Almería, Land of Film

Unique scenes
The cinema of Almería
It was during the summer at the start of the fifties when Almería had its first formal contact with the world of cinema. The Spanish production “La Llamada de África” (A Call from Africa, César Fernández Arda-vín.1952) was filmed in the port of the city with some interesting scenes on the Arenica Blanca beach. But it was without doubt the French film “Ojo por ojo” (An Eye for an Eye, André Cayatte.1956) that pictured the capital as a set from Africa using various quarters of the city: Las Perchas, Pescadería, Cerro de San Cristó-bal.

From those moments until the present day hundreds of productions, both international and national, believed they had found far-away places like: El Cairo (Lawrence of Arabia), Tangier (The Wind and the Lion), Is-kenderun (Indiana Jones and the last Crusade), Pa-lermo and Messina (Patton), Cape Town (Dust), Beirut (Duffy), Mesa Verde (A Fistful of Dynamite), México city (A Bullet for the General)... Or even dreamlike or fantasy cities where characters lived their adventures, like Conan the Barbarian in a beautiful and idyllic city of southern Spain, blessed with the sun and the sea.
La Casa del Cine  
(Cinema Museum)  
Cortijo Romero, 1, Villablanca  
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Consult the times of the guided visits.
A country house, in which the splendour of the world of film can be remembered. The finca dates back to 1866, constructed on the outskirts of the city, refurbished and extended in the 20th century. The first people that lived there were the Balmas family and their descendants.

In the cinema museum there is a very special mention of an unforgettable artist who stayed in this house for a short but intense period of time; an outstanding member of The Beatles, John Lennon, who filmed “How I won the war” in Almería in 1966. Among these walls he was inspired to compose one of his most well known songs: Strawberry Fields Forever.

The building was restored to its former glory and in the original style, which is the same as that of the cortijos of Góngora or Fischer by the architect Ramón de Torres. This house has a viewpoint, a large garden featuring a pond and a dove cote tower. The gardens have been restored in a romantic style with arches and rose trellises, araucarias and palm trees; as a place in which to enjoy the water, scent and colours.

ROOM 1
Here the visitor will find themselves in the entrance hall of the mansion, where the splendour of the days of old can be recaptured. The decoration of the floor, the wooden friezes on the walls in a baronial style, speak volumes about the original intention that this salon was decorated for. A place where we will find the host of the house, who will greet us in front of a magnificent fireplace, one of the symbols of the building. The house is also known as Casa de la torre, Casa Balmas, Cortijo Romero or finca Santa Isabel.

ROOM 2
Now you enter into the museum and exhibition area where the visitor will be impressed by a hologram, introducing each of the characters that resided in the house. In a theatre like atmosphere, that combines sound and cinematic elements, we meet the key historical characters of the house. The emphasis is on the architecture, its inhabitants and the social-historical context of that time.
**ROOM 3** (35 mm.)
An exhibition area dedicated to finding out about the cinematic features of the province. It is divided into 4 independent zones:

- **Area with panels** Where you are introduced into how a film is made through the most important aspects: script, actors, specialists, extras and cinema directors. There is a themed recreation with audio-visuals and characters.
- **3D room.** A 3D film will be projected that shows you where famous films took place, both in the city and throughout the province.
- **Action, Take!** On entering the room you will feel like you are starring in a film, in the popular scenes with great characters from the history of cinema.
- **Chrome scenes** Gallery of some of the most important scenes ever filmed in Almería. The visitor can try to see himself reflected in a real scene with the most important film stars.

**ROOM 4** (The 60’s and 70’s)
In this section you can see a panoramic view of the characters. Consisting of those that lived in the house, those that spent some time in the house or some that had merely been inspired by the house. In the main salon, that has a beautiful view, we can find various cinema characters celebrating a unique and anachronistic party; like David Lean, Yul Brynner or John Lennon. The salon is a magical place, enjoy it and later turn around to look from the balcony to the beautiful gardens of the house.

