

RIVER NAVIGATION

When traveling over great distances, rivers can be a boon for adventurers. Rivers provide a consistent land feature that prevents travelers from becoming lost, they are usually a source of plentiful food and drinkable water, and they can be traveled by boat to reach distant locations quickly. However, they also present natural hazards, and often attract dangerous predators.

TRAVEL ACTIVITIES

When the players are traveling long distances overland, rivers can play a large part in their journey. You may choose to modify the overland travel activities detailed in the *Player's Handbook* in the following ways when the players interact with a river.

TRAVEL PACE

If the players are traveling by foot alongside a river, it has no significant impact on their travel pace unless the terrain becomes more difficult to navigate. If the players are traveling by boat, the direction and speed of the river current effects their travel pace.

When traveling via paddle boat in still or gently flowing water, characters travel at a normal pace. If the current is stronger and they are going downstream, they can travel at a fast pace without suffering the normal drawbacks of doing so.

If they are traveling upstream against a strong current, they cannot travel at a fast pace, traveling at a normal pace results in suffering the drawbacks normally associated with traveling at a fast pace, and traveling at a slow pace does not provide its usual benefits.

NAVIGATION

One of the great advantages of traveling on or near a river, is that it serves as a constant point of reference. If the characters' navigate by following the river, they cannot become lost unless there are many other rivers splitting from it, leaving it unclear which to follow.

FORAGING

Another benefit afforded by rivers is that they usually provide ready access to food and freshwater. Unless the river is strangely devoid of life, or it has been polluted, it should generally be treated as though it provides an abundance of food and water sources for the purposes of harvesting.



RIVER HAZARDS

Rivers can vary greatly in their danger level, whether they are being crossed or boated on. From slow, lazy rivers to raging rapids and waterfalls, there are a variety of conditions characters can face.

OBSTRUCTIONS

These hazards can range from natural features like fallen trees and large rocks, to constructed structures like dams or collapsed bridges. In any case, they represent an obstacle which allows water through but hinders the progress of boats. If the obstruction consists of smaller scattered obstacles, you can treat it the same way you would rapids, detailed below. If the obstruction is large enough to totally bar travel via boat, the characters will be forced to climb over it with their boat, or dock and pull their boat across land until they pass the clearing.

CLIMBING THE OBSTRUCTION

If the players try to pull their boat across the obstruction, have them make a group Strength check to see if they successfully make it with their boat to the other side. If one of the characters passes the check by 10 or more, the whole group automatically passes. If they fail, the boat is dropped and takes bludgeoning damage. The DC of the check determines the amount of bludgeoning damage taken, as shown on the Rapids and Obstructions table.

CIRCUMVENTING THE OBSTRUCTION

If the players decide to dock and pull their boat around the obstacle, it should be enough of an inconvenience that it impedes their travel for the day or puts in them in danger. Docking and moving around the obstacle could leave them open to an attack, or the nature of the terrain may force them to divert their journey away from the river as they search for a way to approach it again.

RAPIDS

This is among the most common and dangerous river hazards. Beyond just consisting of fast currents, rapids often include a variety of hazards such as sharp rocks, foot entrapments, undercuts, and holes. Undercuts are locations where there is room for the water to flow, such as under a rock, but not for boats and creatures, which can lead to dangerous collisions. Holes involve points in the river where the water's current flows over a rock and suddenly dives to the bottom of the river, pulling creatures and objects with it.

BOATING

When traveling via boat through an area of intense rapids, the character paddling must make a Strength (Athletics) check to attempt to navigate it safely, and if a group of characters are paddling, they make a group check. If one of the characters passes the check by 10 or more, the whole group automatically passes. If they fail, the boat slams into rocks and takes bludgeoning damage dependent on the intensity of the rapids as shown in the Rapids and Obstructions table.



