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Spotlight on New Zealand creativity and landscape

In Hollywood, the name New Zealand now shares star billing with the likes of Sir Anthony Hopkins, Naomi Watts, Kiefer Sutherland, Tom Cruise and Sir Ian McKellen.

Over the past decade, the country's reputation has developed as the perfect backdrop for some of Hollywood's finest movies.

Films like *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *River Queen*, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *Whale Rider*, and *The Last Samurai* are casting the spotlight on New Zealand's breathtaking scenery.

Director Andrew Adamson chose his home country to film key parts of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

"The South Island in New Zealand in particular is a very grand landscape, and there's a lot of unspoilt wilderness. There's very few places left in the world where you can point the camera and not see houses or hotels for 270 degrees in the frame," said Adamson.

Natural, untouched wilderness

While filming *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy in New Zealand, esteemed actor Sir Ian McKellen poured praise on the country.

"In New Zealand there really is a natural untouched wilderness and it is overwhelmingly spectacular and moving," he said.

"I can't help thinking once the world has fallen in love with the landscapes captured, they'll want to come see them for themselves."

While compliments paid by the likes of Sir Ian and Tom Cruise (who filmed *The Last Samurai* in Taranaki) are priceless to the New Zealand tourism industry, the landscape caught on celluloid does its own talking.

LOTR impact

The impact of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy has been immense. 'The Lord of the Rings Location Guidebook' is New Zealand's fastest-selling book, and international visitors flock to spots around the country that were magically transformed into Middle Earth, visiting set locations by jetboat, kayak, four-wheel drive and helicopter.

Movies are bringing the world to the most remote corners of New Zealand - like the Whanganui River, New Zealand's longest navigable waterway, and the backdrop for Kiwi director Vincent Ward's *River Queen*; and Whangara, the tiny village on the North Island's east coast (the first place in the world to see the sunrise each day) where *Whale Rider* was filmed.

River Queen and *Whale Rider* not only open a door to a lesser-known part of New Zealand, but both movies dive deep into Maori culture. Maori are increasingly using tourism to uphold and preserve their culture, and Hollywood is doing its bit to help.

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