



## **FILMING AND PHOTOGRAPHY AT GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

Thank you for your interest in using Griffith Observatory as a location for your film or TV production or photography session. This document is designed to provide information regarding production shoots at our unique and historic facility. Griffith Observatory has a long heritage of commercial filming and photography.

The Observatory's main purpose is to serve the public, and we are open six days a week, 10-12 hours a day in pursuit of this mission. We are only able to schedule filming or photography at times which do not disrupt public operation or other scheduled Observatory activities. Our options for scheduling are very limited.

In addition to limited availability, the main challenge for arranging a production shoot here is advance planning. The Observatory is a City of Los Angeles facility with a very small full-time staff. The more planning you have done and the faster you can provide requested information, the better able we will be to help you.

Finally, because we are a historic facility located in a public park, we must have rules to protect the building. This document describes them. While some may seem restrictive, each one is based on experience. You can make the process smoother by understanding the rules and making sure everyone on your crew follows them.

Please read through this document carefully. If you believe your proposed production shoot can conform to the process, requirements, and rules described below, follow the instructions at the end of this document.

Sincerely,  
Griffith Observatory Operations Staff

## **PART ONE: WHEN FILMING CAN OCCUR**

All facilities at Griffith Observatory are primarily for use of the Observatory in accomplishing its mission of public astronomy and science education. The use of Observatory facilities for activities conducted or sponsored by the Observatory takes priority over all other uses at all times. Griffith Observatory will consider appropriate and relevant requests for production shoots consistent with the Observatory's mission, requirements, and rules, and with the policies of the City of Los Angeles, Department of Recreation and Parks ("Department").

Griffith Observatory cannot permit filming or photography which:

- Competes with or disrupts Observatory programs
- Displaces or interferes with any other Observatory activities or maintenance of the facility and grounds
- Imposes an unreasonable burden on Observatory staff, other Griffith Park facilities, or the surrounding neighborhood

Major commercial film and photography shoots can generally only take place on Mondays, the only day the Observatory building is closed to the public (though the grounds are open). The Observatory has virtually no "back of house" areas where filming or photography can occur away from the public. Filming and photography in non-public areas of the building is prohibited.

**Because of the limited available times for filming, the Observatory gives strong preference to productions which portray the Observatory as "itself."**

All filming and photography proposals are subject to schedule availability as determined by Observatory management. All proposals and execution are reviewed by Observatory management for appropriateness and compliance.

Approved production activities may take place between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. Prep and clean up may be done between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. for an additional fee. This must be approved in advance and indicated on the FilmLA permit.

## **PART TWO: DEFINITIONS**

### **A. Type of Production**

Filming        Use of one or more live action cameras

Photography    Use of still photography camera equipment only

### **B. "Observatory"**

Includes the Observatory building and its adjacent grounds, parking lots, and roads. The tunnel and adjacent trails are NOT part of the Observatory grounds.

### **C. "PRODUCTION"**

The company or entity responsible for the film or TV production or photography shoot.

## **PART THREE: OBSERVATORY PRODUCTION REQUIREMENTS**

Here's what you need to do to film or photograph at Griffith Observatory.

### **A. Submit Completed and Signed Filming/Photography Proposal Form**

Please be as detailed, complete, and timely as possible. Be sure to sign at the end. Email or fax the completed form to us. (if you fax, please email us to confirm we got it).

### **B. Make a Film Reservation, Get a Film Permit, and Provide Proof of Insurance**

*NOTE: All fees associated with Park Film Office and FilmLA permitting processes are billed by those organizations directly. Please inquire with each organization regarding any such fees.*

Filming/Photography Permit Coordination. PRODUCTION must contact the Park Film Office (PFO) at (323) 644-6220 to make a location reservation. The PFO is the liaison between the Department and FilmLA to coordinate your permit.

FilmLA Permit Application. PRODUCTION must contact FilmLA to apply for a film permit. They will coordinate Fire Marshal, LAPD, and any other required approval or permits as necessary and will provide you with insurance requirements and submission procedures.

