

Searching for Mermaids in the Karoo



The Mermaid or *Water-meid*, as she is also known in these parts, has been an integral part of Karoo folklore for years.

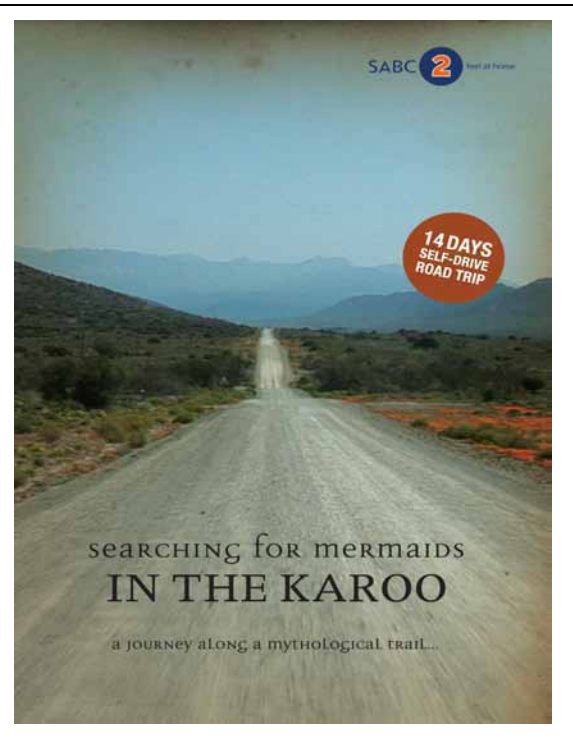
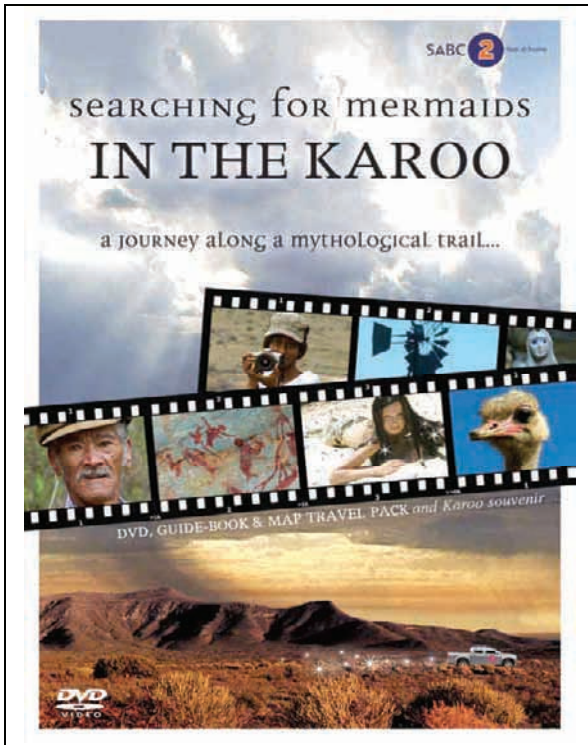
Local people describe a beautiful woman with blue eyes, pink cheeks and a fish-tail - seen sitting at deep mountain pools, combing her long black hair. Stories passed down through the generations, warn children not to go near such places, in case the *Water-meid* or *Water-auntie* drags them in, and drowns them.

Perhaps the most mysterious part of our trip, was the discovery of San rock paintings on the walls of caves, high up in the Little Karoo mountains which have puzzled archaeologists for years. They show creatures with a round head, arms, and a fish tail... Are these paintings of mermaids? Does this mean the San people saw such creatures? And could this be the origin of the stories people tell today?



This road-trip documentary takes you from Cape Town, along the R62, over the Swartberg Pass and through the Karoo – following an intriguing trail of indigenous stories, firsthand sightings and San rock art relating to this fascinating legend.





DVD of road-trip documentary

Plus 36-page, colour Guide-book & Map

The documentary is accompanied by a Guide-book giving details of : How to get there, Places to stay, plus Contact details of people we filmed along the way, who all helped shed light on this ancient legend.



For those who prefer the road less travelled...meandering slowly down dusty lanes, off the beaten track, into remote villages steeped in historic integrity, chatting with locals, listening to firsthand accounts of mermaid-sightings, discovering ancient San rock art of mermaid-like creatures, exploring the stark beauty of the Karoo, and finding out what really makes it tick....this road-trip could be for you!

The DVD of the documentary, plus Guide-booklet, plus map - is available at Tourism Offices along the route, as well as Clarke's Bookshop in Long Street, Exclusive Books in Cavendish Square, or can be ordered directly from us by mailing hardie@iafrica.com. The cost is R185 inclusive of VAT, plus R20 packing and postage.

☆☆☆

Background

Mermaids have appeared in stories and myths throughout the world and throughout history. They are often thought to be symbolic of the sacred feminine, gate-keepers to the watery realm of the unconscious. They symbolise our oneness with animals – half human & half fish – showing that we are not separate from nature, but part of it.



In European fairytales and myths, beautiful mermaids are often shown holding a mirror (mirror to the soul), combing their hair, and beckoning people (often marooned and shipwrecked men) to join her, and explore the unknown treasures of the mysterious underwater...

unconscious... realm. In our still very male dominated world above the ground... the Mermaid could be seen as an archetypal symbol of the sacred feminine – still half submerged – inviting us to join her, to get in touch with feminine power, which has been undermined over the years, and which could help us better navigate our course through life.

Mermaids and other female goddesses were common in early nature based societies, where people understood that having a harmonious relationship with Mother-Earth was crucial for their survival. They saw and revered the power of nature and treated it as something that was alive. They were plainly aware that if they mistreated the earth... it would mistreat them in return. In fact, the sacred qualities with which they imbued nature, kept them from mistreating it.

But with the dawn of the so called Enlightenment, and the scientific and industrial age, belief in nature goddesses fell away, and a more patriarchal culture ensued - where nature was seen as something wild and threatening that needed to be tamed, dominated, owned, controlled, managed, used, exploited and polluted for the exclusive benefit of human beings.

Most of us are now plainly aware of the devastating results this approach has had on our environment – resulting in a dwindling access to clean water and other valuable resources, an unsustainable environment, global warming, destructive weather patterns, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and tsunamis - and how crucial it is that we rectify things before 'nature mistreats us in return'!

And perhaps this is what people of the Karoo still have – a connection with the earth which allows them to still see the sacred in nature. Many people here believe that storms & floods are caused by the Mermaid, angry at the havoc humans have created with the earth. In our environmentally challenged times, we could do well to take heed!