

= Expedition to the Barrier Peaks =

Expedition to the Barrier Peaks is a 1980 adventure module for the Dungeons & Dragons roleplaying game written by Gary Gygax . While Dungeons & Dragons (D & D) is typically a fantasy game , the adventure includes elements of science fiction , and thus belongs to the science fantasy genre . It takes place on a downed spaceship ; the ship 's crew has died of an unspecified disease , but functioning robots and strange creatures still inhabit the ship . The player characters fight monsters and robots , and gather the futuristic weapons and colored access cards that are necessary for advancing the story .

Expedition to the Barrier Peaks was first played at the Origins II convention in 1976 , where it was used to introduce Dungeons & Dragons players to the science fiction game Metamorphosis Alpha . In 1980 , TSR published the adventure , updated for first edition Advanced Dungeons & Dragons rules . The adventure was not updated for later rules systems , but a Wizards.com article did provide a conversion to Future Tech . It included a separate booklet of illustrations , in both color and black and white . The adventure is an old @-@ time favorite of many Dungeons & Dragons fans , including Stephen Colbert . It was ranked the fifth @-@ best Dungeons & Dragons adventure of all time by Dungeon magazine in 2004 , and received positive reviews from White Dwarf and The Space Gamer magazines . The other adventures in the S series include S1 Tomb of Horrors , S2 White Plume Mountain , and S4 Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth .

= = Plot summary = =

Expedition to the Barrier Peaks takes place on a spaceship in the Barrier Peaks mountain range of the World of Greyhawk campaign setting . In the adventure 's introduction , it is explained that the Grand Duchy of Geoff is under constant attack by a succession of monsters that have been emerging from a cave in the mountains . The Grand Duke of Geoff has hired the characters to discover the origin of the creatures , and stop their incursions .

The cave is actually an entrance to a downed spacecraft whose inhabitants have succumbed to a virus , leaving them dead . Many of the ship 's robots are still functioning , however , and the players must either avoid or defeat them ; some may also be ignored . As later seen in video games , " plot coupons " need to be collected . The adventure requires the players to gather colored access cards (the " coupons ") to advance to the next story arc : entering restricted areas , commanding robots , and other actions are all dependent on the cards . Expedition to the Barrier Peaks comes with a booklet of 63 numbered illustrations , depicting the various monsters , high tech devices , and situations encountered in the adventure . Much of the artwork for the adventure , including the cover , was produced by Erol Otus . Several of his contributions were printed in full color . Jeff Dee , Greg K. Fleming , David S. LaForce , Jim Roslof and David C. Sutherland III provided additional illustrations for the adventure .

Expedition to the Barrier Peaks 's 32 @-@ page adventure guide is divided into six sections . These describe the crew 's quarters , the lounge area , the gardens and menagerie , and the activity deck . Along the way , the characters find colored access cards and futuristic devices such as blaster rifles and suits of powered armor that they can use to aid their journey . The first two sections involve various monsters , vegepygmys ? short humanoid plant creatures ? who have commandeered the crew 's quarters , and a repair robot that follows instructions before its batteries run out . There is also a medical robot trying in vain to find a cure for the virus that killed the ship 's crew . In the lounge area , a " Dining Servo Robot " still works , although the " food " it serves is now moldy poison .

The gardens and menagerie area includes an encounter with a " cute little bunnyoid on the stump " . It looks like a horned rabbit on a tree stump , but when approached , the stump develops fangs and its roots become tentacles , which it then uses to attack the characters . The next encounter involves a frogemoth , a large alien frog @-@ like creature with tentacles and three eyes on an eyestalk . In the sixth and final section , the activity deck , the players ' characters must contend with various sports robots , including a " boxing and wrestling trainer " and a " karate master " . If the

characters can communicate with the karate master and tell it that boxing is superior to karate , it will attack the boxing robot until both are destroyed , else they will both attack the characters . The last area of the activity deck is the loading area , where the characters can leave the spaceship . The adventure then ends , with no postscript .

= = Publication history = =

While D & D is a fantasy roleplaying game , Expedition to the Barrier Peaks introduces science fiction elements into the game . Work on the adventure began in 1976 , when TSR was considering publishing a science fantasy role playing game . James M. Ward had shown them his rough notes on Metamorphosis Alpha . Gary Gygax thought it would be a good idea to introduce science fiction / science fantasy concepts to D & D players through the use of a tournament scenario at the 1976 Origins II gaming convention in Baltimore , Maryland . Gygax started with his old Greyhawk Castle campaign material and added a spaceship , which Rob Kuntz helped him populate with monsters . Kuntz is further credited for " inspiration " for the module ; his " Machine Level " having been incorporated into Greyhawk Castle and Tim Kask having played in a D & D game with science fantasy content run by Kuntz at GenCon VII in 1974 .

