

A Planeswalker's Guide to Zendikar

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Deadly perils. Priceless treasures. Zendikar is a wild, untamed world fabled among planeswalkers. Ancient forests conceal trapped ruins. Catacombs leak poisonous vapors into the sky. Magma bursts unexpectedly from a placid lake. The landscapes are breathtaking—if you can survive the dangers. Zendikar hides treasures beyond imagining, but only an elite few can survive long enough to find them.

This is a place where rules are broken: Violent forces roll across the horizon, constantly altering the shape of the land. Massive stones float on air. Vampires dwell in cultured, decadent cities. But elsewhere, the trappings of civilized life are rare. A sturdy machete will keep you alive longer than a chest full of gold.

Even Zendikar's mana is unique—more intense, more powerful, more desired by those who know how to wield it. Like other planes, the lands flow with mana that mages use to power their spells. But Zendikar's mana is different from other planes of the Multiverse. Crackling with spell-like effects, the land pulses with incredibly potent mana. Planeswalkers flock to Zendikar in search of these remarkable—and dangerous—locales.

- Ruins of a Lost Civilization

Ancient, rune-carved monoliths called hedrons are strewn across Zendikar. Up to ten miles long, some of these stones drift in the sky; others are buried in the ground, some whole, some broken. They're remnants of a lost civilization, but their original purpose is unknown. This ancient empire wielded unimaginable power—enough to suspend gravity and alter the land to suit its purposes. Trap-riddled ruins can be found on every continent. Mysterious glyphs hint at truths long forgotten. Unspeakable monsters lurk in the quiet of these hidden monuments of a forgotten past. These ruins still emanate power, and both planeswalkers and local explorers will undergo great peril to reap their rewards.

"I awoke, bloodied, on the banks of the Halimar. I don't know how I got there—face down in the mud, but alive. There must have been a passage out of the ruin, but I was out of my head and can't recall. The faceless monstrosity that ambushed us in Jade Room stalked us for miles underground. After my torch burned down, I stumbled in the darkness, hearing the death-cries of my companions. I have traveled this fierce world twice over, and I can't say what sort of creature pursued us. As I think of it, the quill shakes in my old fingers. I had no love for any of them, particularly the captain. He was a brute. Still, they died so cruelly. I must not dwell on it. Or what might have happened to me when I was not in my right mind."
—The journal of Chadir the Navigator

- The Roil

Zendikar's unique mana, the hedrons, its own fierce ecology . . . these elements combine to cause violent and erratic changes in the terrain. The land shudders and writhes, causing tectonic chaos, extreme weather, and sudden destruction. This volatility is known as "the Roil." Large boulders and shards of rock erupt from the earth, and then subside when the Roil shifts away. Winds generated by the Roil turn debris and vegetation into devastating funnel clouds. Over water, the Roil creates

whirlpools that can suck a boat to the bottom of the ocean or waves that crash into high cliffs and flood the forests beyond.

For those born on Zendikar, the Roil is a natural phenomenon—just the way things are. To planeswalkers, it's obvious that this volatility is what keeps Zendikar dangerous, untamed, and without well-developed civilizations.

"The spike fields are bad, but they're nothing compared to Windblast Gorge. A drake will rip you to shreds before you can bat an eyelash. And mark my words—Zendikar makes your magic wild. Don't trust it. The higher you climb, the worse the Roil gets. The land writhes like it's got a mind of its own. If you're in the way of a Roil tide, you're a goner."

—Sachir of Akoum to Chandra Nalaar

- Exploring the Wilds

Zendikar's intense mana and unique treasures inspires dreams of wealth and power in the bold and adventurous. Driven by tales of wondrous places of mystic power, bands of explorers venture into the wilds of Zendikar. Many such expeditions fail, overwhelmed by the world's many dangers. But a handful of elite, daring souls manage feats of discovery that have earned them riches and renown. Guides, porters, cartographers, sell-swords, lullimages, ruin-sages, and healers form expeditionary parties and team up to scour the world for treasure.

"We'll venture out from Kabira at first light. I have assembled the finest team: A porter who assures me that his hurda is stout and docile. A Sea Gate archeologist who's traversed the hedron fields before. Two sell-swords with references for loyalty. A trapfinder with both eyes and ten fingers. And a goblin guide to lead the line and 'distract' predators from the rest of us."

—Javad Nasrin, Ondu Relic Hunter

- The World of Zendikar

Akoum

Akoum is a mountainous continent where magma glows from crevasses in the earth. Crystalline fields shimmer beneath the sun, but the sharp edges of most surfaces will slice through skin and bone. In some areas, the temperatures are extreme—burning an explorer's skin during the day and causing frostbite during the night. Gases occasionally spew from the ground, and around these vents, bizarre trees and plant life have arisen in pockets of weird biome. The region is plagued by geological instability, causing magma geysers to erupt unexpectedly and shards of rock to rain down unexpectedly.

Bala Ged

Humid rainforests cover this low-lying continent. A humid haze blankets the landscape, which is riddled with poisonous molds, fungi, and strangely colored algae. Deep within the network of limestone caves and tunnels, catacombs, sacrificial altars, and rune-inscribed chambers hide countless treasures. These are the domain of the ferocious, reptilian Surrakar and countless primordial monsters. Bala Ged is home to two tribes of elves: the warlike Joraga tribe as well as the secretive Mul Daya. Mul Daya elves can be recognized by their tattooing, and have a connection with the spirits of their elvish ancestors that sets them apart from the rest of the elves.

"The other elf tribes shun the Mul Daya. They call them bone-eaters and death-friends. But they rescued me from torture at the hands of quag vampires. I've seen them converse with spirits. They honor the jungle like a god and are connected to Zendikar's life-force in a way no one else truly understands."

—Mitra, Bala Ged missionary

Guul Draz

This is a humid region of teeming lagoons, and tangled, fetid swamps—this is the homeland of the

vampires. Predators stalk the wilds, and traps are hidden in mangrove jungles and around settlements. The rancid waterways that twist into the vast marshes and swamps conceal predators and plagues. There are more ruin sites here than elsewhere, including the Hagra Cistern, a huge complex of ruins that's gradually sinking into the muck and water.

"Why do we trap the outskirts of Malakir? We have no desire to work harder than necessary. Chasing prey is for dogs and humans. A victim's blood is warmer if it's already flowing."

—Alinor of Malakir

Even in the dangerous world of Zendikar, this is considered a treacherous place. If you venture to the vampire city of Malakir, you'll have to get by the gatekeepers. Don't expect a warm welcome:

Murasa

Surrounded by towering cliffs, Murasa is continent of jaddi-tree forests, deep valleys, and steep ridges. Vines and other vegetation wind through deep valleys, up cliff walls, and down into dank, half-lit caverns in the earth. The Kazuul Road provides the easiest access into Murasa. But Kazuul, an ogre slavemaster, controls the route and demands tribute from any explorer who tries to enter the continent.

Tazeem

Tazeem is a perilous combination of the Oran-Rief, a gigantic, twisted forest; Halimar, a deep inland sea; and the Umara, and a great rushing river that bisects the continent. Some ancient ruins have been co-opted by denizens, who make their homes in the remains of the massive hedrons. Other ruins remain hidden underground, but are sought after by both merfolk loremasters and power-hungry expeditionary leaders.

Colossal hedrons float in the sky above Tazeem. This rubble field stretches across the entire continent, obscuring direct sunlight and blocking natural rainfall patterns. The massive stones perpetually turn and tumble across the heavens. Amid the ruins, there are the shattered remains of a sky-castle. Merfolk call this Emeria, the Sky Ruin. They believe it was once the home of Emeria, the goddess of the sky.

"Awoke to a rose-colored morning. Slept well high in Vastwood canopy. Sheets of glossy rain poured down from hedron field, but I was comfortable under the cover of the crescent-leaves. Above me, two massive hedrons collided, showering the branches with gray dust and rune-covered shards. I saw two kor up there, cutting pathway stones from the hedrons. They tumbled down, breaking their necks on the limbs of the forest. They shouldn't disturb Emeria, and they paid a just price."

—The Journal of Yon Basrel, Oran-Rief survivalist

Ondu

The geography of Ondu is dominated by a sense of sweeping verticality. The precarious Makindi Trenches, the skyscraping trees of the Turntimber, and the depths of the Crypt of Agadeem all contribute to the strange sensation that travel in Ondu occurs up and down rather than east and west. Jwar, the Isle of Secrets lies near the southern coast. Huge granite heads loom half-buried in the earth, and a beam of pure blue light can be seen shooting straight up out of the island. But no explorer has yet uncovered the source of the light.

Sejiri

This polar region is like an enormous mesa with permafrost steppes, wind-blasted mountains, and impossibly tall cliffs that encircle the continent. Despite its inhospitable terrain, creatures such as felidars, griffins, and sphinxes make their home in the snow-covered wastes. There are many ruins sites, and explorers brave the cold to see what treasures lie deep beneath the snowy surface.

- The Races of Zendikar

Vampires

Vampires live openly in Guul Draz and are famed for the decadence and perversion of their lifestyle. Bloodchiefs, the progenitors of their race, control the opulent city of Malakir. Vampire society is divided by “family” allegiances, each family beholden to its Bloodchief. Each family controls a small amount of territory and routes through the swamp, although the main currency of any family is in its connections and relationships. The tastes and passions of the Bloodchief tend to be imprinted on the vampires he or she creates.

