

Podcast “Filming in Portugal. See the big picture” | Season 2

Transcription of the episode 2 with Ana Alonso and Daniel Louro

[00:00:15 Martin Dale]: So I'd like to welcome everyone to another episode of the podcast “Filming in Portugal: See the big picture”. An initiative of the Portugal Film Commission. I'm Martin Dale, a journalist with *Variety*. And today we're going to be talking about screen tourism, which basically means tourism related to film and television shows. And I'm delighted that our two guests are Ana Alonso and Daniel Louro. Ana is Spanish, she's lived much of her life in Barcelona and is now living in Cantabria, in the north of Spain. She's a consultant and has her own company called The Travelling Set, with which she's worked a lot for screen tourism, above all in the Spanish market. Daniel Louro is Portuguese, based in Lisbon and he has an Instagram site and sites on social media under the name The World is a Set. And has travelled widely around the world, photographing locations linked to film and television productions.

So perhaps we could begin, with each of you explaining a bit what screen tourism is and your own activities. Perhaps I'll begin with Ana, and then we'll go to Daniel. So, Ana what is screen tourism and what do you do in this relationship?

[00:01:31 Ana Alonso]: Well, screen tourism, I think is the next level of cinema tourism, we can say, because when we talk about screen tourism, we go a step forward. We are talking about every kind of audiovisual, sports, that has a big impress in the travelers, taking them to the point that they wish to go to these places that are they are seen in the screen. It's also the next level of the maybe what we can know from long time ago, when we talk about the Hollywood Studios tour or something, this kind of thematic parks about series or films. Now, we notice in Spain that there is a more intense interest for this kind of tourism that takes people from out of Spain and also the Spanish people to this sets where the shooting has been developed and it's also a place that you can visit from the point of view of touristic travel.

So it's a kind of mix between two industries with a lot of potential, and in The Travelling Set we are trying to work with private and public entities, to go further in in that sense.

[00:03:13 Martin]: If we go into your website, it has one section for travelers and the other section for professionals. You're helping professionals make their sets, their locations more tourism friendly. And for tourists, you're helping them find the places they're looking for. Is that right?

[00:03:33 Ana]: Exactly, exactly. We want to stimulate the demand to the travels, to think about this possibility. And also, we think that there's still a lot of work to do with the entities, public and private entities in the tourist industry to develop this kind of offer.

[00:04:00 Martin]: Okay. That's great. So I'd like to come back to you, but let's first of all hear from Daniel. So, when did you become interested in touring the world to find these very attractive locations that have appeared in film and TV? Talk about your own experience and how this has developed and expanded.

[00:04:20 Daniel Louro]: Okay, so this started in 2018 when I was preparing this travel. I had this whole month traveling around the United States, and I started to pinpoint locations that I would like to visit. And I started to see a pattern that most of the locations I wanted to go were movie related. And I'm a movie geek. I love movies. So, that was not a surprise for me. But since I was

going to visit so many movie locations, I started to think that I should be doing something with it, not just standing there at the place and taking a picture. It's just too uninteresting, I think. So I started to think what could I do with that? And that's when the idea of framing pictures with their actual locations came. It wasn't a totally original idea. There was already 1 or 2 people doing it. But still, I thought I could do differently. Or maybe even better. Who knows? So I went forward and I started doing it.

As I said, this was a few years ago, and all of a sudden it started to be an addiction, to check to more movie locations and pay attention to movies and where they shot certain scenes. And since I'm Portuguese, Spain is just next to us. And fortunately, and contrary to Portugal, Spain has this huge tradition and history on iconic movie locations. Especially if we go back to the Western spaghetti era from Sergio Leone. So it was easy. It was the next step to also visit Spain and check some iconic movie locations from those movies. And it went from that. So that's what I've been doing in my free time and my spare time, when I travel, is to visit movie locations.

[00:06:27 Martin]: And spare time. What's your regular day job, as it were?

[00:06:31 Daniel]: I'm a videographer. I freelance. Yeah, this is a non-profitable thing. I have no sponsors. I do this just for fun.

[00:06:42 Martin]: And just before I go back to Ana, a couple more quick questions. You obviously can see the viewers of your posts where they're coming from. Are they mainly in Portugal and Spain? Or is it all around the world? What sort of mix of viewers do you get?

