

# Film land Tirol

*The origins of the film land Tirol go back a long way – back to the days when pictures were “learning to walk”.*

It is remarkable that only one year after the first public film showings by the brothers Lumière in Paris at the end of 1895 the first short film shows – so-called “living photographs” – were being held in the Tirol; the earliest projections were shown in Trent in October 1896 and by the beginning of November of the same year in Innsbruck, in July 1897 the first film shows followed in Meran. In those early years it was the travelling cinemas that fascinated the Tirolean population, frequently the venues for the showings were breweries and inns or circuses and annual fairs. These early films with scenes filmed in Europe by Messrs. Lumière frequently only lasted for a few minutes. By 1900 a so-called cinematograph – apparatus for making, developing and showing films – produced and showed scenes of a Tirolean folk dance, probably a “Schuhplattler”, in Meran. This film has unfortunately disappeared, but it is regarded as the first “made in the Tirol” film production.

In 1905 Frank Ormiston Smith, an Englishman, came to the Tirol to take cinematographic shots for lectures in England, a year later he was commissioned by the Tirolean Provincial Tourist Authority to prepare bioscopic scenes of the Tirol. They were then shown in Germany and England. These “commissions” included scenes like a Sunday church parade, a Corpus Christi procession, Schuhplattler dancing in Meran, “Across the Arlberg in Summer and in Winter” and “Life in Innsbruck on a Market Day”. They deserve special mention because they document the foresight shown in using “moving pictures” for advertising purposes in order to attract visitors to the Tirol. These were the main reasons for producing further films like “Sledging and Skiing on the Arlberg”, “Skiing Races in Kufstein” and “Sledging-Trotting Races in Kitzbühel”.

Many a “cinematographic” speciality featured in those early filming days in the Tirol including the first moving films to tell the story of the Tirolean uprising under Andreas Hofer in 1809. The film “Speckbacher”, produced in 1913, is regarded as the oldest existing film to have been shot in the Tirol.

Another, hardly known, milestone in the Tirol’s early film history was the British-German co-production “The Mountain Eagle” which was shot in Obergurgl and Umhausen in 1925. The director was none other than Alfred Hitchcock who came upon these locations in the Ötztal thanks to a postcard. Unfortunately this film, too, has disappeared, but the director’s diaries, twelve photographs and reviews provide evidence that shooting actually took place in the Tirol. Meanwhile “The Mountain Eagle” is the most sought-after film worldwide.

In 1930/31 Arnold Fanck made the film “Der weiße Rausch” in St. Anton and St. Christoph am Arlberg. More than 40 skiers were among the actors including many of the most famous racing skiers of the day like Hannes Schneider, Guzzi Lantschner and Rudi Matt. The film was an outstanding success, some of the scenes being so spectacular and unique that they appeared again and again in skiing films into the 1960s. The film critics enthused, they loved the choreographic quality of the cutting, the Fanck-typical shots against the light and the slow-motion pictures of artistic skiing tricks never seen in the cinema before. This very convincing film creativity meant that “Der weiße Rausch” had an effect worldwide. The cinema success in European cities meant that a hitherto little known leisure activity became a popular sport and later a mighty industry: winter sports.

After the terror and misery of the Second World War the film land Tirol had an amazing relaunch: between 1946 and 1952 the little village of Thiersee in the Tirolean Lower Inn Valley near Kufstein became the focal point for Austrian post-War films, the Passion Play theatre was the most modern film studio throughout the entire country. 18 national and international films were made during that time in the Tirol. They included “Wintermelodie”, “Wonderkid” and “Das doppelte Lottchen” with famous actors like Curt Jürgens, Hans Albers, Oskar Werner and Paula Wessely.

In the 50s and 60s of the last century numerous “Heimatfilme” were shot in the Tirol. These predominantly light-hearted and entertaining, sometimes cliché-like films such as “Sissi”, “Dort oben, wo die Alpen glühen”, “Drei Männer im Schnee”, “Hoch droben auf dem Berg”, “Die Zwillinge vom Zillertal”, “Das Hirtenlied vom Kaisertal”, “Sturm am Wilden Kaiser” und “Der schwarze Blitz”, brought the most well-known German-speaking actors and actresses of the time in front of the camera. They included Romy Schneider, Hans von Borsody, Karlheinz Böhm, Peter Weck, Peter Alexander, Gunther Philipp, Gerhard Riedmann, Christine Kaufmann, Hans Moser, Paul Hörbiger, Uschi Glas and Toni Sailer. These films in a Tirolean setting promoted a remarkable touristic – and hence commercial – upswing for the province. This effect was reinforced by the repeated use of the name “Tirol” in the film titles, for example “Das Forsthaus in Tirol”, “Ja, ja, die Liebe in Tirol”, “Da lacht Tirol”, “Das Schloss in Tirol”, “So liebt und küsst man in Tirol”, “Verliebte Ferien in Tirol” and “Mein Schatz ist aus Tirol”. Memorable, too, the first TV series that was shown at that time: “Mario” was the exciting tale of a Tirolean boy, played by Mario Peis (the son of skiing world champion Dagmar Rom and the journalist Günther Peis), who – together with his alsatian dog “Truxi” had experienced many an adventure on skis, in particular in the Kühtai.