There are five greater families in Guul Draz: Nirkana, Kalastria, Emevera, Urnaav, and Ghet. Dozens of other lesser families are scattered across Guul Draz, each with a contingent of undead nulls appropriate to their place in vampire society. Whenever a vampire fully drains the blood of a living creature without destroying the husk, a vampire null is created from the body. If nulls are left without orders, they will hunt and kill living things that they can find.

“I both adore and abhor my lineage. Rabid and perverse, they whine like demanding infants. But they are mine, and I would slaughter thousands before I would see them bow down and be slaves to anyone.”

—Kalitas, Bloodchief of Ghet

Kor

The kor live a spare and nomadic existence. They travel mercilessly light, carrying with them only the essentials, valuing the portability of individual skill and strength of character over more “static” virtues. “We were not meant to put down roots,” they say. “The heart is a moving organ.” Despite their constant motion, the kor revere locations in a deep sense. They travel in small bands along one of several pilgrimage routes, visiting dozens of sacred sites across Zendikar. Each pilgrimage circuit takes decades, and many are lost to Zendikar’s dangers along the way.

The kor are masters of ropes and hooks, using them to travel and to hunt, and incorporating them into their spirituality. They rarely use unreliable devices such as crossbows to propel their grappling hooks onto cliff faces or into flying game, relying instead on simple, sturdy rope and the skill of the arm. A hooked line is also a social and sacred symbol for the kor, representing their connection to each other and to the world around them.

“The drakes struck the cliff-haven as dusk was falling. They blended into stormy sky, so the scouts didn’t call the warning until it was too late. Half our kitesailors plummeted into the river in the initial assault. We scrambled to string the lines across the expanse, bringing down the big bull with a razor line across his throat. But our hookmasters were the heroes of this battle. Fearless on the cliff edge, they snared the matrons, and the pups soon deserted the fight. As always, we bless Kamsa for the lines that bind us.”

—Rana Cloudwake, Kor skyfisher

Merfolk

More merfolk live in Tazeem than elsewhere, but they can be found on every continent in Zendikar. Although the merfolk are born in the water, they have adapted to life on land. Curious, thoughtful, and analytical, the merfolk are natural explorers. Merfolk tend to be more solitary than other races and don’t cultivate large communities. But even merfolk who spend most of their time exploring will establish a home base, a place they return to before setting out again.

Run by merfolk scholars, the Lighthouse at Sea Gate is the center of learning for explorers of all races. A library filled with scrolls, and maps, and writings about the lost civilization, this is a storehouse of all the collected knowledge about Zendikar.

"We alone of the races can sense the Roil as it moves across the land. Only merfolk can lull this wild earth and make it still. But my kin mistake the source of such power. They put their faith in Em of the Air or Ula of the Sea. I know that my strength is from Cossi, The Trickster"

—Noyan Dar, Tazeem lullmage

Goblins

Goblins thrive in Akoum, Murasa, and Ondu as well as in most settlements and outposts. Although there are numerous tribes, the Tuktuk and Grotag tribes boast the largest warrens. Much of a goblin's life is devoted to finding and plundering ruin sites. The goblins choose their tribal leaders by their perceived industriousness. The goblin that leads is the one who has managed to retrieve the most interesting or powerful object from a ruin. In Affa, the main settlement in Akoum, many goblins hire themselves out as guides or trapfinders. Of course, the normal plan is to help find something of value, trigger a trap intentionally, steal the object, and run away.

Elves

Bala Ged is the homeland of the Joraga elves and the planeswalker Nissa Revane. The Joraga elves have little respect for any other race or even other elves. They see the survival of their nation as most important, and jealously guard their traditions. Many outsiders view their nomadic clans as roving bands of murderers, but there is a complex culture behind their aggressive exterior.

After splitting from the Joraga Nation, the Tajuru elves settled in Murasa and Tazeem. Large numbers of Joraga have made homes in the towering trees of the Oran-Rief forest, where they inhabit villages suspended from the treetops. The Tajuru are rumored to be the best guides in Zendikar. Using zip-lines and expert climbing techniques, the elves fearlessly span the gaps between branches or cliff faces.

Bala Gad and Elves

Bala Ged

The subcontinent of Bala Ged, separated from the continent of Guul Draz by a miles-long marsh, seems stuck in time, a primordial throwback to the way Zendikar might have been eons ago. Damp, fetid air, thick vegetation, algae-choked marshes, and mold-covered thickets—these are the elements that define Bala Ged. The subcontinent is also home to the surrakar, a reptilian humanoid race on the cusp of sentience. Few "civilized" humanoids call this place home.

"Tracked a bask of nema crocs through the densest reaches of the Bordermire. Lost a third of our rations to the grasping marsh, just before we hit the edge of Bala Ged. We should be able to replenish with some mosses and beetlefruit by this time tomorrow—but the expedition is losing morale even faster than supplies. The skins are worth every effort, but it's getting harder to convince the allies of that."

—Expedition journal of Kol Jofara of Kabira

Guum Wilds

The dense, humid jungle that covers much of Bala Ged is known as the Guum Wilds. This jungle boasts the largest array of carnivorous and poisonous plants on Zendikar. The flora of Guum rivals the titanic jurworrel and jaddi trees of Murasa, wrapping around every surface in a continuous, tentacular crawl.

"I keep thinking I see her. Everywhere I look, the shadows of Guum look like the curves of her face. It's my fault she went looking for the seer; I raved about my time with the Mul Daya, talking up their soul-speakers and spirit-channelers. She wanted answers about her father, and now she's lost and it's all because of me. I'll find her, or I'll die in the trying."

—Rinta Bannock, Greypelt trapper

Surrakar caves

Deep within the Guum Wilds can be found slick, slimy limestone outcroppings of rock dotted with cave mouths. This is where the surrakar nest, never far from either their caves or a bog. They are very territorial, and even brave expedition groups know to steer clear of the limestone hillocks. There are rumors of deep tunnel systems underneath Bala Ged that the surrakar use for spawning, but these are unconfirmed.

“Are you sober? We’re far past oaths and treaties. Surrakar couldn’t recognize a border if it swam up and bit their scaly leg. You’re soft-hearted, that’s your problem. ‘They’re living creatures, Marak.’ ‘They almost have a culture, Marak.’ But you didn’t hear them crunching on the bones of your guide, did you? Your childhood friend? It’s not a discussion. We’re killing them. If you don’t want to help, then you can die along with the fish-eyed bastards.”

—Marak, hunter of Umungshore

Bojuka Bay

This swampy inlet lies at the edge of the Guum Wilds, protected from the waves by the thousands of trees between it and the ocean. Fed by the Umung River and several waterfalls that cascade down the surrounding cliffs, Bojuka Bay is a watery marsh of vast proportions. The Umung River flows slowly through the bay but provides a clear and deep passage for boats going to or coming from the Guum Wilds. Those who pass through Bojuka Bay must be prepared to bribe or fend off the savage marsh trolls that reside there. Fortunately the Grotag tribe of goblins that reside in the trees can provide assistance in this regard, assuming they too are appropriately bribed or intimidated.

“Thank you, Sister Saranna. And my thanks to all of you gathered here. It’s been a dream of mine for twenty years to open this passage, and I’m overwhelmed to see it finally completed. We’ve all known someone who has given time and toil to bring the Bojuka Route to fruition, and some of us know some who’ve given their lives. There are no words to express my gratitude. I’m humbled, and eager to get started. With the permission of the Sisters, I’d like to declare this Route officially open.”

—Speech of Jin Kalau, Sea Gate ship’s captain, one year before the closing of the sea route into Bojuka Bay

Umung River

The Umung River descends in steps from the interior to sea level as it passes through Bala Ged. Once explorers pass the dangers of Bojuka Bay, reaching the interior of Bala Ged is a matter of slow progress against the current and porting small vessels around or pulling them up the many rapids and falls at each “step.” Small villages of humans and Joraga elves can be found along the Umung specifically to aid travelers at such points.

“Expedition day sixty-one. Hit the shallows; we’ve had to drag the skiffs for three days, and the waters are black and sludgy. Maps lied about the Joraga outpost—it’s deserted, except for the mortician beetles and heartstabbers. No sign of the grail temple or of the other party. Starting to wonder whether we got good information back at camp.”

—Anonymous, mission log

The Tangled Vales

The Tangled Vales are a number of interconnected jungle valleys that run between steep hills that ripple across the southern portion of Bala Ged. Clans of Joraga elves make their homes in the vales along with some human hunters and trappers. The jungles of the Vales are a twisted and dangerous morass of predatory plants infested with bestial dangers, but the Joraga have made relatively safe zones by cultivating antagonistic plants as a defensive barrier around their paths and villages. Even

the elves avoid the fungus-choked hilltops, knowing them to be even more deadly. Traveling so high exposes one to the region's unpredictable winds and deadly flying hunters, such as gomazoa.

"He want arrows sharp. He want shrooms cut. He wants traps sprung. All day Goga work for elf man. Never Goga time to rest, always working, getting bit. Tuktuk warned Goga, but Goga wanted 'venture. Well, Goga has new trap to spring for elfs. Use bait to lure floaters down. Bring floaters to camp, so they can grab elf man, and others, and suck their brains. No more work for Goga."