[00:07:00 Daniel]: It's, I would say, 50/50. Most of my followers are Portuguese followers, but sometimes, certain posts that I do, have a broad appeal. Sometimes I do different things. Like, I did this post with photos from the Carnation Revolution in Portugal, the 25th of April. There's a lot of historic photos from those days. And it was also a thing I could do following the same formula. And that's obviously a very Portuguese thing. But if I do iconic movies like *Star Wars* or *Harry Potter*, I feel that I have more engagement from international followers rather than just Portuguese for sure.

[00:07:56 Martin]: And of all your posts, which has been the one with the most hits, with the most people viewing it?

[00:08:01 Daniel]: Yeah, I would say that from the Carnation Revolution, because it got viral 1 or 2 years ago on that date.

Other than that, I had one from... Interestingly, it was one from an animation movie called *Luca*, Pixar's *Luca*, that it's not a movie that has real locations, as you might imagine, but I try to frame it with real locations that were similar to the ones that we see in the movie, in Cinque Terre, in Italy. And that one also got some engagement. Yeah, got some followers for sure. Mainly because it was an animated movie and it felt interesting to see an animated frame on a real location.

[00:08:50 Martin]: Great. So, following on from what Daniel just said, we're going to go back and forth between you. So, Ana, in terms of getting the message across, in terms of getting people involved. How important are social media for what you're doing? And, what are the best strategies to... I mean, this in a way is linked to the growth of social media. It seems to me that people are traveling more. They're sharing more photos when they go to locations.

And there's an image based, increasingly image based dimension to social media, to travel, to tourism and inevitably, of film and television. So how much emphasis do you place on that in your own work?

[00:09:34 Ana]: Well, The Traveling Set is a project that is very new. We start this year in March. But before we were more than a year working for the Spain Film Commission in a... which was the origin, I think, of The Traveling Set. Because I was the responsible for the Spain Screen Grand Tour, the project that was focused on making Spain an interesting place for screen tourism. But at that moment, we realized there was a need to do a harder work with the territories. You know, in Spain we have several autonomous regions. And there are the people that make the decisions about the promotion or how people can visit our country. So, we thought that's the people we need to talk with. And then we also, as you say, Martin, we are trying to make more remarkable places for the tourists, for the B2C.

In this case, it's obvious that we need the social media, it is very, very important. And we also are working with our website in a editorial way, like a kind of blog. We are working now in our own strategies to develop contents, a lot of contents. That's the way to arrive to people. Daniel, you should know it. When you start, you have a few followers or maybe low traffic to your website. But we know the strategy to go to the people that we think could be interested in our content. So social media will be a very, very important point in our own strategy. But our business model now is very focused in the other side, in the B2B.

[00:11:44 Martin]: B2B in the sense of services... What are the two sides of that equation? Companies serving other companies? Can you explain that better?

[00:11:54 Ana]: Yes. We start with the public entities responsible for the promotion of the different regions in Spain and try to make them understand that this is a very, very important segment.

Because the tourist model is working... I have the feeling that is working all the time with the same kind of proposals. Even when we are talking about innovation in tourism industry, we are talking more or less about the same. But screen tourism could be this change for the industry, because we are taking the potential of the audiovisual. And Spain is a leading country, attracting audiovisual shootings, every kind of, and we are a leading country for tourism.

So we are trying to make these "responsibles" to understand that they can develop an offer, trying to make people see that they can discover the region through the eyes of the director and story, etc., So we offer, most of all, a strategy, a strategy to work with this kind of proposal and then an action plan that could be routes, funny bands... Several things. Not only people going to the places just because they shoot a film that they like and they know it was shoot there.

[00:13:54 Martin]: Great. And so for Daniel, this question of the social media, because people spend so much time on social media, sometimes there's a feeling that film and TV is no longer relevant. But in actual fact, the two things go together. In particular, certain shows become cult kind of phenomena on social media. I'd like to get your view of that dynamic between the two and how you tap into that, even though you're doing it in your spare time, as you mentioned, you must be aware of what things are trending. And that also is catching your own interest. So is film and TV now dead because social media is alive? Or, it's very much a symbiosis between the two?