### **C. Provide a Single Point of Contact for Coordination**

PRODUCTION must designate a single point of contact for all planning associated with the production shoot. This person will be the main point of contact with Observatory staff and responsible for coordinating all production activities throughout their respective organization and those employed for the shoot. If PRODUCTION fails to designate such a person, or if the designated person is unable to provide necessary coordination, the Observatory reserves the right to cancel the production shoot.

### **D. Coordinate All Details in Advance with Observatory Staff**

Griffith Observatory has a very small full-time staff. While our Operations staff handles production shoot planning and monitoring, their primary responsibility is to run the Observatory for the public. The more advance notice, coordination, and cooperation you provide in defining the details of your planned production shoot, the better we are able to assist. PRODUCTION should schedule a walkthrough with Observatory staff as soon as possible to identify and work through issues. After the walkthrough, PRODUCTION should document specific plans – locations, timelines, parking plan and equipment – and submit them to Observatory staff for review and approval. The more detailed you can be, the faster we will be able to respond.

### **E. Pay All Observatory Fees**

All Observatory fees are set by the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners. They cannot be reduced or waived except as specified below in the Fee Exemption section. PRODUCTION must pay Observatory fees in advance directly to the Observatory, or the production shoot will be canceled. *See PART FIVE for details.*

## **F. Acknowledge and Follow All Observatory Production Rules, Including Liability**

Production Rules. The rest of this document lays out the rules associated with a production shoot at Griffith Observatory. Signature of the production proposal document binds all PRODUCTION staff to follow these rules at all times. Any exceptions to the rules must be approved in writing in advance by Observatory management.

Liability. The PRODUCTION will avoid any activity that may cause property damage or bodily injury. Failure at any time to act in such a manner will be grounds for the Observatory to terminate the production shoot. In the unlikely event of property damage or bodily injury, PRODUCTION will be liable for associated cost. The funding and timely completion of the repair, to the specification of the Observatory's technical staff is the responsibility of the PRODUCTION.

Hold Harmless – Waiver of Damages. In consideration of the City granting permission requested herein, PRODUCTION agrees to indemnify and hold CITY and its officers, agents and employees harmless from any and all claims, demands, lawsuits, actions of any kind, damages, judgments, amounts paid in settlement, costs and expenses (including attorney's fees), which may be incurred or arise out of PRODUCTION'S exercise of the permission granted or from any of the PRODUCTION's activities related thereto.

The PRODUCTION acknowledges it will use City facilities at its own risk and expressly waives any right to make or prosecute claims or demands against the City for any loss, injury or damage which the PRODUCTION may sustain by virtue of the exercise of the permission granted or by reason of any defect, deficiency or impairment which may occur from time to time from any cause of the water supply system, drainage system, heating system, gas mains, electrical apparatus or cable furnished for the event or for any loss resulting from fire, water, tornado, civil commotion, riot, landslide, windstorm, earthquake or other acts of God.

Non-Disclosure. Observatory staff may not sign non-disclosure agreements.

Release. Observatory staff may not sign release forms. The FilmLA film permit conveys all rights the City is able to provide.

## **G. Use Only Wolfgang Puck Catering for Catering and Craft Services**

Wolfgang Puck Catering holds the EXCLUSIVE contract for all food and beverage service on Observatory grounds, including craft services. Once preliminary approval has been given by Observatory for filming, **PRODUCTION must contact Wolfgang Puck Catering (WPC) to make food and beverage service arrangements.** PRODUCTION is solely responsible for these arrangements and all associated costs. Outside food or beverage service from other vendors or sources are not permitted. WPC has the right to offer a buyout option at their discretion. PRODUCTION is responsible for any and all associated costs.

## **H. Accommodate Observatory Needs**

Staff Access and Parking. During the production shoot, Observatory staff will be working in the building and on the grounds. PRODUCTION must make provisions for staff parking and building access during the shoot.

Staff Photographer. Observatory management reserves the right to assign an Observatory staff photographer to document the filming for the Observatory's archives and future filming assessment. Photos will not be published or used in a public setting without advance approval from the filming organization.

Credit. PRODUCTION should mention Griffith Observatory and the City of Los Angeles, Department of Recreation and Parks in production credits. PRODUCTION should provide a finished copy of the production to the Observatory for its archive.