—Goga, Tuktuk hireling

Bloodbriar

Bloodbriar patches are hungry clusters of nettled vines that react to movement by constricting around it. If the vines constrict on a creature with blood, the thorns pierce the body and siphon the blood directly to the plant's roots. Victims watch in horror as the white veins on the dark vines turn crimson with the blood flowing through them. The Joraga elves of the Tangled Vales have learned how to cultivate and direct the bloodbriar so they can use it as barriers against outside threats. They typically control them by causing regular disturbances in the vines by hurling objects on the sides where they want the plants to grow and by feeding the briars small (and not so small) creatures.

Cut fungus

Cut fungus is a dangerous plant that lives in the jungles of Bala Ged. A cluster of cut fungus resembles an unusually large growth of a layered, mushroom-like fungus, but the caps hide blade-like spines. Cut fungus have primitive sensory detectors that alert them to temperature changes and motion. When these happen in conjunction (such as when a warm-blooded creature or cold steel are brought nearby) the cut fungus opens its layers and unleashes a spray of blade-like spines. The spines carry a mind-affecting toxin that causes delirium, passivity, and eventually, parasitic growth. Over time, wartlike growths cover the victim, killing the host and allowing a new cut fungus colony to grow.

"Blessed are the blood eaters, for they cleanse the jungle of sin, leech away the contamination of dreams, and give of the lifeblood in their stems for our hungry."

—Ghet family blood prayer

Elves are naturally an adaptive race and have fared better than most others on Zendikar. They are the most prevalent race in the continent of Murasa and have a strong presence in other regions such as Bala Ged. They mainly inhabit villages suspended from the treetops, building small villages in the tangled jungles that wend through the narrow lowlands of the hilly interior. Other elves use their culture of living life out on the limb to reside in cliff dwellings cantilevered against rock faces.

Fearlessness

Zendikar's elves are risk takers by nature. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained" is a sentiment of the elves would approve. They're not usually foolhardy, but their lifestyles have made them almost fearless in the face of danger. They use this clarity of thought during trouble to take calculated risks, often astonishing other races with the results.

Preparedness

For the elves, surviving and thriving are deeply interdependent, and you can see this worldview in their daily lives. An elf rarely lacks the equipment for any task that might arise during the day, whether it's dispersing vor slug infestation or climbing a cliff. What an elf lacks for in preparation, he makes up for with improvisation and quick thinking. It's no surprise that elves are prized by planeswalkers as guides regardless of the terrain or their knowledge of it. Using zip-lines and expert climbing techniques, the elves fearlessly span the gaps between branches or cliff faces. Indeed, some of the branch paths elves

take are impassable without their guidance and skills, as they often leap breaches and climb hidden trails. Of course, to benefit from the elf's skill and wisdom a potential employer must be quick enough to keep up. Elves are notorious for thinking of their own survival first and expecting others to do the same.

Spiritual pragmatism

What's notable about elvish religion is the lack of it, even in the face of many unexplained phenomena on Zendikar. The elves know that ghosts and spirits exist and can affect the material world. But they ascribe no transcendental significance to this fact. They know of the Roil, but to them it's simply the way of things. If the elves have a religion at all, it's to associate the strangeness and deadliness of Zendikar with a sensation of time dilation, both in the expanded and contracted directions — the elves' own long lives make it seem natural that past generations should live among us (albeit in ghostly form) as well as that the land itself should change from time to time (even in a single day).

"We should not despair of our lost ones, for they are not lost. We should not decry our insignificant place in the large world, for it is not so small. The unknown is vast, but I am glad of it; none among us knows what is possible in time, and whether the great forces of the world bring sorrow or a tomorrow full of hope."

—Speaker Hazzan at the Throne of Obuun

Organization

Elves have small village clans that include everyone allowed to live in the settlement. Leadership is decentralized and communal, although those with a combination of age and the relevant skills associated with a given decision tend to take the lead. In mixed-race settlements, non-elves are often inducted into the clan or become de facto members but tend to be gently encouraged to live at the periphery of the settlement. Overall, elvish social organization reflects their high degree of self-sufficiency. Individuals are expected to look after their own needs first and foremost, then their families, and finally the clan at large.

Most clans are part of one of the three major elvish nations (although "nation" is used loosely here, more to refer to regional populations than to any coherent structure). Clans act like individuals, with clan speakers focusing first on what is best for their clans and neighboring or allied clans while trying to balance their needs with those of other clans. This self-centered focus can lead to divisiveness within the nations, but the elvish propensity to take surprising risks often causes clans to lend their support to the nation at crucial moments.

Tajuru Nation

The Tajuru nation is the largest of the three main nations, counting among its number hundreds of far-flung clans across Murasa and other parts of Zendikar. The Tajuru are the most open to people of other races, seeing their skills and perspectives as valuable new tools for survival. Tajuru elves are also more open to new lifestyles, be it living in a mountaintop citadel or roaming grassy plains.

The Tajuru are famous for their seemingly innate skill with tools and their use. Many of the crude but functional technologies that allow for survival in extreme locales (hang gliders, rope bridges, pulley-operated transport, zip lines, and so on) are the result of Tajuru innovations. Indeed, the risky branch-top "roads" of Kazandu, the passage path through Sunder Cove, and other similar "civilized" thoroughfares throughout Zendikar were created and are maintained by numerous Tajuru clans along their length.

The Tajuru clans owe allegiance to the speaker Sutina. She rules from the Tumbled Palace on the cliffs of Sunder Bay. This crumbling edifice of ancient origin is clutched in the bows of a huge and thorny jurworrel tree that has lifted it off the ground and has been threatening to drop it into the ocean for as

long as anyone can remember. Speaker Sutina is often seen on the cliffs of Sunder Bay when the tide-altering monster Lorthos makes its destructive rise to the surface. If there is a connection between her and the beast, none but Sutina and her closest advisors know it.

“A map is a brittle record; do not rely on images made of the past. The land makes itself new each day with the sun, so we celebrate its rebirth. We simply delve where the forest pulls us, building strong roads and branchways where we can, leaving our expectations behind.”

—Tajuru Speaker Sutina

The Kazandu Splinter

The elves of Kazandu have separated from the Tajuru nation and don't acknowledge Sutina as their speaker. They believe their life amid the Kazandu canyons, down in the shadows created by countless jaddi-tree limbs, makes their worldview irreconcilable with that of the “overworld” Tajuru elves.

Mul Daya Nation

This secretive nation of elves have an unusual speaker, Hazzan, an ancient elf who follows the cryptic edicts of a centuries-old elvish ghost called Obuun. Hazzan claims the ghost occupies a wooden throne entwined in vines and bark. Now speaker Hazzan sits in the throne to channel Obuun and address the Mul Daya nation. The elves of Mul Daya often give precedence to their speaker's commands immediately after their own survival, which other elves view as a fanatical perversion of elvish culture.

The Mul Daya are the most likely to serve as spies and assassins, always with Hazzan's utterances as the basis for their goals. The seat of Mul Daya power lies in the mysterious, deadly, fetid jungles of Bala Ged. There, in its damp, teeming wilds, Hazzan holds court over his people, delivering the cryptic messages he receives from the spirit. This nation has a relationship with the spirits of their elvish ancestors that sets it apart. To the Mul Daya, the spirit world and mortal realm are no different aside from their tangibility. Hazzan is simply more attuned to the ghosts. Death and the spirits of the dead are as much a part of their lives as the natural world. This is not macabre to the elves at all; they view it as the truest view of the natural system.

“I've done this a long time. You run an expedition, you figure out quick what your curse is gonna be. We've had no problems with the Grotag, the vampires, the bloodbriar—and this is the most obedient hurda I've ever driven. The curse is the damned elves. And I've known elves—some people call 'em haughty, and it's certain they've seen more'n you ever will—but these deep-jungle kind are far worse. They're phantoms, slipping in and out of the greasy vines, moaning their chants on the night's wind. They're our curse this time, the Mul Daya, I can feel it in every beat of my heart.”

—Chadir the Navigator

The Mul Daya can often be recognized by their face-painting and tattooing. Many Mul Daya decorate their skin with an enwrapping vine motif and use strange poisons and acids culled at great cost from strange creatures and plants in the depths of Bala Ged and Kazandu. The best of the Mul Daya warriors are called “vine ghosts” for their silence in entering and waging battle. These elves train in camouflage, stealth, poison use, and trap setting.

Mul Daya soulspeakers

Soulspeakers use the arts of necromancy to communicate with Obuun, the Everliving One. To do so, a soulspeaker performs a ritual and drinks a poison that kills him. Then once dead, the body rises and speaks the distant Obuun's words. Thereafter the undead soulspeaker performs a ritual of renewal that restores life to his limbs.

Joraga Nation

The elves of the imperious Joraga nation have little respect for any other race of Zendikar or for other elves. They see the survival of their nation as most important, and they view the influence of others as a weakness and jealously guard their traditions. The Joraga eschew the goods and habits of others, even avoiding the pathways blazed by the Tajuru when possible. Many view their nomadic clans as little more than bands of roving murderers, but a complex culture hides behind their aggressive exterior. Elves of the Joraga tribe honor druidic power and physical prowess, and their society mixes these pursuits into a single tradition of jungle mysticism.

“No, you are the intruder, human. I’ve seen your kind, touching our world from beyond its borders, seeing through skin and bone like spidersilk. This is not your territory any more than it is the cobra’s or the hartebeest’s, nor is it mine. But it is my duty to defend it, for I am elf-kind, and you have outsider’s eyes.”

—Mondi Thal, Joraga hierarch

The Joraga tribe is more loosely organized than most due to the frequent movements of the clans. Clans follow various beasts of Zendikar in their migrations or hunting patterns, with individual clans devoting themselves to a particular creature and incorporating its attributes into their martial art and spellcasting.