[00:14:40 Daniel]: I think they cross paths, quite often actually. I tend to see that newer generations don't really see movies as much as we did in the past. That's the thing. Movies tend to be only popular if they're part of a franchise, like Marvel movies, which are almost series based, I would say so. It's like a TV show, but on the big screen. So, it's part of a franchise or has some connections. Or like *Harry Potter*, for example. Those exceptions that make part of a big cinematic universe or a franchise or something, those are still going strong.

But I would say that TV shows are much more alive on social media nowadays, for sure. Yeah. It makes me sad because I'm 40 years old. I'm a millennial and I'm from a time when movies were king, and now it's the golden age of television or whatever you want to call it. And because the way they operate and the way that people watch TV shows also depends on social media. So they watch shows that people are talking about or on social media or people post pictures of them watching certain TV shows. So, yeah, there's that. But, I think, I'm not sure what kind of times are we crossing, these days, because sometimes I feel that newer generations don't really care, don't have the attention span need to watch things longer than 1 or 2 minutes.

But at the same time, there are spikes of popularity. We had *Wicked*, that's in theaters right now, it is a two hour and 40 minute movie, which is super long, and younger generations are loving it. And it's hugely popular on social media, for example. So I don't know, it's kind of a mystery that we still have to figure it out, what's happening.

[00:17:02 Martin]: These trends, has this changed at all your viewing habits in the sense that, before you go to a place do you do the research and sort of see, well, this is working well, even if I haven't seen it, then I'll go and see a series.

[00:17:15 Daniel]: Totally. I do that a lot. There are certain movies and shows and things that I have to check just because they're popular and I have... Even, I was in Japan, in September this year, and I just find out there's this hugely popular animated anime movie called *Your Name*, and they used a bunch of real locations in Tokyo, for example, and I had no idea which movie was this. And as soon as I start researching, I found out this movie was hugely popular, not only in Japan but around the world. So I started to research the locations, the real locations they used on that movie just because it was so popular. I had no idea. I watched it because it was popular, but... That thing happens for sure. Yeah.

[00:18:13 Martin]: That's great. And again, switching back to Ana, talking about the B2B and working with institutions and public and private bodies. In Portugal we've got... So this podcast is the Portugal Film Commission, and there's the joint initiative of the Portuguese Film Institute with the Portuguese Tourism Board, the Turismo de Portugal, involving at the centre of the Portugal Film Commission, of the cash rebate and cash refund schemes. And so there's a joint funding from tourism and culture cinema area. In Spain, are they similar? I mean, does the tourism authorities, I know there are regional support schemes and they're interlinked, but is there direct involvement of tourism authorities in promoting and financing film productions in Spain?

[00:19:09 Ana]: As far as I know, from the time that I was working for Spain Film Commission, this is an association, a national association. So the members of Spain Commission are the film commissions of maybe a region or a city or whatever. And most of the times, they depend on the touristic area of this region or city. But not always. But there's something curious about that, because they work for the audiovisual industry, but they are not thinking about the touristic industry. And it happens the same on the other side. That's why when we arrive to the touristic part, to explain that it's very important to bet for the screen tourism, because it's a high potential

segment in the touristic industry... It was very surprising for me because they didn't realize that it was like that. It's obvious that there is a direct impact of the shooting in the territories, but this is the second part of the impact. And it's very important because in terms of long time, you can receive richness of this shooting because the people are still going to some places that maybe there was a movie that is ten years old, but it's still relevant for the people... And there is some interest to visit this kind of places. But there are no data about this, and this is very important. And that's why we also did a study about screen tourism in Spain.

[00:21:11 Martin]: And have there been any particular shows from Spain that have suddenly massively increased tourism to specific places over, say, the last 2 to 3 years?

[00:21:21 Ana]: Yes, of course, *Game of Thrones* was the main thing. And sometimes, it has a dark side, because I don't know if you know the case of San Juan de Gaztelugatxe in Euskadi. Because the impact was so huge...

[00:21:35 Daniel]: That's the one that church that stands on a big... It's the one that has this stone?

[00:21:50 Ana]: Yes, yes.

[00:21:51 Daniel]: ... bridge that goes for the church on the top right.

[00:21:53 Ana]: In Spanish it was called stone, stone... I don't know.

[00:21:57 Daniel]: Dragon Stone? Yes. That's in Pais Basque, right?

