



# DISLOCATION

WADI RUM ISN'T THE ONLY HIGHLY CHALLENGING PLACE *STAR WARS* HAS FILMED



**EPISODE IV: A NEW HOPE** (1977)  
**LOCATION:** TUNISIA • **DOUBLING FOR:** TATOOINE  
*Star Wars'* very first location provided a baptism of twin suns fire. On 23 March 1976, the second day of filming was hit by rain, the first Tunisian winter storm in 50 years. After falling behind in the first week of schedule, George Lucas and co were hit by a freak sandstorm tearing the Sandcrawler set apart. The Tunisian sands also caused havoc, disturbing the signals directing the RD-D2 models and sending them out of control.

**EPISODE IV: A NEW HOPE** (1977)  
**LOCATION:** TIKAL, GUATEMALA • **DOUBLING FOR:** YAVIN IV  
A small crew from Tikal ventured to Tikal, Guatemala, in March 1977 to capture Rebel base exteriors. After 21 hours of travelling, the crew landed on a runway that was just a strip of mud. Eight guides led the team through jungles to a temple. To get the shot of a Rebel soldier high in a look-out point, the crew bolted a tin dustbin on a pole. Only model-maker Lorne Peterson was brave enough to climb into the makeshift crow's nest.



**EPISODE V: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK** (1980)  
**LOCATION:** NORWAY • **DOUBLING FOR:** HOTH  
Echoing *A New Hope*, *Empire* started shooting with Norway's worst winter weather in 50 years, with temperatures dropping to -20 F and 18 feet of snow falling. Trapped in their hotel, the crew shot exteriors of Luke exiting the Wampa cave from outside the hotel doors. Film became so brittle it snapped. Mark Hamill and a skeleton crew braved blizzards and suffered painful whiteouts. George Lucas took one for the team and supervised things from sunny San Francisco.

**EPISODE I: THE PHANTOM MENACE** (1999)  
**LOCATION:** LEAVESDEN STUDIOS • **DOUBLING FOR:** CORUSCANT  
Forget sandstorms, ice wastes and jungle treks. The toughest *Star Wars* locations were the green screens of Leavesden, capable of tripping up even the most seasoned of actor. 1960s icon Terence Stamp signed on to play Chancellor Valorum in order to work with Natalie Portman, but found himself playing opposite a bit of paper. He later told *Empire*: "Actors prefer to work with actors." JAN FREER

near insurmountable challenge, his impulse was not to assemble story groups or worry about the top-down view, but to switch off his targeting computer, let go his conscious self and act on instinct. "This story is alive, and you have to listen to it," he says. "When you land on something that gives you the chills, that's the only way you know if it feels right. You can deconstruct it all you want and try and make sense of how you found it, but somehow it finds you."

He pauses, reflecting for a moment. "I don't know how to explain it. Just the way I can't quite explain how we had this footage of Carrie that we're using. You can say, 'Oh well, it's just luck, it just happened to be,' but it feels like something else. And I neither can nor want to explain any of it."

Just as every saga has a beginning, so too will this one find its end. Abrams and Terrio have taken Lucas' vision to its conclusion, and the story that began on 25 May 1977 will end on 19 December 2019. "It's been a pretty crazy ride," reflects Terrio. "When I was a kid watching *Return Of The Jedi* on loop, I felt like I was the only person Yoda was speaking to. And then there I was all these years later, sitting in a tent in Jordan doing this film. You have this highly personal relationship to *Star Wars*, and then, suddenly, you find yourself right in the middle of it. That feeling is sort of indescribable."

It's one that, at the very least, is almost certainly worth having a movie interrupted for. ●

**STAR WARS: THE RISE OF SKYWALKER IS IN CINEMAS FROM 10 DECEMBER**

ahead to what the future holds for *Star Wars*, take at all lightly. "We don't have a crystal ball," says Kennedy. "We tried to look at *Solo* and see if we could do two movies a year, and we found, 'Hm, that's not going to work.' So we backed off of that a little. But that doesn't mean we don't think about lots of different stories. That's the exciting thing about this universe."

"It's been an honour to inherit and continue this iconic saga that has touched audiences for so many years, and we feel the weight of that every time we set out to tell these stories."

The wider universe will, of course, live on. Whether through *The Mandalorian* on TV, or all-new movie sagas currently in development by Johnson and *Game Of Thrones'* David Benioff and D.B. Weiss. But for the core story, what for so many people is *Star Wars*, the final destination is now in sight.

"I've always loved the start of something," says Abrams, "because of what it promises. Endings are hard. A great ending not only needs to honour everything that's come before but, whether it's a novel, a series or a film, you want to have it feel like it could end no other way." And so it comes back to feeling. In a world of meticulously planned franchises and strategic, multi-phased rollouts, *Star Wars*, at its core, has always trusted in 'The Force. Abrams had not expected to be here, had not expected to finish this tale. But now, as he places the final pieces of the puzzle, he feels like it was always meant to be. There's a symmetry to him being the one to deliver *The Rise Of Skywalker*, just as there is in the fact that, faced with this

blockade runners fleeing destruction, a sky bristling with Imperial Star Destroyers, their numbers great enough to block out the stars. The presence of Old Empire firepower, easily overlooked, points to *The Rise Of Skywalker's* biggest curveball to date. Back in April, when Abrams showed the first trailer at *Star Wars* Celebration in Chicago, the reveal of the film's title was almost eclipsed by the familiar cacophony of the original Emperor echoing over those final frames. When Ian McDiarmid himself walked out to demand, in full Palpatine rasp, that the projector "roll it again", all present lost their shit in unison. How could this be? Is he a clone? A Force projection? Did he survive that fateful plummet down the Death Star shaft? Could Palpatine have been telling Anakin the truth when he spoke of Darth Plagueis The Wise's cure for death? Irrespective of the fine print, *Star Wars'* biggest of bads is officially back in business.

"Some people feel like we shouldn't revisit the idea of Palpatine, and I completely understand that," Abrams concedes. "But if you're looking at these nine films as one story, I don't know many books where the last few chapters have nothing to do with those that have come before. If you look at the first eight films, all the set-ups of what we're doing in *IX* are there in plain view."

The sheer scale of the task he's undertaken cannot be overstated. *Star Wars* has been, by far, the most enduring and influential story of the modern era. Having to put the capstone on a saga that has shaped both childhoods and adult lives for several generations is something neither Abrams, nor producer Kathleen Kennedy, looking

**Is it time for now Supreme Leader Ren (Adam Driver) to fulfill his destiny?**

