

No vaccine required

Credit crunch woes are making worldwide headlines. We're told household spending is being reined in. Folks are no longer tossing about their borrowed cash, buying products willy-nilly, eating out, or visiting their local pubs for a pint or two. Yet, during this recession, cinema admissions are up. In some places, so is tourism. Love affairs between movies and their travel-happy fans last through good times and bad.

In 1965, *The Sound Of Music* dazzled audiences far and wide. Forty-four years later, fans still flock to the magnificent meadows of the Austrian Alps (even though they were filmed in Bavaria, Germany), the gazebo, and Salzburg. They also visit the von Trapp villa without a care that it wasn't shown in the musical. Afterward, they just head over to Leopoldskron Castle, which was filmed in its place. Credit crunch, schmedit crunch! *The Sound Of Music* tour continues to be one of Austria's top draws.

After viewing the jubilant *Mamma Mia!*, cash-strapped people who yearn for sunshine and romance, apparently go home and raid their piggy banks *en masse*. Shortly thereafter, they transport themselves away to the suddenly-famous Greek islands of Skopelos and Skiathos, where the film was set. Who can blame them?



Exhibition, informs screentrade's **Christine Todd**, is partly responsible for one of the bugs to have infected untold numbers throughout the world – the travel bug.

Not only musicals and romances give people itchy feet. Vampire films continue to support Romania's cash flow. Despite the fact that Dracula never existed, tourists go along for the ride, suspending disbelief for the fun of it. They visit Curtea Domneasca, his palace in Bucharest, lodge at the relatively new Castle Dracula Hotel on the Borgo Pass, and eat at The Golden Crown in Bistrita. Even during a credit squeeze, there's nothing like a good old spending spree to lift the spirits.

Films promote tourism internationally and locally, a boon to financially-strapped natives. In England, Harry Potter tours peak whenever a new sequel is introduced. Fans collect at Oxford's Christ Church University to see Hogwarts' Great Hall. They tour Gloucester Cathedral and check out exterior views of Alnwick Castle. Fast-thinkers at London's King's Cross Station even installed a plaque on Platform 9 to alert travellers that this is the

very place where Harry set off for Hogwarts. It all helps pad the national coffers.

Australia is an epic film primed for mining tourists. After seeing Nicole Kidman, Hugh Jackman and their crew of cowboys and cowgirls move cattle across the northern outback's spectacular landscapes, even city slickers are tempted to phone their travel agents. Locations in Bowen, Darwin, Kununurra and Sydney are also caught on film. Where is a fan to start?

By providing upsides to the credit crunch, the Film industry remains inadvertently heroic. Movies help promote the spending and exchanging of money worldwide. They offer the promise of romance. They provide us with escape from drudgery. And they inspire us to appreciate the benefits of travel, if only from our cinema seats. Even during recessions, movies move people. **S**

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