Various interesting and international film productions were also realized at least in part in the Tirol at that time. They included “The Gamma People” by John Gilling with Paul Douglas and Eva Bartok in Imst, “The Main Attraction” under the direction of Daniel Petrie with Pat Boone and Nancy Kwan in Kühtai, “La strega bruciata viva” under the direction of Lucchino Visconti with Silvana Mangano and Annie Girardot in Kitzbühel, “The Double Man” under the direction of Franklin J. Schaffner with Yul Brynner and Britt Ekland on the Arlberg, “Ruba al prossimo tuo” directed by Francesco Maselli with Claudia Cardinale, Leon Askin and Rock Hudson in Itter or “Assignment K” directed by Val Guest with Stephen Boyd, Camilla Sparv, Robert Hoffmann and

Vivi Bach in Kitzbühel, “A Matter of WHO” directed by Don Chaffey with Terry Thomas, Sonja Ziemann and Richard Briers in Ehrwald and Berwang.

In 1969 the Tirol was chosen as the setting for two major international films: “The Last Valley” was shot in the Gschnitztal under the direction of James Clavell with Michael Caine, Omar Sharif and Florinda Bolkan and its background was the Thirty Years’ War. “Downhill Racer” was mainly shot in Kitzbühel and St. Anton; directed by Michael Ritchie it featured Robert Redford, Gene Hackman and Camilla Sparv.

With the French film production “The Bear”, directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud in 1987, the film land Tirol again took the international stage. The East Tirol was chosen as the scene of this film mainly on account of the mountain landscape around Lienz. Cleverly, it combined elements of an animal film, an adventure film and a family film. It became a great cinema hit worldwide. Annaud was so impressed by the locations in the East Tirol and by the friendliness and helpfulness of the Tirolean population that he said, “The Tirol is industrious like Germany, beautiful like Switzerland and charming like Italy.”

In 1991 suitable locations were sought throughout the Alps for the TV series “Der Bergdoktor”. The Tirol Tourist Board was asked to help and made suitable suggestions for the German film production company. Finally, the village of Wildermieming on the Mieminger Plateau above Telfs was selected as the site, the house of the “mountain doctor” was duly built and filming continued until 1998. This experience led to the Tirol Tourist Board’s founding the **Cine Tirol Film Commission** in 1998, it was managed by Josef Margreiter and film maker Erich Hörtnagl acted as expert adviser. The Commission’s main purpose has remained the active promotion of the Tirol as a film land in order to draw attention to outstanding locations and easy accessibility even in the high mountains and the glacier regions. International film makers are impressed by the immediate proximity to each other of the Alpine wilds and a strong infrastructure in respect of tourism and transport. Further factors in the success of the province are the four striking seasons as well as the possibility of shooting winter scenes on five Tirolean glaciers in the spring and autumn months, the admirable competency of local film makers and the great range of architecture – from medieval castles to state-of-the-art cableway stations. What is more, the Tirol can look back on a changing history and countless tales which are the stuff of exciting and touching films. Important, too, is the highly positive and film-friendly attitude of the local population as well as regional and local authorities. Film teams from many countries are made to feel welcome and well looked after. Decisive competitive factors are the means of support and practical help provided before and during shooting by Cine Tirol as a professional film commission that sees itself as the driving force of the film land Tirol.

Since 1998 the Cine Tirol team under Johannes Koeck has introduced comprehensive measures in communications and marketing in order to make the Tirol the “leading film land in the Alps”. These include Cine Tirol presentations at film centres in Austria and abroad, from Vienna to Mumbai, participation in international film festivals from Berlin to Busan, location fairs and coproduction meetings from Munich to Los Angeles. The acquisition of specialist events like EAVE where young and experienced film producers receive training and further training provide means

to make decision makers more aware of the film land Tirol. In addition Cine Tirol is a member of the AFCI (Association of Film Commissioners International) and a founding member of EUFCN (European Film Commissions Network) and the AFC&F (AUSTRIAN Film Commissions & Funds).