CROSSING ON FOOT

If characters find themselves attempting to navigate across rapids by foot, each one must make the Strength check to attempt to cross the waters safely. This check is made with disadvantage if the character is unable to stand in the water or has just been thrown into it. If a character fails this check, it is immediately pulled a number of feet downstream equal to the check's DC. If it collides with a rock or other hard object, the character takes the corresponding bludgeoning damage listed in the Rapids and Obstructions table. The character makes this check again at the start of each of its turns, getting pulled further downstream each time it fails.

RAPIDS AND OBSTRUCTIONS

Hazard DC	Bludgeoning Damage
10	2d6
15	4d6
20	6d6
25	8d6
30	10d6

WATERFALLS

When rapids result in a sudden plunge from a far enough height, they become a waterfall. The heights these drops can reach depends on the type of terrain the river is running through. The table below can be used to create a waterfall of a random height that suits a given terrain.

Waterfalls often present major obstacles to characters traveling by river, and can force them to take major detours, or abandon their attempt at traveling by river entirely.

Terrain Type	Waterfall Height
Low Hills	1d4 x 10ft
Large Hills	1d6 x 10ft
Highlands	1d8 x 10ft
Small Mountains	1d10 x 10ft
Mountainous Cliffs	1d12 x 10ft

EXAMPLE RANDOM ENCOUNTER TABLES

The following are different river environments across different levels of gameplay, complete with random encounter tables you can use when the players are traversing them. You can plug these right into your games, modify them to better suit your campaign, or simply use them as inspiration for creating and running your own river encounters.

Each river has a DC determining the difficulty in foraging, and an activity level suggesting how often to roll for a random encounter. Creature names with asterisks have new stat blocks listed at the end of the document.

LOBLOLLY RIVER (LEVEL 1-4)

Activity Level: 1 Encounter per 4 Hrs. of Travel

Foraging DC: 10

This river meanders through the wooded hills of a small kingdom, lazily passing villages as it goes. Though it is often used as a means of transport between towns, travelers must be wary of the dangers the unassuming river poses. Bandits will set traps for merchant boats, and aggressive river animals will spontaneously attack travelers. Though bandits and dangerous wildlife pose the most direct threat, the locals are most suspicious of the river fairies known for playing pranks on any who cross their path.

LOBLOLLY RIVER ENCOUNTERS

d100	Encounter
1-4	River rapids with DC 10
5-6	River rapids with a DC 15
7-8	A beaver dam blocking the river
9-10	Fallen trees blocking the river and being used to setup an ambush by 3d6 bandits

d100	Encounter
11-15	A waterfall 1d4 x 10 feet tall
16-17	1d4 + 4 giant otters *
18-19	1d8 + 1 giant frogs
20-21	A giant toad
22-23	1d4 + 2 wolves
24-25	1d3 black bears
26-27	1 badger or 1d4 poisonous snakes
29-30	1d4 + 4 giant badgers
31-32	1 swarm of insects
33-34	1 awakened tree
35-36	1d6 + 2 pixies
37-38	1d8 + 1 sprites
39-45	A traveling merchant boat
46-53	A fisherman (commoner)
54-58	A drowning villager (commoner)
59-67	A roaming hunter (spy)
68-73	Floating debris from a smashed boat
74-79	A riverside fort, either built by children or fairies
80-86	A traveling salesman (commoner) willing to pay the party to escort him to a nearby village they are all traveling to
87-92	2d6 bandits willing to work with the party to recover a loot stash that was pilfered by pixies
94-97	A crate of valuable goods floating into dangerous rapids (DC 15)
98-00	1d4 + 1 pixies promising the party a reward if they win a game of hide and seek along the river





AKHMUTEN RIVER (LEVEL 5-10)

Activity Level: 1 Encounter per 4 Hrs. of Travel

Foraging DC: 15

This calm river runs through an otherwise arid wasteland, providing the most significant source of water in the region. Civilization flocks to it, as do all manner of ferocious beast. Kingdoms have risen and fallen along the river's banks, and many of the crumbling temples looming over its waters are no longer inhabited by their original creators.

