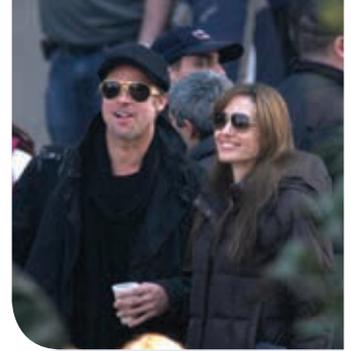




LUXE



## ✈ LUXE EXPERIENCE

# Lights, Camera, Budapest

Stepping out of the shadows of Prague and Paris, Budapest is setting the scene and becoming a popular setting for major Hollywood films. Travel enthusiast and movie junkie Michelle Tchea heads there hoping to rub shoulders with her favourite stars. *Words by Michelle Tchea*

The cinematic vistas of Budapest are without a doubt beaming with Hollywood appeal. Walking down the streets of the Hungarian capital, it is easy to see how the attractive city is a draw card for more than just tourists. While Eastern Europe has been home to many Hollywood productions, Budapest is quashing all competition and encouraging industry spearheads to choose the Danube River as the backdrop to its next million-dollar project.

In the last decade, many have followed in the footsteps of *Casablanca* director Michael Curtiz and turned the streets of Budapest into prime movie locations. Taking full advantage of the government's tax rebate for foreign and domestic film productions, production companies are finding it hard to

resist the European charm. With low production costs and a picturesque Budapest backdrop, the architectural buildings and historical bathhouses leave many saying *au revoir* to Paris and *szia* to Hungary.

For tourists and local movie buffs roaming Váci Utca for a little retail therapy, it's easy to get lost in a 19<sup>th</sup>-century street scene with bowler hats, similar to those out of *Bel Ami*, starring teenage heartthrob Robert Pattinson. However, if action is more your thing, turn the corner and you may just be in the way of Bruce Willis, saving the world from yet another world domination plot in the *Die Hard* series.

The slightly disturbing yet eerie feel of Budapest mixed with the historical buildings of tougher communist times provides an unparalleled setting.

From doubling as Buenos Aires in the 1996 film *Evita* to the serene streets of Steven Spielberg's *Munich*, Budapest is not slowing down as host.

After shooting: *Mission Impossible - Ghost Protocol*, Tom Cruise probably had a few travel tips for fellow actors Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, who called the city home for the filming of the much anticipated drama *World War Z* and *Wanted*.

Random cafés are the best places to spot your favourite stars, such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, or Jeremy Irons, star of TV series *The Borgias*. 2013 cements Budapest as the next Hollywood, with British actor Luke Evans returning to Budapest (after filming *The Raven* there last year) for the remake of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Now that is something to sink your teeth into. ✈

## MADE IN BUDAPEST

### Past films:

*Spy Game* – Brad Pitt and Robert Redford  
*Evita* – Madonna and Antonio Banderas  
*Munich* – Eric Bana, Daniel Craig  
*Underworld* – Kate Beckinsale  
*The Raven* – John Cusack and Luke Evans  
*Mission Impossible:*  
*Ghost Protocol* – Tom Cruise  
*The Rite* – Anthony Hopkins

### 2013 and beyond:

*World War Z* – Brad Pitt  
*A Good Day to Die Hard* – Bruce Willis  
*Dracula* – Luke Evans

### Places to go star spotting:

Streets of Budapest – Váci Utca; *Sziget Festival* in August (Music and Cultural Festival); *Cafe Gerlőczy* – Gerlőczy Street 1; *Gundel Restaurant* – 14<sup>th</sup> District, Gundel Károly Street 4; *Gerbeaud* – 1051 Vörösmarty tér 7–8 Budapest; and *Restaurant Zona* – Lánchíd Utca 7–9 Budapest