Settlements

All stories, at their core, are about people, and the stories you tell in Last Odyssey are no different. For safety and because we are social animals, human beings will almost always be found together in settlements. In Last Odyssey, a *settlement* is also a term that refers to a node or closely linked group of nodes where players can rest from traveling, buy goods and services, find information, and interact with NPCs who will advance the plot. While in a settlement, players have the chance for both free play and structured investigation. The following section presents tools for creating those aspects of settlements that players will find the most useful, namely resting accommodations and the gathering information, as well as a guide to creating settlements that closely fit the type of pattern that best facilitates the feeling of the Last Odyssey setting.

In Last Odyssey, settlements are rare, and large settlements are even rarer. This is because the implied setting of the game is pre-industrial. Travel is difficult and trade even moreso, resulting in a settlement pattern much like that of the postclassical era of human history. When creating a new settlement in the overworld, GMs should take into consideration its population, which is a number that determines a great deal about the settlement, including its layout, its culture, and its architecture. GMs are allowed and encouraged to break the mold, but the following section will focus on the major types of settlements that players will usually encounter.

Not every settlement or landmark in a given region needs to be counted in the overworld. The reason for this is that not every place in the world will ever be relevant to the campaign. Instead, the GM should focus on detailing settlements that meet one or more of the following criteria:
The settlement provides goods and services the players will be interested in buying.
The settlement is a place where players can offload goods in exchange for currrency.
The settlement is a place to rest on the way to somewhere more important.
The settlement has employment for adventurers, or is the destination of a given quest.
The settlement has Lore the players can learn by exploring it.

Villages

Population: <1,000 people.

A *village* is the smallest viable permanent human settlement possible that could feasibly sustain itself with whatever food practices are available to its residents. Villages tend to be tight-knit, and locals have a great deal of knowledge about the dangers of and how to navigate the surrounding area. However, there are also very few services available, and what local professionals or merchants that do exist may be eccentric or hard to contact.

Villages' small size means they are less sheltered from the elements than larger settlements. There is usually a village square and a place to honor and bury the dead. There will also be a few professionals, such as a blacksmith, a tanner, a miller, and a baker, as well as a big house for any authority figures. What those authority figures look like largely depends on culture. In towns ruled over by a monarch or imperial power, it might house the landlord or assigned bureaucrat, while in more independent or democratic polities it could be the meetinghouse for the council of elders or even the manor of an elected mayor. In any case, much of a village's structure will be built around food production, and the GM's description of the village should reflect this. The smell of manure, the sound of rain and wind, and the texture of mud, dirt, and sand against the players' boots, all of these emphasize the pastoral qualities that distinguish villages from their more populous counterparts.

When the GM decides a settlement should be a village, they should consider the following questions:
How do the locals feel about outsiders? Are they mistrustful? Are they generous? Do they try to scam or steal from them?
How amenable are the locals to letting the players rest? Is there a local tavern or family that will take them in, or will they have to sleep in the barn?
What do the townsfolk do to procure food? They will probably spend a great deal of time farming, fishing, and/or hunting, and if it isn't a festival day they will be busy performing these tasks. After all, for rural people they are a matter of life or death.
What are the local beliefs of the townsfolk? Do they follow a mainstream religion, or do they have their own beliefs? Usually, the answer will be some combination of these two, and asking around about them can teach the players a significant amount of Lore.
What local materials are available for the villagers to build their homes with? Do the locals make their houses out of reeds? Wood? Clay? Imported stone?

Towns

Population: 1,000-10,000 people.

A *town* is the next largest type of settlement. However, what distinguishes a town from a village is not just its size but also its purpose. The reason why towns exist in the first place is to facilitate commerce, and as a result town residents will often hold jobs that are provided for by the flow of trade rather than the direct production of foodstuffs. A town's markets and taverns are gathering spaces where craftspeople can sell their goods, farmers can sell their produce, professionals can ply their trades, and ideologues of all sort can attempt to sway people to their causes. Towns are the best place to find services and learn about local events, but might still be ignorant of world news beyond the broad strokes. Larger cities will often have clusters of satellite towns near their limits, while in more rural areas the largest settlement will take the form of a single town.