The humans living here have an uneasy relationship with the crocodile worshipping lizardfolk who dwell along the untamed stretches of river and in the ruins of temples lost to previous generations. Though outright aggression between settlements is avoided by both groups, the lizardfolk have no qualms about preying upon stray travelers who don't have anything of value to offer them.

d100

Encounter

1-5	A massive obelisk that has collapsed into the river, leaving a treacherous hazard for boats; DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to cross by boat
6-10	3d6 + 2 lizardfolk
11-15	1d12 crocodiles *
16-20	1 giant crocodile *
21-25	1 lizardfolk shaman with 2d6 + 3 lizardfolk
26-30	1d8 + 1 locust swarms (swarm of insects)
31-35	1d3 hippos *
36-40	1 hippopotamus gorgops *
41-45	1d6 crocodiles + 2d4 lizardfolk
46-50	1 giant crocodile + 1d3 lizardfolk
51-55	1 deinosuchus

d100

Encounter

56-60	1d3 lions
61-65	1d10 giant hyenas
66-69	A lizardfolk looking for other humanoids to trade goods with
70-74	A traveling merchant ship
75-78	A boat with 2d4 frantic commoners that has been damaged and is slowly sinking into the river
79-81	Human limbs, gently floating down stream
82-84	A royal barge, flanked by multiple boats
85-87	A stampede of herd animals attempting to make it across the river as a group of 2d6 crocodiles closes in
88-90	A baby in a bassinet, gently floating down the river
91-93	A group of humans repairing and refurbishing once abandoned ruins in an attempt to reoccupy a lost settlement
94-96	A boat containing a priest and 4 acolytes performing a river ceremony
97-98	A group of 2d6+3 wounded bandits fleeing by boat from a group 3d6 + 3 lizardfolk
99-00	An overgrown ruin now home to a lizardfolk village

Crag Tooth River (Level 11-16)

Activity Level: 1 Encounter per 3 Hrs. of Travel

Foraging DC: 20

This river runs through a treacherous, mountain valley, with other streams constantly feeding into it. As the river charts its course through the crags, it forms deadly rapids and massive waterfalls. These mountains are home to large and dangerous beasts, and once housed a military outpost built atop its highest peak, near the mountain spring which serves as the river's source. The abundance of food and ideally placed keep eventually caught the eye of Shirrys, a red dragon who declared war on the keep's defenders. After a long bitter battle, the keep was lost and became her lair.

Now, Shirrys and her children rule the valley and hunt its inhabitants with impunity. As a result, few people attempt to traverse it, though soldiers continue to scout the area in hopes of finding a way to retake their mountain holdings. For those braving the journey, the river provides one of the few reliable ways of navigating the crags without becoming lost, and subsequently dragon food. Those who follow it to its source will find a mountain spring scorched bare by dragon fire and the charred remains of those who challenged the valley's new ruler.

d100

Encounter

- | | |
|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 1-5 | River rapids with DC 20 |
| 6-10 | River rapids with a DC 25 |
| 11-13 | Rocks and rubble blocking the river |
| 14-21 | A waterfall 1d12 x 10 feet tall |



