

Travel Outlook

Movie industry owes a lot to travel

The Academy Awards ought to have a new category: An Oscar for the movie that best depicts the experience of travel.

Not those sail-off-into-the-sunset travelogues that were popular a generation or two ago, but dramatic films that arouse the audience's special interest in the setting (the country, the city, the hotel), in the mode of travel, or in the adventure of getting from one place to another.

Where would the movie industry be without such films - without, for example, the countless pictures that involve travel by rail?

As long ago as Dec. 28, 1895, an audience in Paris attended the premiere of a pioneering film with a less than catchy title: The Arrival of a Train in the Station of Le Clotat. Reports said that the 1895 cinema-goers cringed in fear at the sight of the approaching locomotive on the screen.

Passenger trains have been the setting for some of the great classics of film drama, such as Shanghai Express (1932) starring Marlene Dietrich; Alfred Hitchcock's Strangers on a Train (1951), and Murder on the Orient Express (made in 1974, set in 1934).

If it were not for the influence of that last-named film, it's unlikely that present-day travellers would be clamoring to pay sky-high fares to travel on the revived Orient Express between London and Venice.

AT THE STATION

Railway stations, too, have been central to some memorable movies, including The Clock (at which Judy Garland and Robert

Walker met in New York's Grand Central Station in 1944) and Brief Encounter (1946), set in a bleak rural English station, where Trevor Howard encountered Celia Johnson briefly.

To turn from those somewhat



Vince Egan
Travel

lugubrious plot-lines, let's consider the success of hit movies of the 1930s that featured the nimble feet of Fred Astaire in such glamorous locales as New York, London, Venice and Rio de Janeiro. With those graceful, sophisticated images firmly in mind, the movie-goer was not only eager to visit those cities, but also shielded from their harsh reality - for a time, at least.

Never on Sunday was a powerful invitation to come and discover Greece in 1960. Topkapi, made four years later, was a dazzling display of Istanbul's unique character.

And who hasn't determined to visit Paris, after watching one of the many great pictures that have used its glories as a framework? There were Moulin Rouge, An American in Paris and dozens more.

Having assuaged the urge to see the City of Light, anyone who had seen Alfred Hitchcock's To Catch a Thief (1955) would surely be drawn to the French Riviera and Monaco, to follow in the elegant footsteps of Grace Kelly and Cary Grant.

CITY BY THE BAY

A great director, Hitchcock had a special talent for choosing backdrops that contributed strongly to the flow of his films.

For three of his productions, his choice was the San Francisco Bay area - and crowds of travellers still flock to the specific settings featured in those films, made decades ago.

Shadow of a Doubt (1943) featured a two-storey Italianate house at 904 McDonald Ave. in Santa Rosa, near the Sonoma County vineyards north of the city by the

bay. And with The Birds (1963), Hitchcock made a shrine of the schoolhouse near the coastal village of Bodega Bay, not far from the town of Santa Rosa.

Vertigo (1958) was set in the steep hills of San Francisco itself. Hitchcock had his co-stars James Stewart and Kim Novak meet at or near such famed attractions as the Palace of the Legion of Honor, the Palace of Fine Arts, Fort Point, Coit Tower and the redwood stands at Muir Woods, across the Golden Gate Bridge.

Some other scenes of Vertigo were filmed in the grand old Fairmont Hotel, which stands in lordly splendor at the pinnacle of Nob Hill near the heart of San Francisco. A favorite not only of movie directors but of countless travellers as well, the Fairmont has been featured in several other major productions - Kiss Them for Me (1957), with Cary Grant; Petulia (1968), with Julie Christie; Towering Inferno (1975), with Charlton Heston, and Midnight Lace (1980), with Doris

Day - to name only a few.

It's clear that the movies and the experience of travel both rely heavily on dreams and fantasy. When everything goes as it should, both can leave us spellbound.

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