**ROOM 5** (John Lennon)
This room is a sentimental introduction to the universal musician John Lennon, as this was originally his bedroom during the time he spent in the house in 1966. A journey through time, where the focal point is both his bed (functional and modern in the Lennon style) and his bathroom, where the ex Beatle composed “Strawberry Fields Forever”. In this room there is a display of people, objects and places that meant something to the composer at that time and especially to his relationship with Almería.
Walk of Fame

Located at the start of the central street Poeta Villaespesa, next to the Cervantes Theatre, the Walk of Fame formed part of the project “Almería, Tierra de Cine” (Almería, Land of Film). Through this, the City Council wants to recuperate and promote the historical and sentimental relationship of the cinema with Almería. The actor Eduardo Fajardo inaugurated this in 2012 with a bronze star, on which his name is engraved. Recently a star was added from Ridley Scott, director of Exodus.

International Short Film Festival “Almería En Corto”

Diputación Provincial de Almería
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The Festival Internacional de Cortometrajes “Almería en Corto” (International Short Film Festival) aims to be one of the most important of this genre on a worldwide level. The proof of this is shown by the hundreds of works that enter the competition each year.

The International Short Film Festival “Almería en Corto,” has the best of this genre on an international level; like the contest “Cuéntalo en 90 Segundos” (Tell it in 90 Seconds), that alongside the 48x3 Marathon, gives the opportunity for young talents to develop their potential, imagination and devotion to the seventh art.

This festival is organized by the Diputación Provincial de Almería (County Council) with the collaboration of the Ayuntamiento de Almería (City Council). Because of its involvement with Almerian society the event has fast become a tradition in this Land of Film, “Tierra de Cine.”

Almería Film Office

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Almería Film Office, member of the Andalucía Film Commission, is the support and promotional office for the cinema and professionals of this art. The aim is to make the possibilities of filming in Almería easier for people connected to the industry, in as much as looking for locations as to achieving permits. This is a magnificent tool in which to enhance Almería as a destination for all types of productions like cinema, video and TV. It has been developed through the Área de Turismo del Ayuntamiento de Almería (Department of Tourism in the Town Hall).
Theatrical Visits

It is a review of the history of the cinema of Almería, highlighting the main scenes that took place in the capital from well known films such as: “Patton”, “The Wind and the Lion” or “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade.” One can visit different filming locations like the Escuela de Artes y Oficios Artísticos (School of Arts), the Cathedral square and the Nicolás Salmerón Park with the steps leading to the Calle de la Reina, where scenes from “Patton” and “Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade,” amongst others were filmed. This also emphasises the huge changes that all of the films from the 60’s and 70’s brought to Almería. These have left plenty of anecdotes and curiosities, which are mentioned during this guided itinerary.

The visit is included within the calendar’s trimestrial programme of guided visits, organised by the City Council of Almería. The visitor can also complete the itinerary on their own by following the cinema totem posts, situated at strategic points from the film locations. These information panels provide details about each film.
Some film locations around the city

There are a series of relevant locations where scenes from the major films were shot. You can take a tour around these by following the signed information panels found at each place:

1. Calle de La Reina steps. "Lawrence of Arabia"
2. Plaza Vieja (Town Hall square). "Lost Command"
3. Plaza Chafarinas. "That Man George!"
4. Railway station. "A Fistful of Dynamite"
5. Alcazaba entrance esplanade. "You Have Made Me Crazy"
7. San Cristóbal hill entrance esplanade. "Conan the Barbarian"
8. Avenida Reina Regente. Gran Hotel Almería. "800 Bullets"
9. Nicolás Salmerón park by the Red Cross building. "The Wind and the Lion"
10. Plaza de la Catedral (Cathedral square). "Patton"
11. Plaza Bendicho- Puche’s house. "Catlow"
12. Escuela de Artes y Oficios (School of Arts). Plaza Pablo Cazard. "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade"
13. Paseo de Almería / Hotel Costasol. "The Passenger"
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