As a special service, Cine Tirol provides a comprehensive location service for all film makers. During the decision-making phase in particular the provision of information and personal attention for producers, directors, heads of production and location scouts enables the land to be seen in all its variety. Excellent contacts with the local population and outstanding local knowledge characterize the Cine Tirol location service, as do professional contacts with companies, authorities and the film branch, quick access to extensive photo and video archives and libraries, linguistic ability, dedication and great empathy.

Selected film projects also receive financial support in form of a non-repayable production grant from Cine Tirol. The main grant criteria include the economic effect of the production on the region („Tirol Effect“) and the thematic relation of the production to the region („Tirol Reference“).

Training and further education for Tiroleans involved in film-specific work constitutes another Cine Tirol priority. As part of seminars and workshops those interested receive training in location scouting and Alpine location management, the network of Tirolean film makers being given help and support.

Since the foundation of Cine Tirol in 1998 more than 1000 film productions from near and far have been hosted by the Tirol. They include – to name but a few – **feature films** like „James Bond 007 – SPECTRE“, „Downhill“, „Madison“, „Eddie the Eagle“, „Point Break“, „Snowpiercer“, „Stars in the Winter Sky“, „Tiger Zinda Hai“, „Yuvvraaj“, „Saaho“, „As it is in heaven“, „The Educators“, „Last Holiday“, „In 3 Tagen bist du tot 2“, „xXx – Triple X“, „Der Architekt“, „März“, „The Mystery of the Snowqueen“, „Rise up and Dance!“, „Vals“, „Extreme Ops“, „Die Freiheit des Adlers“, „Lapislazuli – Im Auge des Bären“, „Bergkristall“, „Vollgas“, „Die Skitour“, „Helden in Tirol“, „Flashback“, **television films** like „Der Schandfleck“, „Schwabenkinder“, „Franz und Anna“, „Gefährliche Gefühle“, „Gipfelsturm“, „K2“, „Die Lawine“, „Crazy Canucks“, „Das Weihnachtsekel“, „Der letzte Kronzeuge“, „Ausgelöscht“, „Gletscherblut“, „Der Bär ist los“, „Die Hüttenwirtin“, „Die Wanderhure“, „Die Hebamme – Auf Leben und Tod“, „Die Aufnahmeprüfung“, „Der Meineidbauer“, „Stille“, „Fremder Feind“, **TV serials** like „Tatort“, „Landkrimi Tirol“, „Im Tal des Schweigens“, „Wilder Kaiser“, „Da wo die Berge sind“, „Der Metzger“, „Team Alpin“, **TV series** like „Der Bergdoktor“, „SOKO Kitzbühel“, „Pardes Mein Hai Mera Dil“ and „Powder Park“ as well as numerous **documentaries** like „Glockner – Der schwarze Berg“, „Unterwegs nach...Heimat“, „Vom Leben am Steilhang“, „Im Reich des Steinadlers“, „Der Inn“, „Schnee“, „Streif – One Hell of a Ride“ and **short films** by young producers e.g. „Excuse Me, I’m searching for the Ping-Pong Room and My Girlfriend“ or **commercials** for leading companies and brands like BMW, Porsche, Jaguar, Mercedes, Volkswagen, Opel, Suchard, Coca Cola, Pepsi, Sony Ericsson, Tchibo, Karstadt, Napapijri, Scania, Shell, Garmin, Samsung, Telekom and many **music videos**, such as „Perfect“ by Ed Sheeran, „Ohne Dich“ by Rammstein, „Parasol Peak“ by Manu Delago and „Enni soni“ from the Bollywood movie „Saaho“.

Many well-known film figures have come to locations in the Tirolean mountains since the foundation of Cine Tirol, among them Daniel Craig, Will Ferrell, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Hugh Jackman, Vin Diesel, Queen Latifah, Peter Storemare, Mario Adorf, Heino Ferch, Daniel Brühl, Tobias Moretti, Bernhard Schir, Christian Berger, Ina Weisse, Josef Bierbichler, Iris Berben, Karl Markovics, Fritz Karl, Désirée Nosbush, Joseph Vilsmaier, Sabine Derflinger, Matthias Schweighöfer, Brigitte Hobmeier, Harald Krassnitzer, Fritz Wepper, Kristina Sprenger, Hans Sigl, Nicholas Ofczarek, Hannah Herzsprung, Hans Weingartner, Ruth Drexel, Kurt Weinzierl, Günther Maria Halmer, Robert Palfrader and many others.