d100

Encounter

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 22-25 | A rock slide requiring a DC 15 Dexterity save. Creatures take 8d8 bludgeoning damage on a failed save and are pinned under the rock. On a pass they take half as much and are not pinned. A DC 20 Strength check is required to unpin a creature. |
| 26-27 | 1d10 air elementals |
| 28-29 | 1d10 earth elementals |
| 30-31 | 2d4 trolls |
| 32-33 | 1d8 + 1 ettins |
| 34-35 | 1d8 + 1 basilisks |
| 36-45 | 2d6 former soldiers (veterans) who've turned to banditry |
| 46-55 | 2d4 charred, undead soldiers (wights) |
| 56-65 | 3d4 red dragon wyrmlings soaring above the river |
| 66-70 | 1 young red dragon intruding on Shyrris's territory |
| 71-75 | Shyrris (adult red dragon) patrolling her valley |
| 76-80 | A helplessly lost merchant (spy), trying to escape the valley in one piece |
| 81-82 | 1 young silver dragon seeking to oppose Shyrris |
| 83-86 | 1d6 spies attempting to scout the valley and determine the dragons' whereabouts |
| 87-89 | 2d6 + 2 veterans and 3d8 + 5 guards attempting to establish a beachhead in the valley |
| 90-94 | Smashed debris from supply wagons floating down the river |
| 95-97 | 1d8 + 3 veterans and 2d6 + 4 guards attempting to fend off 2d6 + 2 red dragon wyrmlings |
| 98-00 | The mountain keep serving as Shirrys's lair, looming on a peak overhead |



RIVER STYX (LEVEL 17-20)

Activity Rating: 1 Encounter per 3 Hrs. of Travel
Foraging DC: 25 (Disadvantage unless *Remove Curse* spell is used while foraging)
 This legendary river crosses the lower planes of the multiverse, linking together multiple underworlds and serving as a common mode of transportation for fiends. Those who drink from its waters are said to lose all memory of their past lives, and lost souls as well as other underworld creatures can often be found crossing its waters.

A creature that drinks from the Styx or enters its waters is targeted by a *Feeblemind* spell (save DC 20). A creature must repeat the saving throw whenever it starts its turn in the river, until it fails the save. A feeble-minded creature can drink from the Styx and swim in its waters without suffering any additional effects. If a creature fails its saving throw and remains under the spell's effect for 30 consecutive days, the effect becomes permanent (no save) and the creature loses all its memories, becoming a near-mindless shell of its former self. At that point, nothing short of a wish spell or divine intervention can undo the effect.

d100

Encounter

- 1-4 River rapids, in the form of grasping spectral hands, with a DC 20. Damage from these rapids deals an additional 5d6 necrotic damage
- 5-8 River rapids, in the form of grasping spectral hands, with a DC 25. Damage from these rapids deals an additional 8d6 necrotic damage
- 9-12 Massive skeletal remains blocking river passage for miles
- 13-16 A waterfall 1d8 x 10 feet tall
- 17-20 A waterfall 3d10 x 10 feet tall that crosses into another lower plane

d100

Encounter

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 21-24 | 3 night hags in a coven and 2d6 wights |
| 25-28 | 2d10 wraiths |
| 29-32 | 1 death knight with 2d4 + 2 wights |
| 33-36 | A demilich |
| 37-40 | A lich |
| 41-44 | 1 greater demon (goristro or marilith) accompanied by 2d4 lesser demons (barlguras , shadow demons , or vrocks) |
| 45-48 | 2d6 + 1 hezrou , yochlol , or glabrezu demons |
| 49-52 | 1d3 nalfeshnee demons |
| 53-56 | 2d10 + 3 barlguras , shadow demons , or vrocks |
| 57-60 | 1 balor |
| 61-64 | 1d4 ice devils leading 2d4 barbed devils |
| 65-68 | 2d6 + 1 erinyes |
| 69-72 | 2d6 + 2 chain devils |
| 73-76 | 1d4 + 1 devil commanders (bone devils or horned devils) leading a unit of 3d6 + 3 bearded devils |
| 77-80 | 1 pit fiend |
| 81-84 | 1 yugoloth commander (arcanaloth or ultroloth) leading 2d6 + 2 mezzoloths |
| 85-88 | 2d10 mezzoloths |
| 89-92 | 2d6 + 2 nycaloths |
| 93-96 | A battle between devils and demons. Pick results from this table to determine the composition of each side. Demons: 41-60. Devils: 61-80. |
| 97-00 | A ghost seeking help escaping the lower planes |



NEW RIVER ANIMAL STATS

CROCODILE

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 38 (5d10+10)

Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)

Skills Stealth +3, Perception +4

Senses darkvision 30 Ft., passive Perception 14.