The core of Joraga mysticism ties their clans together, giving them common ground and mutual respect. All the clans honor Speaker Nen, an ancient elf who dwells in a rain-slashed jungle atop the lofty and cloud-shrouded plateau. Nen delivers few commands but when his wisdom is required, he sends messages in the form of beastly messengers.

Guul Draz

Guul Draz is a humid continent, with tangled jungles and waterways that twist and spread into vast marshes and lagoons. Guul Draz is home to more ruin sites than other continents, and it’s rife with poisonous creatures and diseases. Despite the overall sense of decay, and the foreboding nature of the ruins that jut up out of the swamps, Guul Draz has thriving cultures.

The merfolk move freely along the rivers that make the best highways throughout Guul Draz. The land is overgrown with trees and roots, or is unsound and glutinous, but the water is smooth and easily traversed on barges, or below the surface. Humans have carved out several settlements along the edges of the continent and can be found living in small villages along every major waterway and plying the river trade, which is very profitable, despite the great risks.

Humans and merfolk do great business on the waters, and at the center of it all, the vampires thrive. This is the vampire’s homeland. Whereas in other continents vampires tend to live discreetly amongst other living creatures, in Guul Draz they live openly. They are dangerous, sometimes turning on the merfolk and humans that live amongst them, sometimes infiltrating and feeding on the merfolk and humans that attempt to live apart. Despite this, Guul Draz has a significant number of visitors. Although there is risk walking among the vampires, there’s also promise of dark power and wealth.

Nimble Alema—that’s what we called her as a child. She is an exceptional trapfinder: quick eyes, clever fingers, can even cast a spell or two. She warned me that she’d die young. But I can’t leave her on this wretched continent, trapped in a demon’s lair or as a vampire’s pet. If there’s a chance she lives, I will find her. If not, I will carry her bones back to Tazeem.

—Anbecan of Tazeem

Malakir

Malakir is the most well-developed city on Zendikar, although still small and simple compared to metropolises on other planes. It is built amongst the swampy lands near a massive ruin known as the

Hagra Cistern. It has a reputation for debauchery and decadence, as befits the hedonistic ways of the vampires. The city is divided into five districts, each named after the vampire family that controls it:

Ghet District is a currently impoverished. The family Ghet suffered a major setback in political fighting that resulted in Emevera diverting water around their dykes and flooding Ghet. Ghet has built temporary dams, but the damage to their holdings was significant.

The Nirkana are cutthroats who run about the swamps like drooling animals. The Ghet are no better than gutter rats. The Emevera are so common they couldn't appreciate a fine meal if it died on their doorstep. The Urnaav are obsequious idiots who think we are too stupid to see their machinations. They would all be Kalastria if they could, and who could blame them?

—Lyandis, family Kalastria

The Free City of Nimana

A coastal city built by humans, the Free City is ironically named, because it is the major port where slavers arrive and sell their wares. The most hardened denizens of Guul Draz, mostly vampires but also lowlifes of other races, purchase slaves in huge lots to work in their industries, and in the case of the vampires, to provide new food and sport. Likewise Nimana is the major export center for the mercantile products of Guul Draz that are sent to other lands for trade. As such, nearly every vampire that is heading out to infiltrate the rest of the world passes through Nimana.

Family Ghet has been using their alliance to gain access to the inner decision-making apparatus of Nimana, and are actively converting influential members of the town to their cause. Their plan is to eventually seize outright control of the city and integrate the city into their holdings, raising their own prestige and power.

Pelakka Karst

A vast region of limestone gullies, sinkholes, rises, and caves, the Pelakka Karst is actually the shattered remnants of a filtration system that fed the waters around the Hagra Cistern, an ancient structure, vast and mysterious in purpose. An area of badlands encircling the Cistern, the karst is so treacherous to navigate that even the merfolk will travel long distances to avoid crossing it. The karst is home to some of the largest river predators in all of Zendikar. Humans will sometimes venture through the Karst, mostly bandits who will risk the dangers to avoid the river patrols, but few survive the unpredictable currents and the vast whirlpools that can form unexpectedly whenever a sinkhole forms and sucks down the waters. In addition, much of the Karst shifts regularly, and some of the caves are actually monstrous mouths. Travel down the wrong channel and you can find yourself ground to a paste by the rapidly moving walls.

Tribes of ogres make their home in the Hagra ruins. Cruel as vampires, they place no value on life. It's like their lungs are filled with the foul breath of the underworld. I always hire one, though, because they can slaughter undead better than anyone else.

—Ferth, Nimana expedition leader

Filth Bursts

A form of reverse sinkhole, a 'filth burst' is a massive eruption of oily black toxic sludge that bursts out of the ground unexpectedly. Throughout Guul Draz, there are patches of ground that look solid, but in reality are a thin crust over a tumulus of compressed waste. The slightest damage to the crust can allow the tumulus to explode from the ground, engulfing whatever had the misfortune to step on it. Filth bursts are highly toxic, both physically and magically. They can poison and kill whatever they engulf, or even worse, mutate and derange it, spawning a filth beast.

The Hanging Swamp

The Hanging Swamp is north of the Hagra Cistern, home to several tribes of humans. The Hanging Swamp is a giant sinkhole, 20 miles in diameter, with a floating swamp suspended above it in a glittering arc of water blobs connected by reeds. The entire mass is shot through with roots and creepers, anchoring the whole soggy mass to the ground below. The Hanging Swamp is a maze of floating water globules, and once you enter, it takes an expert guide to find the way back out. Because of a standing effect of The Roil, the entire swamp is in constant motion, the vines twisting and coiling, and the water globules flowing from one location to another. This constant motion means that the path an adventurer followed into the Hanging Swamp is not reversible — the way out is constantly shifting and changing.

The Hanging Swamp is filled with predators that use the terrain to mask their own presence and trap prey. Giant amphibians and insects abound, mixing fluidly with the vines and creepers that make up the “solid” terrain. Many are too small to be a threat to intelligent creatures, hunting smaller prey, but the swamp is home to the deadly Guul Draz Python, which is more than happy to consume man-sized or larger prey.

The vampires of Zendikar feed off of the energies in the blood of living creatures—energies that are particularly strong in times of terror and pain. Their skin feels cold to the touch, and they are consumed with dark passions and blood hunger. Vampires are long-lived—around two hundred years on average.

The vampires dress themselves in leather and insect carapaces ornamented with silks and gauzes. They often decorate their skin with paint made from blood and minerals. Complex layered clothing appeals to them, and they long ago adopted almost aristocratic styles of costuming. Because they aren't warm-blooded, they suffer no discomfort wearing heavy outfits in even the fetid air of Guul Draz.

The pretentious Kalastria pretend that only human blood will satisfy them. Fattened weaklings. They never know how it feels to run through the jungles in pursuit of a bloodscent. The tang and pulse of feral blood has no equal.

—Nirkana Lacerator

Vampire settlements are perhaps the most cultured places on Zendikar. Many vampires value art, ritual, and even primitive theater, and their sense of macabre ornamentation has a dark appeal even to some non-vampires (although other races tend to admire from a distance). Each of the powerful families is under the rule of a different Bloodchief, and any visitor to their lands is well advised to have the protection and patronage of a family, especially if they intend to attempt to live amongst the vampires.

Bloodchiefs

The Bloodchiefs are ancient vampires, the progenitors of their race. They tend toward neurotic insanity, though a handful could be considered good, relatively speaking. Vampires are sired by Bloodchiefs, and the tastes and passions of the Bloodchief tend to be imprinted the vampires he or she creates. When a Bloodchief drains enough blood from sentient creature, that creature becomes a vampire. But only Bloodchiefs can do this. When another vampire drains enough blood from a sentient creature, it becomes a null, not a true vampire.

Nulls

The vampire nulls are faceless undead thralls, a sort of high-speed zombie. They are easily commanded by other vampires, though if they are left without orders they will hunt and kill whatever living things that they can find. When a vampire fully drains the blood of a living creature without destroying the husk (a common problem for the more violent and sadistic vampire), a vampire Null is created from the body. The victim withers into a gaunt form, its skin goes completely pale, and its facial features vanish

except for the mouth, leaving its face a smooth ovoid with teeth. Megalomaniacal, evil vampires lead armies of nulls, using them to sow terror.

Ondu

Ondu is a continent in the southwestern quadrant of Zendikar that juts into the Silundi Sea. The continent shows signs of influence from ancient civilizations, but it is nature that dominates here, taking precedence over small settlements of humans, kor, goblins, and merfolk.

Verticality

The geography of Ondu feels almost vertical. The precarious Makindi Trenches, the skyscraping trees of Turntimber, and the depths of the Crypt of Agadeem and the Soul Stair all contribute to the strange sensation that travel in Ondu runs perpendicular to the horizon rather than toward it.

“We count the cliff strata as we soar, their layers marking time like the rings of trees, history laid out by altitude. Ondu’s journey has been like our own, stretching high beyond its lowly beginnings, striving to kiss the clouds. When we need guidance we aim our kitesails straight down, plunging into the shadowed Trenches, the years dashing by the tips of our canvas wings—and we pull up just before the bottom, surrounded by the oldest of times, whose stony memories enrich our perception.”

—Wamata, kor skyfisher

Islands of Ondu

The region of Ondu is composed of one central landmass and the three major islands off its coast: the large, southernmost island of Agadeem, the smaller, temperate Beyeen, and the tiny, sea-swept Jwar.

