

Kuala Lumpur



MALAYSIA

New facilities and incentives are making the territory Asia's latest go-to location. Liz Shackleton reports

Malaysia is emerging as Asia's next hot shooting location, thanks to the introduction of a 30% cash rebate on production and post-production spend, and the opening of Pinewood Iskandar Malaysia Studios (PIMS).

The latter was established by Malaysia's sovereign wealth fund Khazanah Nasional through a strategic alliance with the UK's Pinewood Shepperton Group.

Introduced at the beginning of 2013, the Film In Malaysia Incentive (FIMI) is available for international features spending a minimum of \$1.5m in the country. Productions to apply so far include Michael Mann's high-tech thriller *Cyber*, which shot in Kuala Lumpur (as well as China and the US), and Netflix original series *Marco Polo*, produced by The Weinstein Company, which is shooting at PIMS. Khazanah has established a subsidiary, Rhizophora Capital, offering loans to cash-flow the rebate.

In addition to five sound stages, with a total area of 100,000 sq ft, PIMS also houses two 12,000 sq ft HD-equipped TV studios, a green-screen water tank, backlots, digital post-production facilities and support services including production offices, catering, dressing rooms and workshops.

Beyond the studios, Malaysia has similar locations terrain to Thailand, including rainforest, beaches, highlands and modern cityscapes.

Pinewood Iskandar Malaysia Studios



Although *Entrapment* (1999) and *Anna And The King* (1999) both filmed in Malaysia, the country is relatively new to servicing international productions so PIMS and local authorities and universities are running training courses for local crews.

Local production services companies include Biscuit Films, which worked on *Cyber* last year.

THE LOWDOWN ON MALAYSIA

Is there a minimum spend requirement for the 30% cash rebate?

Yes. The minimum spend for foreign productions is \$1.5m (RM5m) for features, \$118,000 (RM385,000) per hour for TV and \$462,000 (RM1.5m) for post-production. For local productions, the minimum spend is \$770,000 (RM2.5m) for features, \$59,000 (RM193,000) per hour for TV and \$154,000 (RM500,000) for post-production.

Are the financial incentives easy to combine with incentives in other territories?

In theory this should not be a problem, but the rebate is new so this has not really been tested.

Can incoming TV productions and commercials access the incentives?

The rebate also covers TV series — including game shows and reality shows — documentaries, commercials and short-form animation.

What are the key locations?

Tropical rainforests; highlands; islands and beaches; historical Malay, Chinese and colonial architecture; modern cityscapes.

What are the major film studios?

PIMS in Iskandar, KRU Studios in Cyberjaya near Kuala Lumpur.

Do incoming productions need to bring their own crew?

Yes, because the country is in the process of upskilling. Experienced crew could also be flown in from Australia and Thailand.

Do crews speak English?

English is spoken widely in Malaysia.

First point of contact

Film In Malaysia Office (FIMO) under the National Film Development Corporation Malaysia (FINAS).

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GOOD TO KNOW

Malaysia has a mixed population of Malays, Chinese and Indians, so there is no problem finding actors, extras and TV audiences of different ethnicities.