



The Pacific Coast Region, which features some of the country's most attractive coastlines, offers an unparalleled level of diverse scenery. Whether it's the volcanoes of Hawaii, Washington's Cascade Range, Oregon's rivers, the deserts of California or the glaciers of Alaska, a filmmaker can find just about any look needed to bring a script to life.

Despite this region's long history with production, big changes are underway. While Alaska has swung open its doors to production, California has just introduced a brand-new incentive program; the Hawaiian Islands are seeing an impressive increase in production as is Washington, a state with everything at its fingertips; and Oregon is increasingly becoming the focus of film and TV. It's not hard to see why 2011 will be a year to remember along the Pacific.

ALASKA



One of the most intriguing state success stories in recent years is undoubtedly that of Alaska, a

booming production hub in the 1980s that saw a dramatic slowdown and dwindling of state production-related resources throughout the late 1990s. From then on, there was essentially no active film office, and budget considerations were minimal, with the tourism office managing any production that came to the state.

That all changed nearly three years ago, when legislation was devised to bring the film office back to life and introduce a competitive tax incentive program that would lure productions back into the state. Alaska's new incentive program allows for a base transferable tax credit of 30 percent on qualified production in-state expenditures. Add to that an additional 10 percent credit on Alaska hires, another 2 percent for production expenditures between October 1 and March 30, and 2 percent for production in a rural location, and applicants can land a 44-percent tax credit.

The Alaska Film Office and its incentive program have been active for just over two years now. Ten productions have already received tax credits under the incentive program since then, reports David Worrell of the Alaska Film Office, and the Office currently has 28 productions prequalified — nine of which are feature films. “It is exciting for me because I’ve been in Alaska for nearly 30 years,” says Worrell. “I worked in TV in Anchorage here in the ’80s, and it was exciting to see these films here, and then it just went way. It’s great to filmmakers returning to Alaska, to see the interest in our amazing locations, to see Alaska stories being told in authentic places — and there are so many great stories.”

Although infrastructure is still in early development, capacity is building with a growing number of warehouse facilities becoming available for shooting. Production in the state, much like Hawaii, is naturally location-driven and the state draws in productions with a very clear sense of what they need in mind. Nonfiction TV programming like “Ice Road Truckers,” “Man vs. Wild,” “Alaska’s Most Extreme,” “Grizzly Land” and the documentary Disaster on K2 all illustrate the particular niche Alaska fits for many productions. That being said, second-unit shooting is strong in Alaska — for everything from The Proposal and Transformers to Star Trek — and its expansion in recent years has helped the state to gradually develop capacity. Independent films are also breaking ground in Alaska. The film Everybody Loves Whales (starring Drew Barrymore) shot throughout 2010, while On the Ice, a short film directed by Alaska native Andrew MacLean, went to Sundance before it transformed into a feature film, which wrapped shooting in spring 2010.

Alaska is the state to follow in upcoming years. Its capacity, range of production and film office will continue to grow and evolve. Right now, the state needs to make sure its name gets out there. “We’re spreading the word that Alaska is open for business,” says Worrell.

CALIFORNIA

California, like Alaska, is making waves on the production scene with a new incentive program. Under the California Film & Television Production Tax Credit Program, a feature film with a budget range of \$1 million to \$75 million may be eligible for a 20-percent tax credit. Additionally, the state offers a 25-percent tax credit to a TV series that has filmed all prior seasons outside of California, or an independent film with a budget range of \$1 million to \$10 million in qualified expenditures.



All of this has California Film Commission Director Amy Lemisch glowing. “We worked long and hard to get an incentive program for California,” she says. “It’s the best news we’ve had in a very long time, and it’s helping us keep a lot of production in California.” It goes without saying that the need for such an incentive program had been growing in recent years, as productions have become more prone to wandering far and wide globally looking for the best options for their bottom line. Indeed, California has lost its market share of big-budget studio feature films to other states in recent years.

Although its limited budget doesn’t yet allow it to cover big-budget productions, Lemisch says that programs like California’s have an immediate effect on production levels. And when Lemisch explains that the program has already worked “exactly as it is designed to work,” she isn’t kidding. After all, the reality TV series portion of the TV pie has grown in the last decade, as have one-hour series, low-to-medium-budget independent films and commercials — so there is a lot of work in these areas. These are just the types of productions that California can attract with its new program.