Turntimber, the Serpentine Forest

Turntimber trees

Only wild and brave creatures reside in Turntimber, a vast temperate forest on the Ondu mainland. Turntimber’s famous corkscrew-like trees twist into staggering heights, tracing lazy circles on the sky and providing the inspiration for the woodland’s name. Over decades and centuries, the trees bend and twist around invisible spikes of mana like a climbing vine around a pole. The mana feeds and strengthens the trees, pushing them to ever-greater heights. However, the mana spikes provide no physical support, so their overburdened root structures creak constantly as the trunks sway. This creaking has inspired stories of a secret language known only to the trees, which human shamans and druids call *uksil*. Many have been known to venture into Turntimber in hopes of cracking this sacred language, believing it to hold the key to the deep wisdom and lore of Turntimber.

Wildlife

Turntimber supports a menagerie of dangerous creatures. The apex predator here is the baloth, a muscular, omnivorous hunter with claws that allow it to climb the spiraling trunks. Territorial baloths in search of prey have been known to leap from one tree to another with surprising nimbleness, and their jaws can slice through bone.

However, the dominant fauna in Turntimber is the snake, which fills predator roles at all scales in Turntimber. From tiny tree snakes to massive cobras, from the harmless to the lethally venomous, from the mundane to the mana-infused, serpents writhe and hunt throughout the woodland. Some elves believe the snake’s shape to be a symbol of mana itself, coiled around lines of mana just like the trees, and track their movements to detect patterns in mana flow.

Greypelt

Greypelt is a small settlement of druids, hunters, and trailblazers on the outer edges of Turntimber. Its name comes from the tents made from the woolly grey hide of Turntimber warthogs, although many different materials are used in the encampment. Explorers venture out from Greypelt into Turntimber to seek nodes of mana to harvest from the ancient, creaking trees, and have developed a way to temporarily “tame” and store small, stable quantities of primal mana. These parcels of mana are very valuable, and are attracting the interest of powerful expeditionary outfits.

The Makindi Trenches

The Ondu mainland is crisscrossed by a maze of high-walled canyons called the Makindi Trenches. The canyons represent sheer drops down hundreds of feet, some terminating in whitewater rivers, others ending in bare rock. Mana-fueled winds howl through the canyons at odd intervals, making it important for climbers and builders to attach their instruments carefully to the cliff walls.

Inhabited cliffs

The walls of the canyons support a surprising ecosystem of their own. Birds, reptiles, and even humanoids such as goblins and kor nest on the trenches’ sheer surfaces. Trench giants scale the walls looking for crunchy animals to eat, and enormous spiders build trapdoors in the overhangs to snare fliers and climbers.

Raging rivers

Travelers usually travel along the cliff’s edges on wagon trails, but a much faster and more dangerous mode of travel is by river. Fast-moving whitewater rivers course through many branches of the Trenches.

Teetering Peaks

Throughout the canyons and plateaus of Makindi are famous boulders perched in unlikely, precarious, gravity-defying positions. They’re called the Teetering Peaks, even though they have not been seen to move. Historical changes in Zendikar’s fickle gravity may have caused these rocks to shift into their current positions, but some believe that they are deliberate traps set to lure—and then crush—curious passersby. Some mages study the locations of the Teetering Peaks, believing that their locations form a pattern or map that could have deeper significance to the region.

Prison of Omnath

Of the legendary places of Ondu, none is surrounded by more controversy than that of the Prison of Omnath. Omnath was supposedly a divine manifestation of the ferocious mana of Zendikar, a being that can be found in some incarnation in many creation myths of the plane. Some call Omnath the “flickering heart,” the origin of the primal mana that pulses throughout Zendikar. Despite the uncertainty of Omnath’s actual existence, a real site on a high mesa of Ondu has been dubbed the Prison of Omnath.

Binding Circle

If one travels to the top of a soaring Onduan mesa, through the dense forest that crowns it, and into a murky mire at the grove’s heart where shadows move and twist, one can find the binding circle that surrounds the entrance to Omnath’s prison. A complex arrangement of strange globular swamp-growths, stone hedrons, and animal bones, the circle creates an eerie sensation in those who approach it. The effect deters living beings from approaching the circle’s center, where a huge pit leads deep into the ground—hence, few travelers even come close to opening it. Those who have gotten close have died to the destructive surges of power that lash out from the circle.

Soul Stair

According to some, the pit in the center leads into the Soul Stair, an infinitely-long spiral staircase reportedly leading down into the bowels of the world. The Stair connects the relatively rational surface world with a seething, surreal void below, the place where Omnath, a being composed of raw mana, is forever imprisoned.

Ritual of Lights

Religious pilgrims from across Zendikar travel to the Prison of Omnath on a twice-yearly basis to perform the Ritual of Lights, a ceremony designed to protect the world from the release of Omnath. In their view, Omnath is a malevolent, chaotic, primeval force, and its release would represent the destruction of most forms of life. They encircle the site with seventy-seven candles and chant prayers and songs, believing that the ritual strengthens the magical “walls” that make up the Prison.

Jwar, Isle of Secrets

Near to the southern coast of the Onduan mainland is the isle of Jwar. Jwar has largely been written off by explorers due to the swirling Silundi Sea currents and territorial sea serpents that constantly encircle it, but archaeomancers contend that magic of great value and power lurks there. A beam of pure blue light can sometimes be seen shooting straight up out of the island—or down on it from above—leading to strange rumors about the significance of the island.

Faduun

Huge, alien-looking, granite heads known as the Faduun loom all around the isle of Jwar, many of them half-buried in the ground, tilting at odd angles. The Faduun radiate strong magic, but their purpose and history are unknown. Some claim to have heard them speak in forbidding tones, but in a language unknown to modern scholars.

Strand of Jwar

On some cool nights, a streak of bluish light radiates skyward from the center of Jwar. The phenomenon originates from a deep, seawater-filled pit on the island, and attracts flying creatures such as drakes and even dragons. Some kor tribes call it the Strand, hypothesizing that it's the spiritual thread that connects Zendikar to the afterlife, although some merfolk revile its magic as bad luck, even prohibiting their race from looking upon it. Planeswalkers recognize the Strand as a powerful manifestation of æthereal energy but have not determined its function.

The vanishing dead

Some religious pilgrims take dangerous journeys to Jwar in order to bury their dead on the island. Bodies buried in the soil of Jwar, if watered like plants and cared for vigilantly, disappear completely, bones and all. It's unknown what causes this phenomenon or where the corpses go. Some believe that these sacrifices of the dead to nature help pacify the natural forces of Zendikar.

Beyeen, the Crown of Talib

The God's Crown

The island of Beyeen is actually several small volcanic landmasses connected by bridges of clinging vegetation. A ring of jagged, volcanic peaks rises from the center of the island, resembling a monarch's crown. The kor call the small range the Crown of Talib, after their god of the earth. The Crown range is home to a number of volcanoes, including Valakut, the Molten Pinnacle, largest and most active peak of the Crown range.

“Piston” mountains

Other, smaller crags on Beyeen show signs of ancient, dramatic forces. Powerful geomancy once forced the peaks from the tops of the mountains, causing them to periodically hover in midair above the craggy mesas beneath, then settle down again. These tectonic effects have since become overcome by the fierce mana energies of the volcanic chain, and now these “piston” mountains fly up and smash down again unpredictably. It’s seen as a mark of bravery to venture under these mobile peaks to look for valuable relics or to tap into the primal mana there, but many have died trying.

Wildlife

Beyeen is home to mighty lith wurms—hard-toothed burrowing wurms that feast on mountain goats, hyraxes, ogres, condors, and goblins. The lowland valleys of Beyeen are a temperate rainforest, supporting black-furred apes, dappled jaguars, tapirs, and duikers.

Zulaport

A transient community of mages, explorers, and artisans, of mixed races and origins, lives on the coast of Beyeen in a town called Zulaport. The economy of Zulaport is believed to be controlled to a powerful vampire named Indorel, who uses a network of goblin, human, and ogre thugs to ensure herself a cut of all the trade that happens around Beyeen.

The Boilbasin

Near the western coast of the isle of Beyeen is a group of massive tide pools that stair-step down the mountainous slope toward the sea. The pools mingle seawater with geothermally heated hot springs from below, creating basins that seethe with steam. The Boilbasin is said to be a favorite location of dragons, who use the boiling water to cleanse their scales.

Hedron Fields of Agadeem

Mystic relics

The muddy savannah of the island of Agadeem holds a veritable graveyard of ancient stone hedrons, some the size of a fist, others the size of small buildings. This is in sharp contrast to Tazeem, in whose hedron fields the stones are still aloft and seem to be related to the Roil. In the case of Agadeem’s hedron fields, the stones have long since fallen and lay partially sunken in the earth, but they still have an effect on the land.

Strange laws

Though no one hedron appears to have any extant magical capacities, the effect of hundreds or thousands of them can have a marked effect. The laws of nature warp strangely around the Agadeem hedron fields, causing bizarre and unpredictable thaumaturgical and gravitational phenomena. In a strange distortion of the Roil, huge discs of earth thrust up from the ground, rotate in place, and settle down again at odd angles. Humid winds gather in knotted eddies, forming spheres of elemental air that encase groups of floating hedrons and trap flying creatures. Scholars speculate that the power of the hedron fields, if properly harnessed, could be great enough to accomplish almost unimaginable feats of spellcraft, but the erratic conduct of the hedrons has made it too dangerous for large-scale experimentation so far.