[00:22:02 Ana]: Yes. That's the one, that's the one.

[00:22:04 Daniel]: I've been there. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:22:05 Ana]: San Juan de Gaztelugatxe is there. And after the *Game of Thrones* episodes, where it appears, there begin to arrive a lot of people. It was a touristic place, but not this, not at this point. So, it was a problem. But in Euskadi they changed the situation because they started to ask for reservations to go there, and you have to pay to make your reservation to visit San Juan de Gaztelugatxe. So now these incomes are used for the environment, to keep everything safe, the nature, everything.

And also they took another kind of decisions, like, it is not allowed to shoot a big film or a big production like *Game of Thrones*. Not anymore in San Juan de Gaztelugatxe.

So it's also risky, when we talk about screen tourism. But, I think if the responsible can manage, with some vision and with a strategy, I think it could be also very, very positive for the territories.

[00:23:33 Martin]: And Daniel, the same thing. *Game of Thrones* obviously was shooting here in Portugal as well as in Spain. And you cover both territories, as it were, both countries. Over the last 2 to 3 years what have been the big recent shows, *Game of Thrones* presumably is one of them? I don't know if there are other examples that have inspired you to travel and have also engaged a lot in social media.

[00:23:59 Daniel]: Yeah, *Game of Thrones* for sure was one of those, mainly because the show used a lot of real locations, and in this day and age is kind of rare. Well, let me see... Newer shows or more recent.

[00:24:16 Martin]: I don't know. For example, the Portuguese series *Turn of the Tide* in the Azores. I don't know if that...

[00:24:20 Daniel]: Ah, yes. Yeah. Yeah, that's a good example. Well, I haven't been in Azores since the show was shot. But, I know the little town of Rabo de Peixe, that little town on São Miguel Island - I think I'm not mistaken. It got a spike of popularity, for sure. People went there, and supposedly it's a very poor part of the island. And they were definitely not ready for the spike on tourism they were having there.

Interestingly, we had this Star Wars TV show that was shot in another Portuguese island, in the island of Madeira. I'm not sure how that affected tourism there, because they weren't shooting in obvious locations, but I guess an important film location in the history of Portugal, since we don't have Hollywood coming here every day, even though this is a TV show, but let's call it movie industry, like big American movie industry.

In Portugal, we had plenty of things happening in the last 2 or 3 years. We had a *Fast and Furious* movie, which unfortunately didn't explore much of the Portuguese landscape. It was mainly a freeway that they cut just for shooting a car chase and 1 or 2 places in Almada, in the south of Lisbon, on the other margin of the river.

And we had a Netflix show called *The Heart of Stone*, who also had car chases filmed in Lisbon's downtown, which was quite impressive, I must say. I don't think Portugal has ever seen something like that. And we have some other things happening. We had a horror movie shot here a few years ago with Nicolas Cage called *Color Out of Space*. It was shot in Sintra. So yeah, all these things going around here are fairly new for us, for sure.

[00:26:33 Martin]: And, just quickly, for both of you, I'm curious, with the pandemic, obviously, now we're all back to normal. But, suddenly between 2020 and beginning of 2022, it was almost impossible to travel because of the restrictions. Or at least it was a big change. But at the same time, people were living, traveling more through images, through social media. I'm curious to know, during that confinement period, the lockdown, how that impacted your work and your sharing of your work. So, Daniel first and then for Ana.

[00:27:14 Daniel]: Well, fortunately, I am a little obsessed with locations. Every time I go to a place, I try to do as many photos I can get. So I have lots and lots of photos in the drawer. So when pandemic hits, I had lots of photos I could still post them and pretend I was still traveling when I was clearly not. So yeah, I had that. And I could still feed my social media with new photos.

It was also a time where you could walk freely in the streets, and Portuguese landmarks were fairly available for walking around without so many tourists around. So I also did that. But yeah, in terms of engagement on social media, I think it was an interesting period, for sure. Yeah. I was gathering lots of followers around that time.

[00:28:14 Martin]: And quickly for Ana, obviously you were involved in a different way. But how did that period impact your work?