Big-name productions continue to flock to California, and films like *You Again* (starring Sigourney Weaver and Jamie Lee Curtis), *Burlesque* and *The Social Network* have shot throughout the state. And although most shooting is still done in and around Los Angeles, other locations are growing hotter. The FX show “*Terriers*” has shot in San Diego, while *Moneyball*, starring Brad Pitt and one of many productions to benefit from the new tax credit, recently shot in Oakland.

The city of Santa Clarita is a great example of a location that has grown as a destination for a wide range of productions. Initiated in 2009, the city’s Film Incentive Program subsidizes film-permit fees and refunds portions of hotel tax paid by production companies. This appears to have helped boost production. Jessica Freude of the Santa Clarita Valley Film Office reports that the city has issued 265 film permits and racked up 867 film days in the 2009/2010 fiscal year. Santa Clarita continues to attract a great deal of television production, and Freude says that production has been greatly driven by California’s new incentive program. Recent projects include the CBS show “*CSI*” and Showtime’s “*Californication*,” and films like *Jackass 3D*, *Faster, Priest*, *Bridesmaids*, *Bad Teacher*, *Thor*, *Beautiful Boy*, *Drive* and *Dirty Girl* have all shot in Santa Clarita.

Aside from the incredible locations California has to offer, the state houses some of the country’s most impressive, state-of-the-art studios. Despite California’s economic woes, many of these studios have demonstrated how the global expansion of production and markets for film and television can bring benefits to the state. SPG Studios, located in Burbank since 1983, is a terrific example. The studio provides services in audio postproduction and dubbing for domestic and international film and television. While the main studio is based in California, SPG has staff in Mexico City, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, and all dubbing is completed with local talent. At the time of this article, the studio was working on the last installment of *Harry Potter*, a franchise it has worked with from the first film in 2001. “SPG is doing very well,” says President Helgar Pedrini.

SPG provides translation and dubbing in Spanish and Portuguese for HBO in Latin America, and projects include hit series like “*Boardwalk Empire*” and Filmmaker Michael Mann’s upcoming series “*Luck*,” starring Dustin Hoffman and Nick Nolte. “This type of work has been increasing because networks and studios increase their margins by expanding into foreign territories and catering to an ever-growing domestic audience,” explains Pedrini. The studio also does trailers, promos, DVD features, television series, documentaries and theatrical work for Warner Bros., Fox and many of the independent production companies in the Hollywood community.

So what's keeping an international-oriented studio like SPG here in California? "In California, we are surrounded by all the major studios of the world," reports Padrini. Even more importantly, we have extremely talented industry people here and great equipment." With ADR rooms, recording studios and three recording stages, including a theatrical stage with full state-of-the-art HD with Dolby Surround 5.1, SPG epitomizes the strength of infrastructure and depth of experience California offers. It's no wonder that the state has a lot to look forward to. Pedrini sums up the positive vibe currently coming out of California production world: "I'm anticipating 2011 is going to be a very good year."

HAWAII

Hawaii has long been a destination for Victoria Secret and Sports Illustrated photo shoots, nature documentaries and travel programming. But things are changing quickly: Stage space is growing steadily and a wide range of productions are finding that Hawaii, which offers some of the United States' most gorgeous beaches, diverse and unexpected landscapes, is also developing the infrastructure needed to handle big productions. Business is booming, both big and small, with the lion share of production coming out of Oahu. In 2010, nine big features and television shows were shot throughout the state, and production expenditure totaled \$350 million. "We're as busy as we've ever been," explains John Mason of the Big Island Film Office.

Maui is a prime example of Hawaii's success, as the island saw unprecedented levels of production in the first half of 2010. Clint Eastwood's *Hereafter* (Warner Bros.) shot in Lahaina, *The Tempest* (Touchstone/Miramax) shot on Lanai and the Big Island, the *Just Go with It*, a new comedy with Adam Sandler and Jennifer Aniston, will do extensive filming throughout Maui and Kauai. Benita Brazier of the Maui Film Office says that independent productions like *Get a Job* and TV shows like ABC's "Modern Family" have also filled the film office's schedule throughout 2010, leading to production expenditure at around \$62 million in 2010 — up from \$15 million in 2009.

According to Brazier, since June the island has become home to a stage space expanding over 200,000 square feet: A renovated pineapple cannery is now an expansive warehouse space able to house three separate soundstages, covering four acres and sporting 12,000 amps of electrical connectivity. The site is only 10 minutes away from the Kahului Airport and five minutes from the main seaport. And with three adjoining stages that can be used simultaneously, it will be the island's largest yet production facility of its kind on the island.

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