According to Gygax , both the scenario that became Expedition to the Barrier Peaks and Metamorphosis Alpha were successful at the convention . Although Metamorphosis Alpha became available to the general public in mid @-@ 1976 , only a few copies of the Expedition to the Barrier Peaks tournament adventure survived after the convention .

When Metamorphosis Alpha was updated and expanded into Gamma World , it seemed the right time for Gygax to reintroduce Expedition to the Barrier Peaks to the public . Said Gygax , " What could be more logical than to make available a scenario which blends the two role playing approaches into a single form ? " Gygax updated the scenario to Advanced Dungeons & Dragons (AD & D) rules , hoping it could serve as a primer on how to integrate science into one 's fantasy role playing game . In 1980 , the updated version was published as Expedition to the Barrier Peaks . At the time of Expedition to the Barrier Peaks 's release , each Dungeons & Dragons module was marked with an alphanumeric code indicating the series to which it belonged . The 32 @-@ page adventure bears the code S3 (" S " for " special ") . The module included a 36 @-@ page book and a 32 @-@ page book , with two outer folders ; it was one of the first deluxe scenario modules , and included a book of illustrations intended to be shown to the players during the game , including four color paintings . This module was included as part of the Realms of Horror abridged compilation produced in 1987 . Although an article on the Wizards.com web site did provide a conversion to Future Tech , the adventure never received an official sequel and was not updated for the D & D version 3 @.@ 5 rules (Wizards of the Coast periodically alters the rules of Dungeons & Dragons and releases a new version) . It was made into a novel of the same name by Roland J. Green for the Greyhawk Classics series . The adventure has also been referenced in the Nodwick comic series . Unlike the other S series adventures , Expedition to the Barrier Peaks was not included in the Dungeon Survival Guide by author Bill Slavicsek because to him it was a " wonderful adventure " , but not " a D & D adventure . Once you add ray guns and power armor to the game , you have a fundamentally different experience . " Other products that have introduced futuristic elements into D & D include the adventure City of the Gods (1987) and the novel Tale of the Comet (1997) .

All four modules of the S @-@ series were included as part of the Dungeons of Dread hardcover collection , released on March 19 , 2013 . Lawrence Schick wrote in the foreword : " Vegepygmies and robots . What more could you need to hear ? Let ? s go ! S3 Expedition to the Barrier Peaks was Gary in full @-@ on funhouse mode , having a high old time mixing elements of Jim Ward 's Gamma World with fantasy to create a rollicking and memorable AD & D adventure . "

= = Reception = =

Expedition to the Barrier Peaks received favorable reviews and was ranked the 5th greatest Dungeons & Dragons adventure of all time by Dungeon magazine in 2004 , on the 30th anniversary

of the Dungeons & Dragons game . Judge Bill Slavicsek felt the adventure was a " classic clash of genres " . It was not something he felt should be done often , but it made a " memorable diversion " . Judge Mike Mearls described how he felt the first time he read Expedition to the Barrier Peaks . " I had this terrible , terrible conflict within myself to immediately tell my friends about it at war with a maniacal , desperate drive to keep it hidden at all costs . " Judge Keith Baker was most impressed with the adventure 's art . He liked that it came with a separate book of art ; in particular the before and after illustrations of the carnivorous plant with a " built @-@ in bunny lure " . This was later featured in a Wizards.com " Ask Wizards " segment . According to the Dungeon editors , the adventure 's defining moment was its frogemoth creature , and its full page color illustration .

Two gaming magazines reviewed Expedition to the Barrier Peaks in 1981 . Reviewer Marcus L. Rowland said in White Dwarf # 26 that he found the adventure " very enjoyable , with ideas and creatures eminently suitable for wider use " . He gave it 9 / 10 overall , but complained that some of the maps were printed on both sides of the same sheet , making them useless as a Dungeon Master 's shield (a visual barrier that allows dice rolls and other activities to be conducted without the players knowing the outcome) . He recommended at least a week 's study by the Dungeon Master before attempting to play it . He also notes that the cover " reveals the secret of the creatures " . Kirby Griffis reviewed the adventure in The Space Gamer # 36 . Griffis noted that it is full of " surprises and new monsters " , and felt that its one drawback was that Gygax presented standard D & D monsters as natives of other planets . In summary , he found it interesting and " full of spice and flavor " ; recommending it to anyone interested in " something new " or wanting to include science fiction in their D & D game .

According to Creighton Broadhurst , author of Exemplars of Evil : Deadly Foes to Vex Your Heroes , the adventure is one of the most popular " old time " Greyhawk adventures . Game designer Daniel Kaufman remembers " the famous backward @-@ firing guns " as one of the adventure 's highlights , and Stephen Colbert , who played Dungeons & Dragons as a child , chose this adventure as his personal favorite .