

TV and Movie Tours – Lights! Camera! Action!

In 1999 while moving to the Upper East Side Georgette Blau realized she lived near the apartment used in *The Jeffersons*. Using her passion for classic television and cinema as inspiration, Blau began New York's first, and currently the world's largest, TV and Movie tour company, On Location Tours.

Television and movies bridge cultural and continental divides more than any other medium. In New Zealand, for example, the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy increased tourism to the area by 16%. Similarly, Australia saw a 20.5% increase in visitors thanks to movies such as *Crocodile Dundee*, *The Man from Snowy River* and *Mad Max*.

“My aim was to create tours that allow people to straddle the border between fiction and reality ultimately bringing them closer to the characters and TV history itself,” Blau said. In an effort to heighten the overall experience our tours are staffed with local actors who are able to offer an insider's perspective on the industry and share behind-the-scenes information. We also sing TV theme songs and show video clips from the locations to further connect the experience to the fans' pop culture knowledge. We currently serve over 100,000 domestic and international tourists per year.”

In 2009 OLT introduced a TV and Movie tour in Washington DC, a city full of filming sites universally recognized. Political dramas, disaster movies and romantic comedies all use the same landmarks to tell their stories. *Forrest Gump* is a prime example of the post-modern movie experience; it is a film based on recognizable places and events and when tourists see these locations they feel more connected than they would if the reference were purely historic.

New York TV and Movie Sites is the company's flagship tour, available in English and German, showcasing more than 60 locations from some of the most famous places seen on screen. Sites from *Friends*, *Damages*, *Seinfeld*, *The Cosby Show*, *Spider-Man*, *I Am Legend*, *Men in Black* and *The Devil Wears Prada* are featured. This tour can be coupled up with the NBC Studio tour or a Film Workshop, which includes learning the film-making process and the illustrious history of the New York film industry. This and our Central Park TV & Movie Sites Walking Tour are considered our all-audience tours.

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With an expansive female audience, the *Sex and the City* Hotspots tour includes more than 40 locations from the hit TV show and both movies. Available in English and German, passengers see where the fabulous foursome shop, drink and dine. Locations include the art gallery where Charlotte worked, the location of Carrie & Big's rehearsal dinner and the bar owned by Aidan and Steve. This tour has an off-shoot, the All Day *Sex and the City* Hotspots tour, that is more focused on shopping and also includes a three-course lunch at a location used in the first movie.

We cater to our younger guests with the *Gossip Girl* Sites tour. Visitors experience a day in the life of

Manhattan's privileged prep school kids on this excursion through Upper and Lower Manhattan. Locations include The Palace Hotel, home to the Bass and van der Woodsen families, The Constance Billard School for Girls, and Henri Bendel where Blair and Serena frequently shop, and many more. There are more than 40 locations on this tour.

The Sopranos Sites tour is geared toward the male audience, as they join the mob on a trip through New Jersey, covering more than 40 locations from the hit show. The Bada Bing, the Muffler Man and Pizzaland are some of the highlights. Guests also get a chance to sit in the same spot Tony Soprano sat in the final, controversial episode.

Film buffs can enjoy the Classic New York Movie Sites tour. This guided tour of iconic films spanning from the 50s through the 80s provides nostalgic fun around the Big Apple. The sites hail from timeless films including Marilyn Monroe's subway grate from *The Seven Year Itch*, Holly Golightly's brownstone from *Breakfast At Tiffany's*, Woody Allen and Diane Keaton's bench from *Manhattan*, and many more.

Since launching On Location Tours in 1999, Blau also founded the Association for TV and Movie Tours (ATTAM), the only organization in existence dedicated to the rapidly growing sector of TV and movie tourism. ATTAM provides free, focused representation and networking opportunities to companies around the world that run film tours. There is no doubt that On Location Tours is a force to be reckoned with in film tourism.

By Pauline Gacanja (On Location Tours)

www.screentours.com

Date: 2010-09-27

Article link:

<http://www.tourism-review.com/travel-tourism-magazine-movie-tours-around-new-york-city-article130>

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