script demands

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Island-shooting locations in the tropics, such as Hawaii and Puerto Rico, offer lush backdrops that draw actors and directors. Other islands entice productions via their unique landscapes.

But these allures may not be enough. Before anyone signs a check to send cast, crew and possibly equipment across the high seas, these locations have to present convincing advantages beyond their scenery.



Producer Lynn Hendee, who recently worked on a production of William Shakespeare's "The Tempest" with helmer Julie Taymor on Lanai and the Big Island in Hawaii, says each film has to carefully weigh what sorts of sacrifices might have to be made to work on an island location and what that will mean for the project's overall budget.

"In our case it was perfect," says Hendee. "We went into it knowing there would be logistical and cost issues, but Julie (Taymor) had visited

Lanai years ago on a vacation and the landscape was so theatrical and surreal that she was willing to do what needed to be done to shoot this film in that location, and we got the look we needed because of that."

While Taymor and Hendee worked hard to create the look of the film with the resources they had, Hawaii's tax credits also made choosing the location easier for the filmmakers.

"The only reason we could afford to come to Lanai was because of the tax credits for investors," says Hendee. "A Honolulu-based financier raised half our budget because of them."

While shooting some scenes for "Shutter Island" on Peddocks Island near Boston, executive producer Chris Brigham also found that once there's a match for a look the film needs, there's often a real commitment to travel to an island, despite the complications.

"There are times when the look of the location trumps logic," says Brigham. "It's like a military operation to shoot on an island that doesn't already have the resources you need because you have to bring in everything from catering to wardrobe."

Brigham made the most of the days on the island by monitoring the weather reports and strategizing with the filmmakers to send the cast and crew there when they were most likely to get the greatest amount of time shooting.

It's a process that figures heavily in the work of Jean Higgins, executive producer of "Lost." The show shoots in Hawaii, and more than once she has had to change plans after the sets nearly washed away because of weather.



"I read the surf report every day, because weather is a big part of shooting on an island," says Higgins. "Our 'survivor camp' has been wiped out by the waves on the North Shore two or three times, so now we're very careful and we move it in and out of the area depending on what the forecast might be."

On top of the logistical issues of bringing a crew to an island, helmer Taymor also had to work around delays on seeing dailies. "On a remote location like Lanai, we were three days behind on seeing what we'd done, which you never like because you want to see what you have before you move on," says Taymor.

"But," she adds, "there's an advantage to being on an island in that the crew and cast are around each other a lot and they become more like a family. There aren't the distractions of the rest of the world so you get a group that's more focused on the film."



Even with all the complications, shooting on island locations has been a long tradition for filmmakers determined to get a certain look for their films. There was a time when Santa Catalina Island was almost a kind of secondary backlot for filmmakers trying to do so relatively close to Los Angeles.

"Now we're often the site for a special date or event on shows like 'The Biggest Loser' or 'Big Brother,' but in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s larger films like 'Ben Hur' and 'The Ten Commandments' were shot here all the time," says Donna Harris of the Catalina Chamber of Commerce. "What a film gets when they decide to take on the logistical challenges of shooting on an island is a look and feeling they can't get any other way."

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