Kabira

A community of humans and other races has encamped near the Agadeem hedron fields, some to study the ruins, some to loot them, and some to worship them. The influence of the nearby ruins is clear in the architecture of the settlement; the architecture of Kabira mimics and incorporates the shapes and glyphs from the stone hedrons. A merfolk cleric-scholar named Viniva runs the Kabira Conservatory

here, a small academy which sponsors research of the hedron ruins and passes on what it learns to the Lighthouse at Sea Gate. Some of the Conservatory's recent research concerns the way that certain types of magic—particularly healing, protection, and some types of illusion—respond best near the hedron fields. Others have studied the hedron-mimicking architecture, claiming that, far from a simple artistic trend, it may actually represent a deep safety problem for the denizens of Kabira.

Three Masks

Multiple explorers have reported witnessing the phenomenon of the Three Masks, immense, floating, monstrous visages that generally appear as a trio. Whether it's a psychic disturbance, a mirage, a transcendental spiritual experience, or just a series of tall tales is subject to debate. Descriptions of the masks vary, but some merfolk and kor scholars wonder whether they might be manifestations or visions of the three gods of their respective pantheons.

Crypt of Agadeem

Nestled into the canyons on the island of Agadeem is the Crypt of Agadeem, a natural cavern converted into a heavily trapped burial site. The mouth of the cavern is a huge natural archway lined with innumerable small, etched hedrons. The entrance chamber, called the Crypt Maw, is a cavern the size of a cathedral. It is home to thousands of bats and is believed by some to be haunted by malevolent spirits.

The Cryptlock

On the rear wall of the Crypt stands a massive stone sculpture that functions as a mystic lock, barring travelers from exploring the rest of the crypt. Archaeologists have concluded that the lock opens only on rare occasions during the death-hour just before dawn, and only when some unknown incantations are spoken. However, certain mad human, goblin, and vampire mages, calling themselves "witch vessels," claim to have traveled down through the miles and miles of shelf-lined crypt tunnels behind the lock, and claim to have spoken in a lost "ghost tongue" with the thousands of dead bodies they say can be found there. They claim their communion has granted them knowledge of events to come, but warn that the tunnels are infested with lethal traps and other evils.

Tazeem and Merfolk

Surrounded by unstable, scrub- and lichen-covered calcite flats, Tazeem is a perilous combination of reef-rock forests, a deep inland sea, and a great white-water river that bisects the continent. Some ancient ruins are prominently visible and have been co-opted by the denizens of Tazeem. Others remain hidden and intact, with mysterious artifacts and forces waiting to be discovered by intrepid explorers.

Colossal hedrons choke the sky above many parts of the continent. The rubble obscures direct sunlight and blocks natural rainfall patterns. As light filters through the stones, it moves in constantly shifting patterns across the ground, and objects often have multiple shadows from the diffuse light. The massive stones perpetually turn and tumble across the heavens; in constant motion yet bound by an invisible force that prevents the stones from moving beyond the edges of Tazeem.

Tazeem is the ancestral home of the merfolk, who believe that the rubble was once a glorious castle and home of the angelic Em, ruler of the wind realm. When the castle was destroyed in a cataclysmic upheaval, the enchantment that protected it wasn't completely dispelled, and the shattered remnants remained in the heavens.

Pathway Stones

The massive hedrons are covered in runes and retain magical properties even when they fall from the sky or are broken into shards. Pathway stones are the equivalent of lodestones; they always point to the direct center of the hedron field no matter where in the Tazeem they are located. Those who understand how to orient themselves according to the hedron field can use the pathway stones for navigation.

There's a high demand for these pathway stones, which are usually sold in small palm-sized chunks. These are painstakingly chipped off the hedrons by cutter-traders, one of the most dangerous professions in Tazeem (because of the risk of falling, being crushed by colliding hedron pieces, or succumbing to other, more mysterious hazards). Cutter-traders are often merfolk who scour the surface of Tazeem for fallen stones, but they also use great daring and expertise to navigate Em's Realm and retrieve pieces of the stones that are still in the air.

Halimar isn't a natural sea. Surrounded on three sides by rocky cliffs, the fourth side is enclosed by an ancient Sea Gate. The seawall is more than 500 feet tall with a white-stone cylindrical tower (now used as a lighthouse) that soars an additional 350 feet into the air. Collectively, the seawall and lighthouse are known as the Sea Gate, the largest settlement in Tazeem.

No one knows when the seawall was built, but they believe that Halimar must be an old sea because it is home to many species of brightly colored fish, tusked seals, and massive leviathans that dwell in the depths. Halimar is very deep—around 500 feet deep in some places. When Halimar is placid, the water is a sparkling cerulean. But when The Roil moves across the water, there are white-capped waves and treacherous whirlpools. Tidal waves crash against the sea gate and the cliffs. Despite the tumultuous seas and plethora of carnivorous sea creatures, it is viewed as the safest way to get from the Sea Gate to the mouth of the Umara River Gorge, and there is a substantial maritime trade and traffic on Halimar.

The Lighthouse at Sea Gate

The city of Sea Gate is the closest thing to a hub of civilization in Tazeem. The city is nominally based around trade houses, with a central house for blacksmiths, coopers, butchers, etc. The flat space at the top of the sea wall is approximately 20 acres, and nearly every inch has been built up with houses and shops. Even the narrow corridors between the buildings are covered because of the risk of attacks from drakes and other aerial predators.

At the eastern side of the sea gate stands the Lighthouse, a cylindrical tower that is the center of all learning in Tazeem. The Lighthouse has 20 floors and is a nexus for merfolk explorers/chroniclers. The walls are lined with leather scrolls filled with maps, spells, archeological finds, lists of plant and animal classifications, and theoretical discussions of The Roil.

Much of the interior of Tazeem is an ever-expanding reef-rock forest. The formations of brittle rock are similar to a coral reef: branching plateaus, spiny towers, bristly fringes, and stratified layers with deep crevices and sun wells. This reef-rock forms in pale yellows, greens, and blues. The reef-rock is porous and pockmarked, and water drips through these crevices and holes. The rock itself is infused with magical properties and is continually expanding and growing, like a coral reef, although the rock itself isn't alive. These reef-rocks can grow up to 100 feet tall and merge with surrounding reefs to form stratified plateaus that are hundreds of miles wide and tall.

Giant trees and other vegetation grows on this reef-rock—on top of the plateaus, surrounding the spiny formations, deep in the sun wells—wherever it can get even a small amount of light and water. The plants send out a mat of roots and engulf the rock so that in many places the rock isn't visible through the undergrowth. The forest takes the shape of the rock below it, making bizarre shapes and silhouettes. Because of the scarcity of direct sunlight, the vegetation grows explosively fast whenever

sunlight does manage to reach it. Known as Em's Blessing, this explosive growth is both beautiful and dangerous. Animals and explorers can become caught and suffocated in the growth.

There are numerous pit caves all over Tazeem. These are deep vertical shafts that lead down to the swampy underground caves. Birds make their homes in the walls of these caves, and some elves carve deep indentations into the walls to make sheltering places that are safe from The Roil. Some pit caves still have reservoirs of fresh water at the bottom and these are outfitted with a pulley system to bring the water to the surface. Other pit caves are filled with a choking mist that leaks into the air, poisoning anything that ventures too close to the mouth of the shaft. The most dangerous pit caves are those that look innocuous but are actually geysers that blast boiling water into the air.

From its source at Halimar Sea to the northern edge of continent, the Umara River runs through a deep gorge and drops over 800 feet over a series of waterfalls. The fast-flowing water is dangerous to navigate and is mostly white-water rapids throughout its length. Hundreds of tributaries branch out from Umara and wind through the Oran-Rief, and these smaller rivers tend to be less tumultuous than the Umara.

The gorge acts as kind of a wind tunnel, and merfolk make gliders that they can use to glide down the gorge. These gliders aren't particularly practical, but some merfolk prefer them to the boats and portages. The Umara River Gorge is less affected by The Roil than anywhere else in Tazeem. Because of this, there are more settlements in the gorge and along portages than other places.

Magosi Waterfall and Portage . Magosi is the largest waterfall along the river at almost 300 feet tall. No one has ever made it over the falls alive in a watercraft. The portage near the top of waterfall is a popular resting point for nomadic groups of various races; there are always traders and other explorers camped at the portage. In the inner continent, this is the best place to trade for pathway stones, supplies, and merfolk spell scrolls. Everyone travelling down the gorge must pass through the Magosi portage, but it is still a dangerous spot to spend the night. People routinely disappear in the night, and there are rumors of a massive, tentacled creature that lives behind the waterfall.

Curious, thoughtful, and analytical, the merfolk are natural explorers. Although the merfolk are born in the water, their appearance is more human than fish. They have muted skin colors, including ivory, beige, silver, and pale gold. They have residual fins on the backs of their arms and calves. The fins are sometimes streaked with brighter colors, such as green and blue. They have human-like hair in shades of silver, gold, and light browns. But like their fins, the merfolk's hair often has streaks of bright color as well.

Although merfolk are a common sight in the settlements and trading posts of Zendikar, they are a race in decline. Merfolk tend to be more solitary than other races and don't cultivate large communities. But even merfolk who spend most of their time exploring will establish a home base, a place they return to before setting out again.

