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FILMING ABROAD: A PRODUCER'S GUIDE TO VISA REQUIREMENTS IN 5 TOP INTERNATIONAL FILMING LOCATIONS

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Filming Abroad: A Producer's Guide to Visa Requirements in 5 Top International Filming Locations

As awards season has drawn to a close, winners and future hopefuls alike may be looking abroad for their next big project. In fact, recent estimates show about half of US productions are at least in part filmed outside of the country. One of the less glamorous aspects of international filmmaking is ensuring that cast and crew are properly authorized to work in the chosen location. In this Insight, we'll discuss the work permit and visa frameworks governing film production in some of the industry's leading international film destinations – plus key takeaways and a four-step action plan.

Canada

Featured films: *American Psycho*, *Mean Girls*, and *The Incredible Hulk*

US citizens do not require a visa or an Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA) to enter Canada on a short-term basis. However, most employees working on a film production in Canada must still obtain a work permit. Fortunately, essential workers may be eligible for a work permit that is exempt from the usual Labor Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) requirement, so long as the work performed creates or maintains significant social, cultural, or economic benefits

Related People



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or opportunities for Canadian citizens or permanent residents. This typically requires that the work be both high-wage (at or above the applicable provincial or territorial wage threshold) and unionized in Canada.

Applicants who do not meet these criteria (like digital media or visual effects staff, who are generally non-unionized in Canada) may still qualify for an LMIA-exemption where the applicant's employment-related activities would create or maintain significant social, cultural, or economic benefits or opportunities for Canadian citizens or permanent residents.

The work permit is typically issued for the length of the production.

United Kingdom

Featured films: *Harry Potter, The Batman, and Barbie*

Certain "non-visa national" cast and crew may enter the UK as Standard Visitors for up to six months to undertake permitted activities in connection with a film production, provided the film is produced and financed overseas and the individuals remain employed and paid by a non-UK entity.

A "non-visa national" is a citizen of a country designated by the UK as visa-exempt for short stays. Such countries include the US, Canada, Australia, and EU Member States.

Although these individuals do not require a work visa, as of February 2026, they are generally required to obtain an ETA prior to travel.

Australia

Featured films: *The Matrix, The Great Gatsby, and Thor: Ragnarok*

Most non-Australian citizens working on film productions in Australia require a work visa, typically the Temporary Activity visa (subclass 408) under the Entertainment Activities designation. This visa permits cast and crew to undertake work in Australia for the duration of the production, which may extend up to two years depending on the circumstances.

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Applicants are generally required to be sponsored or supported by an approved Australian organization. As part of this process, the sponsor or supporter typically must consult with the relevant industry body or union, such as the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA).

Hungary

Featured films: *Blade Runner 2049*, *Midsommar*, and *Dune*

Generally, US citizens are visa-exempt for travel to Hungary for up to 90 days. However, third-country nationals still generally require a permit (such as a residence permit for employment purposes) to work in Hungary. Fortunately, certain employees may qualify for permits that are exempt from the standard labor market test, and others may be exempt from the permit requirement altogether.

For example, film cast and crew working for a company registered with the national film authority may qualify for work authorization that is exempt from the standard labor market test. This permit can be issued for up to two years.

Additionally, non-Hungarian cast and crew working in Hungary for no more than 90 days may be exempt from the work permit requirement, particularly when they remain employed and paid by a foreign employer.

Italy

Featured films: *Blade Runner 2049*, *Midsommar*, and *Dune*

Employees working on film shoots in Italy generally require prior authorization in the form of a Nulla Osta. For certain cast and crew, this authorization can be exempt from annual immigration quotas. In most cases, the application must be sponsored by a local production company or co-producer, even when the individual remains employed by a foreign entity.

Once the Nulla Osta has been issued, production employees must apply for a Subordinate Work Visa (lavoro subordinato), usually at the Italian consulate in their country of residence. If the employee intends to remain in Italy for

more than 90 days, they must also apply for a residence permit (permesso di soggiorno) within eight days of their arrival to Italy.

Key Takeaways

Employers planning international film productions should be aware of several common themes across jurisdictions:

- **Visa-free entry does not equate to work authorization:** Even where visa-free entry is permitted, cast and crew may still require separate work permits.
- **Exemptions are very fact-specific:** Many jurisdictions offer streamlined pathways, but eligibility often depends on a list of factors, such as an employee's wage level and foreign payroll status.
- **Local sponsorship may be required:** Certain countries require a local production partner to sponsor work authorization, even when cast and crew remain employed by a foreign employer.
- **Work authorization requirements frequently hinge on the length of the production:** Short-term stays may qualify for exemptions while longer engagements trigger more formal obligations.

4 Action Items

Employers can take steps now to mitigate risk and ensure compliance with complex international frameworks:

- 1. Conduct compliance assessments early:** Before production begins, evaluate each destination country's visa and work authorization requirements.
- 2. Structure employment and payroll strategically:** Where applicable, keep cast and crew on foreign payroll to maximize eligibility for certain exemptions.
- 3. Build immigration timelines into production schedules:** Account for processing times, multi-step application requirements, and potential delays.
- 4. Engage seasoned global mobility counsel:** Work with global mobility counsel to confirm eligibility for exemptions and ensure compliance with local visa and work permit requirements.

Conclusion

We will monitor these developments and provide updates as warranted, so make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information directly to your inbox. Please contact your Fisher Phillips attorney, the authors of this Insight, or any attorney on our [Global Mobility Team](#) or [International Practice Group](#) to learn more.