## **PART FOUR: PRODUCTION RULES AND PROCEDURES**

### **A. No Smoking**

There is **absolutely no smoking** permitted anywhere at the Observatory or anywhere in Griffith Park. Rangers vigorously enforce this prohibition (63.44B24 L.A.M.C.) and may issue citations (which may include substantial fines). PRODUCTION must advise all employees and contractors not to smoke.

### **B. Load-in and Load-out Limitations**

PRODUCTION load-in and load-out plans must be coordinated with the Observatory in advance. Arrangement may be made in advance to unload and load equipment along the red curb at the horseshoe as long as direct access for a fire truck to reach the building is maintained. PRODUCTION vehicles may not block driveways or hydrants at any time and must always maintain a fire lane. Protective material underneath PRODUCTION vehicles and equipment (such as layout board) is required to prevent oil stains and other damage.

No PRODUCTION vehicles larger than a pick-up truck may approach or depart the Observatory between 10:30 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. No load-in activities may occur prior to 6:00 a.m. Filming cleanup and truck loading may begin as soon as the event is completed but must cease no later than 1:00 a.m. Loaded PRODUCTION trucks and heavy equipment may remain in the Observatory's parking lot overnight for pick-up the next morning between 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. Additional fees for added hours of set-up or wrap-up may apply. Added hours must be specified and approved in advance and included on the film permit.

### **C. Protection of Surfaces and Lawn**

PRODUCTION must ensure protection of floor and other surfaces (including concrete sidewalks, stairs, and walls) from scratches, chips and stains. Plastic, felt, or other type of protection is needed under all furnishings, set dressing, and equipment. PRODUCTION vehicles are required to use protection from oil leaks as well as scratching from lift gates or any other equipment making contact with surfaces. PRODUCTION is prohibited from placing any

vehicles, equipment, set dressing, tents, or stakes on the Observatory lawn. ANY use of the lawn must be approved by the Observatory in advance.

## **D. Site Clean Up**

Clean up is the responsibility of the PRODUCTION and must be completed during the time allotted for the film permit. It is expected the facility will be left as it was received. All trash generated by PRODUCTION must be removed from the grounds.

## **E. Parking and Traffic Control**

Parking/Base Camp Limitations. Griffith Observatory is located in a public park with access restrictions and itself has extremely limited available parking. We have a limited amount of space for production trucks and vehicles. PRODUCTION may need to make provisions for off-site parking. The Park Film Office may be able to assist with alternate locations.

Traffic Access: Depending on PRODUCTION size and scope, provisions for restricting public or vehicle access may be necessary. Please discuss in advance with the Observatory.

Traffic and Parking Plan. PRODUCTION must prepare and submit a detailed traffic and parking plan for Observatory approval prior to the FilmLA permit approval. Our staff can offer suggestions.

## **F. Electrical, Equipment, Effects, and Props**

Electrical. Use of Observatory power is not permitted. PRODUCTION must provide all necessary electrical equipment for their shoot. All power cords and cables must be properly shielded and secured so as not to present a trip hazard.

Generators. The Observatory will consider PRODUCTION requests for the use of a generator(s). Such use must be approved in advance, be outside the building, and not cause any damage (oil leakage, surface deformation, etc.) to Observatory property. Connections to generators must be secure. Cable runs must be approved in advance.

Lighting. PRODUCTION must disclose location and description of all lighting to be used. A detailed lighting plan must be submitted prior to permit approval. PRODUCTION may not:

- Project onto or materially change the appearance of the Observatory building
- Adjust or modify any of the Observatory's existing interior or exterior lighting
- Attach additional lighting to the Observatory

Construction. Usage of stages, walls, and/or other items constructed on- or off-site is prohibited.

Gunfire or Explosions. These are discouraged, owing to the Observatory's location in a heavily-visited public park, directly above a crowded neighborhood. PRODUCTION may not use simulated gunfire or explosions without explicit advance approval from the Observatory.

Smoke Machine. PRODUCTION may not use smoke machines of any kind.