Towns live and die by the trade that flows through them, and much of what is available in town will exist to attract and feed off of it. Thus, there will not only be at least one tavern and a marketplace, but also very often the presence of religious sites, libraries, hot springs, circuses, and other attractions that serve to funnel human beings into the town. There may also be a small handful of industries that require more complicated inputs and their associated guilds, such as a mason's guild, an alchemist's guild, or even a mercenary's guild if the need is great. There will also be gathering spaces for locals, which are usually expanded versions of what can be found in the average village.

GMs should consider the following questions when designing a town:
Towns are large enough to accommodate a great deal of complex politics. What is the latest drama? Is there a way for the players to get involved, and if so, how?
Is there a marketplace, and if not, where are the merchants located? What are they like? Are there any rivalries?
Many towns will rest on major landmarks or tourist attractions. Are there any in particular the players could visit? Are they scams, or could they provide actual benefit to the players?
What political actors rule over the town, and what are their needs? Are they willing to employ adventurers, and if not, what is the reason?
Generally, towns will have some sort of protection against being looted. What sort exist here? Walls? A moat? A garrison of soldiers or guardsmen?
Towns require a lot more food than the average village. What do the people eat here, and how does it affect the experience of being there? Is there the sound of frying, or woodsmoke? The stink of fish? The aroma of baked bread?

Cities

Population: 10,000-100,000.

A *city* is any settlement large enough to not just support an economy apart from food production but to be a place unto itself. If a city exists at all in a particular region, it is often one of if not the defining landmark. Cities are diverse and chaotic places that will generally have at least one if not multiple of every type of basic good or service the players might need, from camping supplies to summoning ingredients to rare trade goods of all stripes. In addition, they are also perfect places for players to learn about the history and culture of the region more broadly, both in the form of Lore and in information about factions, antagonists, and enemies. However, while the people of a city are literate and informed about local politics, they might know a great deal less about what happens outside of the city walls. City taverns are also excellent places to recruit followers and to link up with trade caravans, as well as find travel services that can take players from city to city. The tradeoff for this is that crime is commonplace, and wandering some places in a city at night is liable to get players ambushed by thugs. Sleeping on the streets is often discouraged and, in some districts, may be outright forbidden, and GMs should take this into account when players rest for the night.

Most cities are large enough to be divided into multiple districts, each of which might be populated by professionals of a particular stripe, members of a particular institution or ethnic group, or members of a particular socioeconomic class. Common types of districts include foreign quarters, docks, mansion districts, holy cities, palace districts, market squares, university districts, districts for manufacturing or magical services, and so on. Factions will also have a presence in cities, and one city might be home to several different distinct centers of power, each with its own agenda which might or might not be in competition with the others.

When GMs decide to include one or more cities in a given region, they should take into consideration the following questions:
Cities are often a relatively safe haven for foreigners and persecuted minorities. What peoples are represented here that aren't anywhere else close by, and what can players learn from them?
A city is not just a large settlement, but also a place of deep religious and political significance. What world or worlds is this city the center of? Is it the capital of trade in its area? The capital of culture? Does it contain the temple of a local pantheon, or the palace of a local monarch?
Settlements on the order of tens of thousands of people will have significant impacts on the local environment. How is this impact felt? Do the streets reek of sewage? Is the air hot, or stagnant, or hazy? Is the river dirty and muddy? What measures do the people of the city take to mitigate these impacts, if any at all, and how does it affect their culture?
The buildup of such a dense population doesn't happen overnight, and doesn't happen at random. What is the reason this city became so large? Does it sit at an important river crossing? Is it protected by natural boundaries? Are its politics unusually tolerant, or its local religion unusually influential?
The history of the growth of a city will be told through its layout. Is there a crumbling old town, or old walls? Is there a central temple complex that dominates its landscape? Are there any ruins, either above- or underground, and do they suggest growth or shrinkage?