[00:28:27 Ana]: I think it had a very positive impact, because during the pandemic, streaming consumption of contents was spectacular. So, now it continues. So after the pandemic, Spanish people, especially, I've seen a study that says that, next to 80% of Spanish people paid some subscription to platforms. So it means that the people is watching series or movies. So the potential to take them to the places that they have seen in the fiction is bigger and bigger.

And also in Spain we have the situation that we travel a lot around our own country. So we are not talking only about big international productions that can make these locations interesting for foreigners. We can also manage the interest for the screen tourism in terms of national

productions that are interesting for the Spanish people that likes to travel around the country. And in this case we don't need big stars from Hollywood and so on. The small productions could be also a fun phenomenon for the Spanish people.

[00:30:15 Martin]: And in terms of the locations that have got the biggest kind of boost. Across in Spain it's been the big cities, Barcelona, Madrid, but also tiny little places, as you mentioned, like in the Basque Country. Do you think it's something that's more related to little places that people weren't aware of and suddenly go to? Presumably that's where you feel the biggest impact? But again, over the last 2 to 3 years in terms of locations, in addition to the ones you mentioned, anyone's particular that have really seen a big boom of tourists because of screen tourism?

[00:31:01 Ana]: I think it depends also on the work of the territories. I mean, for example, in Madrid, in the capital, the city, they have a lot of tours created by the film commission, you know. In this case they work in the same department of the tourism responsible. So, there is a lot of shows shoot in Madrid and they are also working in this kind of proposals.

Andalusian in general is the same. But it is true that sometimes, these small places where suddenly appears *Game of Thrones*, like El Castillo de Saфра, for example. The impact is so, so, big that it becomes something that appears in the media, and everybody is talking about. In Madrid or Barcelona, maybe something like that is not so impressive, but it's also happening, of course, because, you know, for a shooting you need the service companies, and most of them are settled in the big city. So go to a small, tiny place to shoot... I can imagine it. It is more difficult. But in terms of tourism, for me it's better because then you can work in a kind of more sustainable tourism, because people are going to places that are not so massive and not so full of people.

[00:32:44 Martin]: And also the seasonality, it can combat a bit the peaks in the summer and the main holidays. Is that true, that people start taking advantage of periods throughout the year to travel to locations linked to film and TV?

[00:33:04 Ana]: It could happen because the screen tourism is not exactly connected with the time of the year. You can go to these places every time, whenever you want. It is true that if you, for example... It comes to my mind in a small production about a trilogy of books that was shot in Navarra, and in the books the story happens always with rain, and the movies are also with rain. So when you go there, you are thinking about rainy weather. It is strange because everybody seems to look for good weather to visit any place. But if you are trying to remember or to recover this fiction, in this case, it is better for you the rainy weather. This option to break with the seasonality, is also an opportunity. But you have to work with a strategic point of view in this kind of things.

[00:34:22 Martin]: Okay. And a different subject with Daniel, the question of technology. You're primarily using photography, but you also use video, even 360 photos or video. And also in terms of... Explain a bit better how your Instagram page and these works and, linked to screen tourism, whether things like specific apps can help or whether you've been involved in anything like that, if you could explain a bit more the technology side.

[00:35:00 Daniel]: Well, I have never been involved in anything like that, but I've been contacted by some groups that are trying to build apps, like GPS apps, that are built specifically for tourists to go and meet the exact spots of certain locations. People can submit new locations on the website, and they become available immediately on their apps. I don't think any of those have

grown big enough for people to use it, but there are certain locations and places around the world that have apps for specific regions.

I'm recalling, for example, the town in Italy called Crema, where they shot the movie *Call Me By Your Name*. And that town was practically non-existent on tourist eyes. It's near Milan, but I think it wasn't visited as much, and the movie totally revolutionized tourism there. The tourist center has movie stuff like the bicycles they use, the books that were on screen... And they invite visitors to download their app so they can go around and walk, do the movie tour around the city with pictures from the movies and audio descriptions from the places. So there's that. They have that on certain locations. I'm sure they're trying to do the same thing in other places.

About the technology you're asking? Well, I primarily do photos. I also like to spend some time researching or contacting people that live there that might have worked on the movie or appear on the movie to tell a little story about every location that I visit.