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Watery Lurker. The crocodile has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks while submerged in water.

Hold Breath. The crocodile can hold its breath for 15 minutes.

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 14) Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the crocodile can't bite another target.

Death Roll. One creature the crocodile has grappled in the water it must make a DC 14 Strength saving throw, on a taking 17 (4d6 + 3) piercing damage damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



DEINOSUCHUS

Huge beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 130 (9d20+36)

Speed 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25 (+7)	9 (-1)	18 (+3)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)

Skills Stealth +2, Perception +5

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 15.

Languages ----

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Watery Lurker. The deinosuchus has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks while submerged in water.

Hold Breath. The deinosuchus can hold its breath for 15 minutes.

Actions

Multiaction. The deinosuchus makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail. It can't make both attacks against the same target.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 34 (5d10 + 7) piercing damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 18) Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the deinosuchus can't bite another target

Tail. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target not grappled by the deinosuchus. Hit: 20 (3d8 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

Death Roll. One creature the deinosuchus has grappled in the water it must make a DC 18 Strength saving throw, on a taking 67 (11d10 + 7) piercing damage damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful.

Giant Crocodile

Huge beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 86 (9d12+27)

Speed 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	10 (0)	17 (+3)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)

Skills Stealth +3, Perception +5

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 15.

Languages ----

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Watery Lurker. The crocodile has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks while submerged in water.

Hold Breath. The crocodile can hold its breath for 15 minutes.

Actions

Multiaction. The crocodile makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail. It can't make both attacks against the same target.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (3d10 + 6) piercing damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 17). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the crocodile can't bite another target.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target not grappled by the crocodile. Hit: 15 (2d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Death Roll. One creature the crocodile has grappled in the water it must make a DC 17 Strength saving throw, on a failure taking 44 (7d10 + 6) piercing damage damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Giant River Otter

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 4 (1d6 + 1)