Built on a large island in the middle of one of the widest sections of the Umara River, the Merfolk Enclave is a hive-like structure of rooms that look like bathing halls, corridors, and sleeping chambers. The Enclave is made from a rock that resembles pale sandstone that has glittering crystals embedded in it. Merfolk must be born in the water, so many merfolk return to the Enclave to find a mate or to give birth. While many merfolk consider the Enclave to be their home, most don't live there full time.

The merfolk believe that the world is divided into three realms: Emeria, or the Wind Realm, which was once ruled by the angel Em and includes the sky, the wind, and the clouds; Ula's Realm, the underwater realm; and Cosi's Realm, which comprises everything else.

Zendikar is so dangerous and inhospitable that all other terrain is considered to be under the rule of Cosi, the Trickster. Cosi is believed to take the form of handsome humanlike being with a mischievous grin. He carries two kor-inspired hooked ropes that he uses to meddle in mortal affairs. Cosi has a chaotic nature. He will lure, scheme, and deceive for no reason but to incite chaos. Misfortune is usually blamed on Cosi's meddling.

Goblins

The goblins of Zendikar are similar in appearance to goblins found in other planes, between 3.5 and 5 feet in height, but with a slender, more elongated build. Their arms are unusually long, allowing them to brachiate through forest canopies and along cliff walls, and their skin is more leathery than typical goblin skin. A goblin's skin will range from a brownish red to a moss green, depending on his tribe and his exposure to various subterranean elements.

Goblins practice a strange form of meritocracy when it comes to governance. By far, the most useful trait in a leader is practical survival knowledge, so the goblin that leads the tribe is the one who has managed to retrieve the most interesting or powerful object from a ruin site. As such, ambitious goblins are always trying to outdo one another, and delve deeper and deeper into ever more dangerous ruins. Goblin leaders therefore tend to be young—there are old goblins, and ambitious goblins, but there are very few old and ambitious goblins.

Goblins always carry their most impressive prize with them, and a goblin that hasn't yet retrieved an interesting relic from some ruin or wilderness locale is not considered a full member of the tribe. However, most goblins are fearful by nature individually, so they are willfully gullible when told that a given object is an important artifact. They enable each other's cowardice through a tacit agreement to the effect that, "Yep, that hunk of rock you found feels pretty powerful to me," thereby enabling each others' acceptance by the tribe.

"Grit," an unidentified mineral commonly found in volcanic rock and magma tunnels, is often pounded into dust and eaten by goblins, and it serves to partially calcify their skin—enough to toughen them up against the elemental forces they are constantly subjected to. As goblins age, therefore, their skin develops a stiff, leathery quality like elephant skin. An older goblin starts to look greyer and stonier over time.

Zendikar is home to three major loose tribes of goblins and numerous smaller ones.

The Tuktuk tribe's leader is not exactly a goblin. A goblin explored deep into an ancient ruin, where he triggered an ancient magical rune-trap that instantly killed and then, bizarrely, replicated him. This replica possessed fragmented memories as well as fragmented commands from the magic that animated it, but the two sets of experiences proved incompatible. The replication process aborted, leaving a stone body that mostly looked like a goblin.

The construct managed to return to its home. His name, "Tuktuk," taken from an obscure goblin concept related to bravery, took on new meaning based on the ticking sound emanating from his body. It was obvious to the rest of his tribe that he had brought something amazing back from the ruins, and his physical strength was clearly amplified. As such, the tribe made him chief, and he has been leading them for fifty years—much longer than an average goblin's natural lifespan, and nearly five times the length of an average goblin's actual lifespan.

Tuktuk's conflicting internal motivations, through bizarre chance, make it an excellent goblin leader. The construct mind within it wants to keep certain ancient sites undisturbed, so it is able to steer its tribe clear of dangerous areas of ruins. Even more helpfully, the replica partially understands some of the relics that his tribe's adventurers return with. Compared to goblins of other tribes, a Tuktuk

shaman is much more likely to actually know how to activate relics he has recovered. Whether it's a good idea to do so is another question entirely.

Tuktuk are most likely among the goblins to hire themselves out as ruin guides to other races. Of course, the normal plan is to help find something of value, steal it, trigger a trap intentionally, and run like hell.

The Lavastep tribe is the most industrious of the goblin tribes, with hard-won knowledge of the geothermal activity in Akoum. Much more than the other tribes, the Lavasteps build surprisingly effective equipment out of the crystal shards and veins of strange metals that occasionally boil up to the surface. The most warlike of the goblin tribes, the Lavasteps frequently harass the kor, elves and humans that have taken residence on the surface.

Lavastep shamans tend to be primitive alchemists and experiment with the strange gases and fluids that emerge from newly formed volcanic fissures. When facing a Lavastep, expect to have clay vials and skin bladders full of acids, gases, slimes and other nasty, quasi-magical concoctions thrown at you.

Lavasteps ingest much more grit than the other tribes, and a typical Lavastep goblin's appearance will be quite wrinkled and gray. Experienced warriors will often take on such a rocky appearance that they can hide nearly undetected among the stalagmites, able to ambush foes, predators or prey.

More than the other goblin tribes, the Lavasteps have a somewhat coherent religious aspect to their lives, believing that the fires beneath the earth are sentient. The vapors that their priests and prophets inhale are in fact thought to be messages from the fiery gods in the depths. Fire worship is not for the faint of heart—ritual burning and scarification leave most Lavasteps extremely tolerant to heat and flame, and due to the tissue damage, almost incapable of feeling pain. This makes a Lavastep a dangerous opponent in battle, as they will often fight to the bitter end.

Although most goblins can see quite well in the dark, many Lavastep explorers take a very small, well-covered lantern with them, the flame kept as close to ever-burning as possible, for religious reasons.

The Grotag are clever by goblin standards, and that hasn't helped them one bit. Smaller and weaker than their cousins, with larger hands and feet, the Grotag have tried to live by their wits—not a winning proposition. Ingenuity is prized among the Grotag, so when a goblin has the bright idea of trying to tame fleshpiercer mites, there are at least a few who are willing to follow that goblin into a nest, to predictably horrible results ... most of the time. While the Grotag seem to have a never-ending supply of bad ideas, and a horrible ratio of bad ideas to good, the Grotag also seem to have a never-ending supply of Grotag. As such, by trial and error (and more error), the Grotag have stumbled across a great deal of knowledge useful for surviving the deep places of Bala Ged and for dealing with the creatures that live there.

Grotag goblins imagine themselves to have a sort of empathy with beasts, and they lose hundreds of goblins each year to ill-advised monster taming attempts. But, every now and again, one of these efforts is successful. Grotag are the only goblins to successfully (at least, sort of successfully) domesticate other animals—namely the lagac lizard, large enough to ride or pull a makeshift cart or sleigh, and the ventcrawler, a slow-moving arachnid the size of a car, which enjoys feeding on the charred bodies of creatures caught in lava flows or deadly steam bursts. Occasionally, a Grotag will come home with a more exotic pet, like a drake or a hydra hatchling. Usually, this results in slapstick slaughter.

Grotag are not as insular as other goblins, and are willing to trade their fungal crops and mineral finds for goods from other races. The infamous Grotag curiosity will also lead many members of the tribe to live among other races, whether those other races like it or not. These "bounders," as they're often called (due to the fact that they often need to run to keep up with their chosen travel companions),

tend to be harmless and friendly enough that their “hosts” have a hard time kicking them out of their settlements or travelling bands. However, a friendly group of humans or kor tends to get a lot less tolerant when a Grotag brings home a pet.

Most of the goblin warrens built into the Makindi Trenches are built into exposed rock faces, but some goblin communities gravitate toward small, tight fissures between boulders and converging crags. These fissure goblins have an uncanny affinity for the geology of the region; some of their warriors are hired as climbing guides, and some of their shamans are consulted as oracles of earthquakes and gravity shifts.

The goblins of the Beyeen region of Ondu move from mountain peak to mountain peak, experts at locating ore, obsidian, and gems. They keep the volcanic forces of the island appeased with sacrifices of fruit and gemstones, but still fall prey to most of the predators in their environment. Though their culture appears to be simple to outsiders, the Beyeen goblins actually have a deep dynastic history tracing back generations. Their history is traced out in swirling colors on a miles-long cave mural, called the Beyeen Vein, in the tunnels deep under the mountain Valakut.

Much of goblin society is centered around the role of the shaman, and some goblin shamans will intentionally breathe the volcanic gases that erupt from deep within the ground. While goblin physiology is more adapted to these gases than, say, elves or humans, the results can still be very harmful. Great, chaotic magical energy is trapped in the volcanic caldera below, and as such, the gases often imbue the shaman with magical power and/or visions, if only for a little while. These “gas-talkers” are revered, but often from a safe distance.

Goblins that explore too deeply and too often into the Singing City in Murasa inevitably go “song-mad.” These poor wretches are banished from their tribes to stumble drunkenly about the Singing City, absently crooning its song. Left in the City, they are harmless and eventually waste away, but removing a song-mad goblin far enough that it can’t hear the City’s singing drives it into a frenzy. Goblin tribes at war with one another often sweep the City to gather as many of the song-mad as they can. They then strap blades to them and tie weapons into their fists. These song-mad goblins are driven into battle by other goblins wielding “mancatchers” and then released among the foe. The screeching creatures thrash wildly about, causing havoc and casualties until killed or turned back to thrash among those who brought them to war.

Akoum

Edged beauty“ defines the volcanic continent of Akoum more than any other concept—the crystalline fields shimmer in every imaginable color beneath the sun, but the deceptively sharp edges of even the most mundane surface stones will slice through leather and flesh if an unwary traveler should slip and fall. The surface can reach incredible temperature extremes, as the omnipresent silicate stone reflects the sun’s glaring light and will cook an unprepared traveler during the day just as quickly as that cold stone will freeze one at night.

