

The Guardian

The stunning locations cashing in on Britain's film and TV fame

Tourism chiefs hope 'set-jetting' will drive visitors out of London and into the regions as film production in the UK intensifies

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The cliffs at West Bay, Bridport, Dorset. Visitor numbers have increased since TV's *Broadchurch*. Photograph: Alamy

They might be low on gossip value and have distinctly uneventful love lives but it seems the new celebrities are not the stars of screen but the locations.

An appearance on television or in a film has such a powerful effect on buildings and countryside around Britain that research has found that it brought in between £100m and £140m in international tourism to the economy in England - excluding London - last year.

The figures have been compiled by Creative England and research firm Olsberg SPI to measure the impact of what is being called "set-jetting" - tourism generated by famous locations - as film production in the UK saw a massive leap last year, up 35% from 2013 to its highest recorded level.

The researchers looked at eight screen celebrity hotspots old and new - from the windswept beach and streets of West Bay in Dorset, where Olivia Coleman and David Tennant investigated murder in ITV's *Broadchurch*, to North Yorkshire's Castle Howard, the *Brideshead Revisited* location from the 1980s. The others were Alnwick Castle, Northumberland, (the site of Hogwarts in two of the globally successful Harry Potter films);

the Oxfordshire village of Bampton (*Downton Abbey*); Holkham in Norfolk (*Shakespeare in Love*, *The Duchess*); Lyme Park in Cheshire (*The Awakening*, *Pride and Prejudice*); Puzzlewood in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire (*Doctor Who*, *Merlin* and the new *Star Wars*); and Wollaton Hall, a hilltop mansion in Nottingham (*The Dark Knight Rises*).



Tour guide and group of visitors on Harry Potter theme tour of Alnwick Castle. Photograph: Alamy

Alnwick Castle was the best-performing location in the survey, with day-visit spends from core screen tourists estimated to be worth £4.3m in 2014. Bampton saw the second-highest value, with an estimated £2.7m and West Bay was third with £1m.

The top three locations were depicted clearly on screen and fairly central to the plot but the report also suggests that screen tourism is a trend for all types of content, from period drama and children's programmes to crime and sci-fi.

James Berresford, CEO at VisitEngland, said it was an exciting phenomenon. "It is fantastic that so many tourist destinations are benefiting from domestic and international visitors who increasingly want to experience stunning locations from the world of television and film."

The hope is that screen exposure can help drive tourists out of London and into the regions. The capital claims 53% of international tourism spending in the UK, according to a 2013 study by Deloitte/Oxford Economics. Two new revivals of old favourites, the BBC's new series of *Poldark* which starts on Sunday and is filmed in and around Bath, and the *Dad's Army* film, which used the Yorkshire town of Bridlington as Walmington-on-Sea, might well have similar effects if they prove hits.



Oxfordshire town of Bampton where *Downton Abbey* is filmed.
Photograph: Wakeham/Splash News/Corbis

Berresford said *Downton Abbey* had been a perfect example: “A popular location for ‘set-jettlers’, for example, has been Highclere Castle [in Hampshire], which has been used in *Downton Abbey* for a number of years. As the film industry continues to thrive in England we would encourage regional businesses and organisations to tell people more about places which feature on screen and why they’re worth a visit so that the tourism industry can continue to use the phenomenon to generate jobs and economic growth.”

The *Observer* recently reported on the *Wolf Hall* effect beefing up visitor numbers at Tudor palaces and museums around the country as well as the key locations where Hilary Mantel’s novels about Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell were filmed. But it seems the trend is becoming ever more entrenched in the way we travel.

It’s not just England, of course. Scotland has long had its stunning scenery and elegant cities showcased by films and television series from James Bond and Harry Potter to *Cloud Atlas* and *World War Z*. The 2012 animated Pixar movie *Brave* was claimed to have generated £120m for the Scottish economy, although that was after an extensive joint marketing campaign by VisitScotland and Disney tied in with the film.

Even the remote clifftop ruins of Dunnottar Castle, near Stonehaven, Aberdeenshire, saw a leap of 16% in visitor numbers after its cartoon version was depicted in *Brave*.



Dunnottar castle, Scotland. Photograph: Alamy

More recently VisitScotland has produced a map for Bollywood fans after seeing a rise in the numbers of Indian productions using Scottish castles and lochsides for their high-glamour

productions. Announcing the map last month, Scotland's culture minister, Fiona Hyslop, said tourism from India was a "strong emerging market" as a result of the Bollywood explosion.

And in Northern Ireland poor old giant Finn MacCool is in danger of losing his mythological standing over the causeway coast and glens of Antrim thanks to the massively successful HBO television show *Game of Thrones*. Now in its fifth series, the magical, medieval adventure story is filmed extensively in castles and beaches across the region, leading to the springing up of a *Game of Thrones* industry with tour and coach operators in Belfast.

Creative England, an organisation that helps to promote filming in England, hopes its research will encourage people in the tourist industry to cash in. Kaye Elliott, head of production services at Creative England, said: "We work hard both to encourage production teams to film in the English regions, and also to work with locations, local businesses, local authorities and tourist agencies to help them maximise the benefits of this growing trend, something that has the potential to add even more money into the UK economy. This country is full of magnificent locations."

TOURIST NUMBERS

In 2013 the British tourism industry was valued at £126bn. A record 32 million overseas visitors came to the UK that year, spending £21bn.

London accounts for over half of all inbound visitor spend, the rest of England 34%, Scotland 8% and Wales 2%. In 2013 16 million visitors spent time in the capital. Top attractions include the British Museum, below, the Tate Modern and the Natural History Museum.

In 2012 the UK ranked eighth in the tourist arrivals league behind France, the US, China, Spain, Italy, Turkey and Germany.

In 2012 British residents took 57 million domestic holidays of one night or more, spending £13bn.

In 2013 nearly two-in-five inbound visits to the UK were for a holiday, while a quarter were for business. Almost four in every six holiday visits were during the traditional holiday period. Trips to see friends or relatives accounted for 38% of visits.

Since 2010 tourism has been the UK's fastest growing employment sector.

Source: visitBritain.org

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