Speed 20 ft., swim speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +3

Senses Darkvision 30 ft, passive Perception 13

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

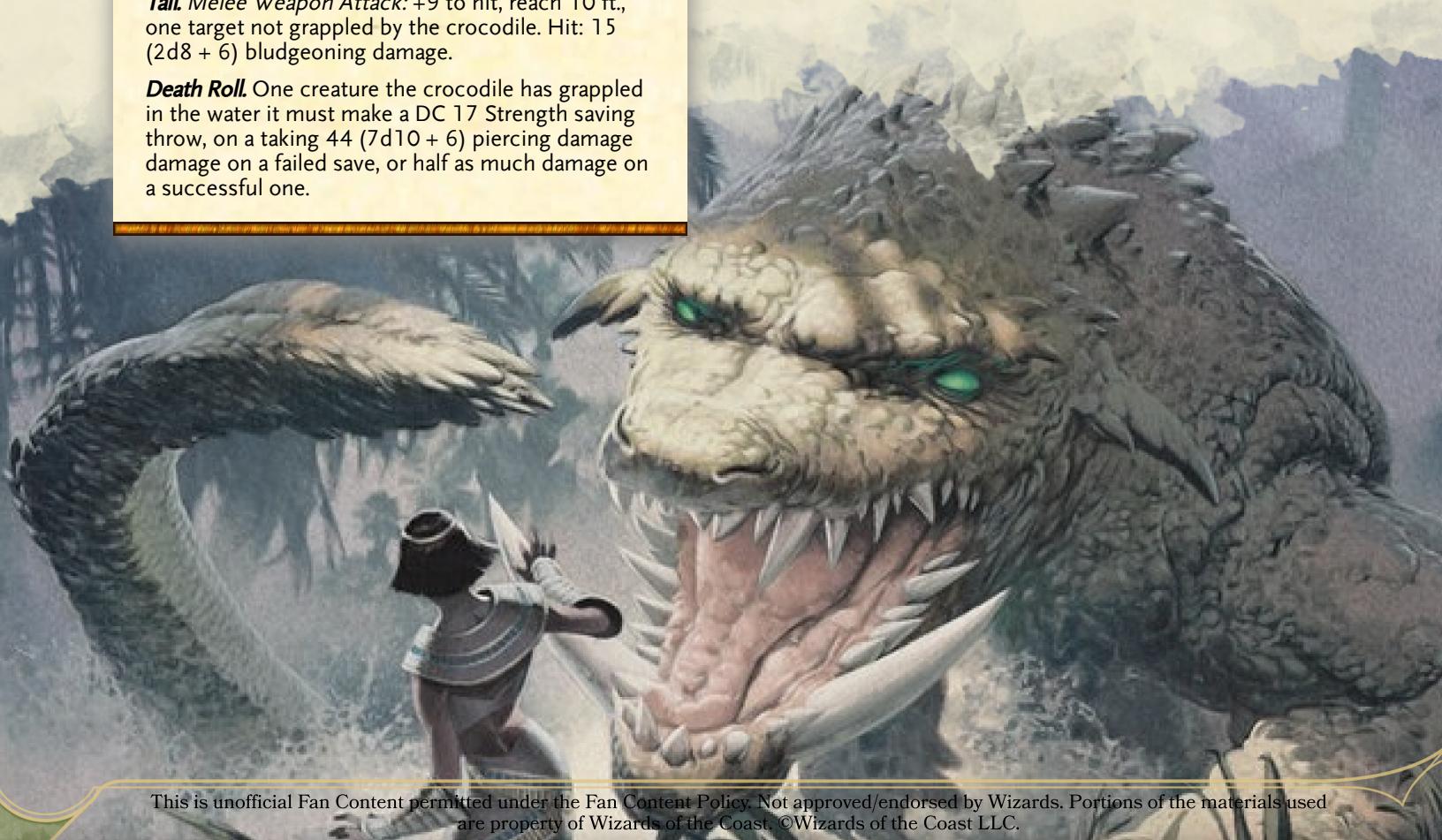
Keen Sight. The otter has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

Hold Breath. The otter can hold its breath for 8 minutes.

Pack Tactics. The otter has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the otter's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage.



HIPPOPOTAMUS

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 76 (8d10 + 32)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	4 (-3)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Intimidation +2

Senses Darkvision 30 Ft passive Perception 11

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Dense. The hippopotamus can move along the ground while underwater without having its movement speed reduced, and does not suffer disadvantage on its bite attack while underwater.

Blood Sweat. The hippopotamus has advantage on saving throws against disease.

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the hippopotamus can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 18 (2d12 + 5) piercing damage.

ART CREDIT

- You Come to a River - Viko Menezes, Wizards of the Coast
- A Rocky Stream With Rapids - Alexandre Calame
- A River In The Forest - MCfrog
- Luxa River Art Detail - Sam Burley
- Swiftwater Cliffs - Eytan Zana, Wizards of the Coast
- River Styx - Anthony Christou
- Deinosuchus - Raul D. Martin, National Geographic Stock
- Crocodile of the Crossing - Kev Walker, Wizards of the Coast
- Hippo Cow and Calf - WillemSvdMerwe

HIPPOPOTAMUS GORGOPS

Huge beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 105 (10d12 + 40)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	8 (-1)	20 (+5)	4 (-3)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Intimidation +5

Senses Darkvision 30 Ft passive Perception 11

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Dense. The hippopotamus can move along the ground while underwater without having its movement speed reduced, and does not suffer disadvantage on its bite attack while underwater.

Blood Sweat. The hippopotamus has advantage on saving throws against disease.

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the hippopotamus can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 32 (4d12 + 6) piercing damage.