Other Special Effects. As a general rule, special effects are not permitted.

Set Dressing. All set dressing and/or decorations must be approved prior to the release of the permit. PRODUCTION may not attach, affix, or place any kind of decoration onto the building interior or exterior. PRODUCTION may not use tape, stakes, staples, rope or any other implement to secure items to the physical building or grounds. This includes alteration of signs. Painter’s (“blue”) tape may be used for layout boards on ground surfaces only.

Hazardous Waste. No aspect or procedure of PRODUCTION may generate hazardous waste of any kind. Doing so is grounds for immediate cancelation.

## **PART FIVE: OBSERVATORY PRODUCTION FEES**

All Observatory fees are set by the Board of Recreation and Parks Commissioners. They cannot be reduced or waived except as specified below in the Fee Exemption section. PRODUCTION must pay fees in advance or the production shoot will be canceled. Fees may be required both for filming at the facility and for Observatory staffing. NOTE: Observatory fees are in addition to those levied by the Park Film Office and FilmLA.

### **A. Observatory Filming Fees**

Photography. Still photography rates are for a four (4) hour block of time. Each four (4) hour period is \$2,000. The fee cannot be prorated by hour.

Commercial Filming. Standard use filming rates are for days when the Observatory is closed to the public (generally Mondays). Fees are inclusive for prep, film, and wrap from 7:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. Exterior only is \$10,000 and Interior & Exterior is \$15,000. Fees cannot be prorated.

Overnight Fee. You may have the option to do set-up in the overnight hours (10:00 p.m. – 7:00 a.m.) for an additional fee of \$2,500. Filming during these hours is not permitted.

### **B. Observatory Staffing Fees**

Observatory staff will be assigned to oversee the prep, filming, and wrap phases of the production shoot. Their primary function is to protect the Observatory grounds & assets. The fees are based on the size of your cast and crew and number of hours permitted. If the production shoot takes place on a City holiday, there is a 50% surcharge on the staffing fees.

Cast & Crew Size	0-10 hours	10+ to 16 hours	16+ to 25 hours
0-25	\$1,500	\$2,500	\$3,250
26-75	\$2,500	\$3,500	\$4,500
76 and over	\$4,000	\$5,000	\$6,000

## C. Fee Exemptions

Fees do not apply or may be waived in the following instances as determined by the Observatory Director. Please note the waiver is for the Observatory's usage fee only. Based on the scope of the production, Observatory monitor fees may still apply. Contact the PFO to determine what additional City permit and usage fees may also be required.

News Media. Bona fide and credentialed news media wishing to report from or on the Observatory or interview Observatory staff members are exempt from fees. News media must coordinate their activities with the Observatory staff to ensure the orderly presence on the Observatory grounds and lack of disruption to the public operation. Requests for interviews with any staff member must be made through the Observatory Director.

Students. Student filmmakers and photographers may be exempted from the Observatory filming/photography fees by providing appropriate documentation from their school or institution. A letter signed by an authorized administrator on the school or institution letterhead must state the student is currently enrolled and working on a student project that will NOT be presented commercially.

Educational Programming. Any bona fide educational production which enhances the image of Griffith Observatory, is related substantively to the Observatory's content and resources, and informs a wide audience regarding these topics may be exempted from Observatory usage fees by the Observatory Director. In addition, any commercial production in which the Observatory's operations and programming are specifically presented to a wide audience may be exempted from Observatory usage fees.

Interviews with Observatory Staff. Any producer wishing to film or photograph an Observatory staff member in connection with astronomical or other scientific matters or with Observatory matters may be exempted from Observatory fees. All such interviews must be authorized well in advance by the Observatory Director. Observatory staff members may not be compensated for such an appearance while on-duty.

## **PART SIX: SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL**

If you believe your proposed production shoot can conform to the process, requirements, and rules described above, you should complete the **Filming/Photography Proposal** form, sign the affirmation at the end, and email the completed form to [rapobsfilmevents@lacity.org](mailto:rapobsfilmevents@lacity.org) (or fax it to 213-473-0818; please email us to let us knowing you are sending a fax). We will contact you within five business days.