The successes hitherto have put the “land in the mountains” in the international spotlight, film makers coming here from many European countries as well as overseas countries, e.g. USA, Canada, Brasil, Korea, Russia, U.A.E., Indonesia, Japan and China. The great interest shown by Indian film producers in particular has been a pleasant surprise for the Cine Tirol team. India has the biggest film industry in the world and brings more than 1,000 new films to cinema every year, not just India, but worldwide between Mumbai, London and Los Angeles. The Tirol provides heavenly film sets for Indian tastes: flower-carpeted meadows, green forests, clear water and gentle hills in the foreground and snow-covered peaks in the background, the ideal location for elaborate scenes with dancing and singing with super stars like Salman Khan, Anil Kapoor, Ajay Devgan, Sonali Bendre and Katrina Kaif. More than 85 Indian film productions have meanwhile been realized here.

Various “made in Tirol” film projects have won awards – an Oscar nomination for “Wie im Himmel” (“As it is in heaven”/“Så som i himmelen”), the German Film Prize for “Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei” (“The Edukators”), the Silver Leopard for “März”, the German television prize for “Schwabenkinder” and the Romy for “Unterwegs nach ... Heimat”.

Cine Tirol itself honours those who have given special service to the film land Tirol: they receive the “Cine Tirol Award”. The prizewinners hitherto were the director Jean-Jacques Annaud, the Berlinale director Dieter Kosslick, the actor Tobias Moretti, Erich Hörtnagl, one of the founding fathers of Cine Tirol, the director of the international film festival Innsbruck IFFI, Helmut Groschup, script author Felix Mitterer, actor Harald Krassnitzer, director and cameraman Georg Riha, EAVE-manager Tina Trapp, the “picture maker” Joseph Vilsmaier, the “Bergdokter” Hans Sigl, the Tirolean actress and former lead actress of „SOKO Kitzbühel“ Kristina Sprenger, initiator of 007-ELEMENTS Jakob Falkner and Cine Tirol Co-founder and current CEO of Lebensraum Tirol Holding Josef Margreiter.

The commercial effect thanks to production related expenditures in the various Tirolean regions has hitherto amounted to an impressive amount, added to that there are the extremely pleasing media effects thanks to reporting on the productions made in the Tirol. The number of cinema visitors and TV and YouTube viewers thanks to “made in the Tirol” films is also remarkable: in 2019 over 470 million people watched moving, touching and entertaining shots of the Tirol.

One great concern of the Cine Tirol team has always been the touristic exploitation of the film productions in the Tirol. 27% of those surveyed by a Halifax Travel Insurance study said that when

choosing a holiday destination they had been inspired by cinema and TV-films; and the Travelsat study found that in 2012 more than 40 million tourists chose their holiday destination because of a film. The dedicated efforts by those responsible for tourism range from the Cine Tirol movie map on the home page of Cine Tirol and the references to “Tirollywood – Tirolean film regions introduce themselves” on [www.tirol.at/tirollywood](http://www.tirol.at/tirollywood), to premiere events on the spot, regular preview guest information, first showings, the exhibition “Thiersee and its film history” or the “Bergdoktor” cycling trail in Wildermieming. Meanwhile various regional programmes have taken shape under the motto “On the trail of film productions”. The Wilder Kaiser Tourist Office started a highly successful promotion in conjunction with the TV series “Der Bergdoktor”: fans of this popular series can take part in guided walks and “Meet & Greet” events with the “Bergdoktor” Martin Gruber alias Hans Sigl.

Cine Tirol has also contributed to the development of film festivals in the Tirol, supporting the International Film Festival Innsbruck (IFFI), the Filmfest St. Anton am Arlberg, the International Film Festival Kitzbühel (FFKB), the Innsbruck Nature Film Festival (INFF), the Politfilmfestival and the Diametrale.

All these efforts are rooted in the awareness and enthusiasm of the Cine Tirol team and its partners and the knowledge that the Tirol possesses the top requirements for a film land and that the positive effects for the Tirol trademark and the individual regions are enormous in all respects.

Thus the Tirol has become a very well-known and popular location. The “Land in the mountains” is set to remain the leading film land in the Alps, attracting film makers from all over the world to the “Heart of the Alps” so that here – between the East Tirolean Villgratental and Bschlabs in the Außerfern, between St. Christoph am Arlberg and the Kitzbüheler Alpen, between the Kaunertal glacier and the old town of Hall, between the futuristic cableway architecture in the Sölden skiing areas and Schloss Ambras, between the last wild river in Europe in the Lechtal and the Tirolean fiord on the Achensee, between the farmhouse museum in Kramsach and the ski jump on Bergisel in Innsbruck or other fascinating locations in the Tirol – they can realize their film aspirations.

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