

International Production Guide to British Columbia

British Columbia has played host to many US and International Productions over the years due to the province's diverse [World of Looks](#). Understanding the regulations around filming in BC can be complex, especially if you're used to a completely different set of rules.

If you are interested in bringing a production to BC, please contact [Creative BC](#) at your earliest opportunity, as this will save you time and money. Our services are free and include valuable information and support to international crews.

How can Creative BC help me?

The [Film Commission at Creative BC](#) offers a full range of [production services](#) and expertise for Producers who are considering filming in British Columbia. Our staff is comprised of industry professionals who provide free advice and information about filming in BC. Upon request, we can provide names of local experienced Production Managers and Production Service providers who can assist with budgeting, planning and crewing for your project in BC. Hiring local Location Managers and Scouts is highly recommended, since they will also have exclusive access to Creative BC's digital location library containing over 22,000 location files from around the province.

What are the financial incentives for me?

Your production company may be eligible for refundable tax incentives based on hiring BC labour for the filming you do in British Columbia. For more information please visit the [Tax Credit](#) section on our website.

Who is permitted to come into the country as part of my filming team?

Creative BC has no authority over immigration, but we can direct you to the federal agencies who handle visa requirements. Depending on the nationality of your visiting crew, you should allow plenty of lead time to obtain work permits, and especially if you're from countries that require visas (4-6 weeks) for entering Canada. You will need to ensure that all the correct documents are obtained and if you require an LMIA (Labour Market Impact Assessment) for each cast and crew that you wish to bring in to work in BC, you will need to apply through [Service Canada](#). Once an LMIA has been received, employers of temporary foreign workers are expected to be aware of their responsibilities and obligations under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA). Employers can be subject to [Inspections](#) by Service Canada.

How much will it cost me to film in British Columbia?

The complexity of your filming activity will determine the costs involved. We recommend that you engage a local Production Manager as early as possible to assist you with budgeting and expenditure planning. We can provide names of local experienced production managers.

Am I required to hire a Canadian Production Manager or service company?

It is not legally required but the regulatory environment here is extensive and complex. Creative BC wishes that all visiting productions have a positive, productive experience by working with our local world-class Production Managers and Production Service companies.

How do I ensure that I get the locations I need *and* be cost effective?

It is very important that you hire an experienced and qualified Location Manager as early as possible. Location Managers and Location Scouts familiar with BC locations, regulations and standards are a smart early investment in your project.

Why do I need to hire a Location Manager?

Filming on location in British Columbia can be complicated and location fees can vary enormously depending on where you film, the shots you require, and the size of your cast and crew. BC is a very busy production centre, so we recommend you hire an expert who knows the local procedures well and has the necessary relationships with locations and permitting authorities. They will ensure your shoot will be as smooth as possible and will get you the best deals.

How much prep time do I need?

This will depend on your script and your location requirements. Instant access to locations is extremely unlikely. Most municipalities require 3-5 days' notice minimum to process film permit applications. Location Managers & Scouts also need sufficient time to source and secure locations. You should plan to do at least one initial scout, and nearer the shoot date you will need to do a technical survey with all department heads present.

What about the unions?

It is recommended and more practical to work with the most experienced management teams available. The members of the DGC-BC ([Director's Guild of Canada](#)) have acquired sufficient experience to provide a solid base to the Production Management, Location Management, and Assistant Director aspects of your production. A management team with expertise in local filming regulations and labour standards are well positioned to provide for a smooth-running shoot. While there is no legal requirement to work with the other unions representing performers, technicians, and drivers, local Production Managers know when a production can feasibly consider working non-union.

What are the Labour standards in BC?

Labour standards in British Columbia are strictly enforced and may differ from those with which you are familiar. It is important that you acquaint yourself with these regulations before you commence filming, through an experienced local Production Manager, who will be able to assist you in ensuring you are compliant with relevant labour law. There are important regulations concerning topics such as: the number of hours that can be worked, meal times and regular breaks required, access to washrooms and holding facilities as well as specific regulations for the employment of minors. There is also an expectation to meet minimum quality of accommodation standards for out-of-town cast and crew while staying in BC.

What are the Health and Safety standards in BC?

There are stringent Health and Safety Guidelines for those working in the film and TV industry in British Columbia. Agencies such as Work Safe BC and Act Safe are there to provide guidance and ensure compliance with the necessary procedures and requirements. You can find out more on their websites: actsafe.ca and worksafebc.com

Do I need to have liability insurance?

You will only be given permission to film at a location if you have public liability insurance. All productions, international and Canadian, need insurance and must present it to receive permission for filming. Your local Production Manager will be able to guide you through the process.

How do I pay for crew and services in British Columbia?

You should always have signed contracts for all cast and crew to ensure everyone is clear about the terms of hire. It is also industry practice to have signed agreements with relevant municipal governments, locations and facilities and be apprised of their filming guidelines. You will need to set up a BC bank account. Generally, locations require payment in advance, a signed agreement and proof of insurance before location preproduction can commence and municipalities generally require a deposit for filming fees. You must ensure you have sufficient funds to cover all production costs.

Thank you for considering British Columbia for your project!