Metropoli

Population: 100,000-1m+

The largest variety of settlement in most Last Odyssey games and also the least common by far is the *metropolis.* To give an idea of how rare these cities are, in the year 1100 CE on Earth there were no cities with a population of greater than 1 million, while the only two cities in the entirety of what we today would consider to be Europe that would count as metropoli under this definition were Constantinople and Cordoba. Of course, population alone does not make a metropolis, but rather the fact that it is large and storied enough to be a world unto itself. The history of a metropolis will span several millennia, and GMs should represent its scale by including multiple nodes that represent different distinct parts of the city. It is also not a trivial thing to traverse a metropolis, and the navigation difficulty and danger rating of moving between districts will be greater than zero, especially for foreigners. Thus, not only is the dizzying array of goods and services present in a city present in metropoli, but also many unique ones, including both those

tailored to life in the city and those tailored towards the elites that populate it, including everything from local guides to strange machinery to local forms of art.

Mapping the layout of a metropolis is by no means a trivial task. GMs should highlight major thoroughfares, important districts, and the places where different local elites live and work. Of course, much of the character of a metropolis depends on why, exactly, it exists in the first place. In a time when food still takes a great deal of labor to produce, one million people don't just gather together for the fun of it. Many historical metropoli, such as Rome, Baghdad, or Kaifeng, were the political capitals of large empires, and contained numerous unique monuments, temples, and landmarks that made them distinct from other cities in the surrounding region. There will also often be services dedicated to helping people get around, such as the canalboats of Venice or the drawn carriages associated with Victorian London. Mechanized public transit is an invention of the industrial age, and its absence means that different districts will often have their own distinct culture and even sometimes their own accents.

Over the course of a campaign, players will most likely encounter one or two metropoli, and will spend a great deal of time there as well. Thus, GMs should take extra consideration to make them feel compelling and unique. Here are some things to consider:
What is the architectural style of the metropolis, and what makes it unique? Is it elaborate, or utilitarian? Is the decor delicate and bright, or dark and gothic? Are there any buildings that tower over the rest, and, if so, what is their purpose?
Metropoli are usually hotbeds of illegal activity, including political maneuvering and organized crime. What factions here represent those things, and how are they organized? Are there any subject populations that tend to gravitate towards crime more than others, and if so, why?
Sustaining the lives of hundreds of thousands of people requires both infrastructure and labor. What practices encompass this? Are there aqueducts? Massive gardens to grow foodstuffs? Does the city import labor from elsewhere, and if so, what is the system for doing so?
As stated above, every metropolis is a center of power of some kind, often of an empire but not always. Where does this metropolis get its influence? Is it the capital of a military empire? A religious cult? A massive network of trade? How do these things affect its local culture?
Every metropolis has unique landmarks that tell the story of its history. Which ones are present in this one? Do they follow a particular aesthetic? What stories do they tell, and how complete and accurate is current knowledge about where they came from?

Landmarks

Not every populated area necessarily follows usual settlement patterns, especially not in weirder settings where people might find alternate ways of sustaining themselves other than the techniques used by humans in the real world. Even in the real world, places such as temples, manors, fortresses, and monasteries were isolated from settlements for logistical or theological reasons. In Last Odyssey, all of these kinds of places can exist, and adding them to the overworld can serve to enrich a setting and give players more variety in the kinds of places they will discover during the campaign. A secluded rebel headquarters in the wilderness, the temple of a forgotten god, the tower of a genial but mad wizard or artificer, an isolated tavern, a hunting lodge in the woods, or anything else the GM can think of are all examples of possible landmarks that the players could come across.

When making a landmark, the GM should consider the following questions:
Why is this place isolated from the surrounding settlements? Are its residents outcasts or criminals of some kind? Have they taken vows of seclusion from the outside world?
Human beings, regardless of who they are, need food, water, and shelter. If not from usual settlement patterns, how do the people here get their resources? Do they have their own gardens? Are offerings brought in from somewhere else? Do they steal from the surrounding countryside, or even conduct raids?
Who runs this place, and how? Is it an authoritarian cult, or a libertarian commune? Who are the leadership, and what is their attitude towards the players?
What goods and services are available to players, and what is the price they pay for accessing them? Is resting here free, or does it cost money? Are these things only available to members of a certain faction, or are they available to all?
It is likely that this place will distinguish itself from other settlements in terms of its decore and its overall feel. What does it look like, and what about it makes it memorable for players? Is it a tall, imposing fortress, or a modest hut? Is it in a particularly overgrown or populous region, or is the surrounding countryside barren, and if so, why?