

Kate Mosse

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CARCASSONNE COMES TO CAPE TOWN

28 November 2011

This morning I arrived back from the medieval cité – where the historic sections of *Labyrinth* are set – this time built on a hill in the Stellenbosch area of Cape Town. The cast and crew are now on day 40 of a 50 day shoot, which started in October in Carcassonne, in the Languedoc, and is concluding in Cape Town, not far from a French settled area known as *Franschhoek* (there is even an area called Languedoc there too).



It was wonderful to be reunited with many of the crew I'd met in Carcassonne six weeks ago – including Simone Stubbs (Key Make Up) here, with me, holding one of the wonderful, handmade medieval *paniers* – and to meet some of the cast members I'd not yet had the chance to get to know. Of course South Africa has a thriving and intensely hard working film industry, and many films and commercials are made out at the Cape Town Film Studios, but nothing had prepared me for the sight of medieval Carcassonne come to life on the hill. It is, of course, an illusion, but at the same time, the streets, the houses, the market, the dogs and horses, the straw, it felt as near to stepping back in time as anything I've ever experienced. Tom Hannam's extraordinary sets and the attention to detail, the integrity, of every sword, every cup, every stone, every door, all built in South Africa for the production, were mind blowing. And Moira Meyer's costume designs for the medieval characters, hand stitched, hand dyed, hand aged, were outstanding. As in Carcassonne, I felt only lucky to have so enthusiastic, so talented, so energetic a team of people working on the production.

What was even more marked was how, in certain ways, this corner of South Africa did feel very like – in spirit, at least – the Languedoc. There is something about land that lies between the mountains and the sea, where the wind blows savagely through, where vines line the roads and there is always the sense of the rock and the immensity of the sky. While we were filming, the notorious Cape wind was blowing hard, much as it does through the real streets of contemporary Carcassonne, capturing a certain sort of mood, a certain sort of atmosphere that only added to the scenes of battle and displacement we were

filming.

Now, I'm back at my desk in Sussex with *Citadel*, thinking about those characters in *Labyrinth* who appear too in the last book of the Trilogy. Trying to remember that they are, as yet, characters on a page, not the characters on the screen that I've left behind in Cape Town.

Pas a pas ...