The photographic thing already asks for a lot of work to get to the places and take the right pictures and do the right framing, which is harder than you might imagine because of the lenses and the differences on the landscape, etc. But I'm trying to push myself to do some videos, like reels telling a little bit more about the locations and to have some information. I mainly try to spend some time telling a story by writing it, but I feel that everything is video now on social media, right. So I'm trying to do more of that, even though it's more work, even more work.

[00:37:54 Martin]: And for Ana. So in the advising on the B2B, advising people, do this kind of issues come up, the use of video, the use of apps. Has that come up in your work?

[00:38:08 Ana]: Well, we used to offer a very wide portfolio of services, starting with the strategy. And then in the action plan, we also talk about technological develops. That should be more complicated than a website. That is something very essential. Then you can talk about virtual maps or apps or also to introduce gaming in the proposal, something that the travelers can play with, not only to see the information, to prove how much they know about the film or a production, for example.

But we try to talk to our potential customers in terms of the technology, especially when we talk about screen tourism, because something that happens in your computer or maybe in your TV... But as Daniel says, young people are using all the time the smartphone. So you have to use this kind of technology to arrive to the young generations. So yes, technology is very important, I think, to develop the screen tourism.

[00:39:52 Martin]: And just the last question, I'll start with Ana and then to Daniel. In the case of Ana, that you're very familiar with the scene of screen tourism in Spain, looking at Portugal, do you think there's opportunities for more growth? What do you think should be the main priorities, tapping into your consulting skills. How do you view the Portuguese market?

[00:40:16 Ana]: Even in Spain, when we talk with some of the responsible of the regions, not every place is the same. As I told you, Madrid, Andaluzia and Barcelona, it's very easy to work, to prepare something for screen tourism. But there are some others that do not have such a big catalog of productions to talk about. I think, it doesn't have to be a barrier. If you can manage, with a strategic point of view, it's possible to do what you want. But, you have to know what is your strongness.

In Portugal, I don't know how is the internal consumption of tourism. Because I think this is something important. As I told you before, in Spain, when we talk about, *Jason Bourne*, *Money*

Heist, Game of Thrones, is very easy to explore these opportunities with foreign travelers. But we also think that the internal travelers are very important. So in Portugal, maybe this is the point to look at... If there are not huge productions, with international staff, maybe the internal productions and the internal travelers could be the way to go further.

[00:42:10 Martin]: Okay, so that's great. Thank you. So as I said, this is the last question for Daniel. In the case of Portugal, obviously for film productions, often they're quite niche audiences. And then we get some crossover successes. There are then the big shows, both film and TV, that are popular in Portugal, but only a few of them are shot here in Portugal. So, is there potential for growth, and what do you think are the main challenges for building screen tourism in Portugal?

[00:42:42 Daniel]: Well, they always say that Portugal has a lot of different landscapes in a tiny, tiny space. And the fact that we have so many productions considering Portugal is a sign of growth. We have the excitement, that probably Spain doesn't have anymore, because your guys are used to big movie productions. That's fairly new for us.

I'm sure we have lots of professionals that are more than excited to work with foreign companies, in terms of movie production. So yeah. Bring it! I'm sure Portugal... Portuguese are easily impressed when we have big productions here and the tourism will definitely leave a mark if that happens.

And, yeah, I just saw a post yesterday from director Ron Howard. He was in Portugal. He was, allegedly, doing scouting. So there's that. Who knows what's coming.

[00:43:51 Martin]: Have you ever been asked to do location scouting for a film? Has anyone ever contacted you on the basis?

[00:43:57 Daniel]: No. Actually, no. But I know that I have lots of location scouters in the industry that follow me. I have that, but I've never been contacted, so who knows?

[00:44:13 Martin]: Well, on that note of bring it on, as Daniel said, let's increase the interest, both in Portugal, Spain. I'd like to really thank both our guests. It was a fascinating talk about screen tourism. So thank you very much, Ana Alonso and Daniel Louro. And I hope everyone can tune in to the next podcast. The next episode. Thank you very much.

[00:44:35 Ana]: Thank you.

[00:44:36 Daniel]: Can I just do the pitch? Don't forget to follow. Just to remind your listeners, it's The World is a Set on social media.

[00:44:44 Ana]: And The Traveling Set, so.

[00:44:47 Martin]: That's right. Thank you very much.

[00:44:48 Martin]: Thank you very much. Bye bye.