Akoum is primarily aligned with red mana, as befits such a heavily volcanic region, but the crystal fields on the surface and the spires of semi-reflective rock help provide a white mana tie to the region as well. Beneath the surface is an impossibly old world, and many layers beneath the surface lay trapped pockets from ages past. From time to time a volcanic burst will bring gases and earth trapped for centuries up onto the surface. For a time, the surface of Akoum will burst into beautiful and oftentimes bizarre flora. The elvish pilgrims that tend these regions refer to the event as a “Life Bloom,” but don’t tell that to anyone who gets trapped within the volcanic event, or who gets eaten by one of the

carnivorous plants that often take root in its aftermath. These regions provide intense links to green mana, but these Blooms tend to survive only a year or two at the most.

Geological Instability

At the center of the sprawling region is a massive supervolcano—not precisely dormant, but in the last millennial cycle, there have been few major eruptions. Instead, because of Zendikar's dynamic force known as the Roil, the whole region is plagued by a constant low-level instability. Whereas the Roil on the continent of Tazeem seems to affect the land from above, the Roil seems to affect Akoum from below. Magma flows constantly flood and clear tunnels, gases from deep within the earth are thrust to the surface, and seismic activity can bring down a rain of crystal shards, more deadly than any volley of arrows. In short, Akoum is not ideal real estate for a sentient being looking to make a home. The mineral lava is liquid at extreme temperatures, but as it cools, it quickly crystallizes. Cooling Akoum lava will produce large jagged outcroppings of crystalline rock, the crystal lattices visibly emerging from the glowing-hot liquid stone.

Lifeforms

Despite the barrenness of much of the Akoum landscape, life does tend to find a way to thrive in the cracks. Aggressive silver and blue grasses take root in volcanic stone and spread rapidly, providing meager fare for the larger fauna of the region. Creatures that can survive the jagged land tend to be as tough and dangerous as their home—no mammals, other than the ubiquitous rodents, have managed much of a foothold. Instead, most creatures are either insectile outright, or have some insect-like features; carapace or shells are essentially required survival traits, as the jagged volcanic crystal has weeded out species that lacked such defenses.

Deadly Coasts

The coasts of Akoum are a deathtrap to travelers. Seismic activity and spires of volcanic glass make landing a ship onto the mainland a near impossibility. The eastern shores are safest, but never safe. After braving a journey filled with krakens and storms, it is not uncommon for a ship to meet its end within sight of the Akoum shores, the hull torn apart on jagged underwater crystals, essentially invisible to a lookout's eye. There are no permanent ports. The coastline changes significantly every year to volcanic eruptions, above and below water, and seismic activity that sends coastal shelves into the ocean itself. Still, upon hearing that a ship has been sighted, people from nearby settlements will do all they can to help bring a ship in—that ship that might carry valuable supplies impossible to glean on the continental mainland.

Teeth of Akoum

The northern reaches of Akoum become more mountainous. The Teeth of Akoum are a series of mountain ranges that are essentially impassable without some means of flight or a very experienced and clever guide.

Civilization clings tenaciously to the Teeth of Akoum, which try to shake it off from time to time. Sentient residents of the Teeth include the humanoid races of Zendikar, the occasional sphinx, and even a golem that went rogue from its original function of ruin defense, for causes unknown.

League of Anowon

A small settlement of explorers can be found high in the Teeth. It's a small training camp founded and led by the vampire known as Anowon, the Ruin Sage. The League of Anowon trains dungeoneering mages, or as they prefer to call themselves (with a touch of irony in their voices), "liberators"—mages taught acrobatics and "extractive archaeology" in order to best survive ancient ruins and bring home items of magical importance. A fully trained mage of the League of Anowon can make an easy living

freelance or as a mage-for-hire. Reaching the camp is no small task, and usually involves taking a griffin from the town of Affa below. Leaders at the camp are rarely physically whole. Teachers tend to take up the role after suffering a career-ending injury—a lost limb or eye, or contact with a crippling magical effect. The camp often attracts preeminent visitors, delvers in their prime who claim to come to the camp for the prestige but who are often looking for expendable student volunteers to help on their next mission.

For all that the school wishes to project an image of forthright respectability, this training camp is frequently shut down for months at a time due to drake attacks, rogue mana storms, seismic activity, or detonations due to misuse of magical artifacts.

Affa

This is a mostly human settlement at the base of the Teeth, though elves, kor, and even the occasional vampire will call it home for a time. A river flows down from the Teeth of Akoum and provides the town with one of the few safe, reliable sources of fresh water in the continent. It serves as the major trading hub in the region, and a launching point for glory seekers who wish to head out to the ruins. Goblins, especially from the Lavastep warren, bring minerals, materials, and any doodads that they can't figure out how to use. While rare, someone who knows what they're looking for might find an undiscovered treasure among the trash at the Affa bazaar.

The Goma Fada Caravan

By far the strangest city in the region is not a traditional city at all. Goma Fada, literally “The City that Walks,” is an enormous caravan of wandering kor, humans, and a few elves that moves at a slow pace through Akoum. The several thousand people that make up the caravan actually represent one of the largest “settlements” in all of Akoum. Hundreds and hundreds of huge, sturdy carts comprise homes, shops, eateries, even agriculture—fig trees and similar hardy plants are grown in the dirt-filled backs of wagons.

Knowing that Akoum is death to any who stay in the same place for long, and knowing that resources can appear and disappear at a moment's notice, Goma Fada has answered that challenge by never sitting still long enough to be caught napping. Huge packbeasts and hurda giants pull enormous carts carrying cisterns full of water or granaries full of food. It can be rough living, as the dangers of Akoum move quicker than the caravan, but the “city” is tenacious and has managed to survive thus far.

Tal Terig

Rising hundreds of feet high out of Akoum's basin is the ruin site known as Tal Terig, or “The Puzzle Tower.” One of the most famous sites on the continent, the ruin's exterior is a pillar of seemingly randomly assembled geometric shapes of all sizes—ranging from tiny decorative cubes jutting from the surface to enormous tetrahedrons, making up a significant portion of the structure, twenty feet on a side. The angles and lines of the tower appear to defy the bounds of logic; some have reported headaches and nosebleeds after looking at its surface for short spans of time.

The portion of Tal Terig that juts above the surface of the ground is a tiny fraction of the huge tower's size. While twenty or so floors jut out into the sky, another two hundred lay buried beneath the crystal and stone.

As expected, the site is as deadly as it is valuable. Spirits haunt the halls, as do many constructs and traps placed to guard against graverobbers. Magical traps line each and every hall, and the magic of the vaults is such that the halls of the spire rotate and cycle, ensuring that no trap learned by explorers stays exactly the same for long. The sound of grinding stone carries for miles from the tower, and

it's a sound that tells the few creatures brave enough to serve as guides that all their hard-earned information about the layout of the ruin has just become obsolete.

Ora Ondar

Most "Life Blooms" in Akoum, the sudden bursts of growth that occur after a tectonic upheaval, last only a year or two. A notable exception is Ora Ondar, sometimes called the Impossible Garden. This oasis of growth in the harsh, angular setting of Akoum has lasted almost a hundred years. A mid-sized, multiracial settlement of mostly elves now thrives there—home to roughly 8,000—and the tenders of Ora Ondar, who call themselves "nourishers," do everything in their power to help it last. The settlers have built homes into the stone crannies of a five-tiered outgrowth of rock that juts dramatically out of the crystalline basin. Each layer is home to a different era's flora—gigantic flowers and ferns, thorned vines, giant pitcher plants and flytraps, and on the top layer, a grove of carefully cultivated kolya trees, which produce a mango-like fruit with magical properties.

Eating a kolya fruit is a risky proposition, as the trees serve as natural mana extractors. Most of the time, eating a kolya fruit will simply be an enjoyable culinary experience; the flesh of the fruit is sweet and tangy. In rare instances, however, the fruit will cause a change in the eater, granting great strength or intelligence if the eater is lucky, or causing strange physical properties to manifest: a phosphorescence to the eater's blood that causes his veins to visibly glow in the dark, or a dramatic change to the color of the eater's eyes.

A cult of elves believe the kolya tree to be a gift from the gods and eat the fruit religiously. These cultists claim that continued eating of the fruit grants them wisdom and visions, but after years of eating the fruit, fatal mutations will usually develop. The elf druid Sef Amaran is the current leader of the cult, and the fruit has disfigured him just as it has granted him many gifts. Now blind and insensate much of the time, his followers dutifully collect his fevered rantings as prophecy.

The Khalni Stone

In actuality, Ora Ondar grows around an ancient artifact, the Khalni Stone. This artifact is a powerful mana refractor, and the druids' success in tending the site comes from an amplification of the effort that the elves have put into maintaining it. Many researchers of the stone have posited that it lies somewhere in the forests of Akoum, but nobody has yet theorized that it could be the source of Ora Ondar. If someone were to learn the truth, the elves and other settlers would do everything in their power to strike back at any who threatened this, their most sacred and life-supporting site in Akoum. The Stone would be a prize that few planeswalkers or magical practitioners of any sort would cease pursuing were its location to become known.

Igneous Glens

Other than the sporadic Blooms, plant life is sporadic throughout Akoum. Conditions of temperature and moisture change so rapidly that larger plant life can rarely adapt. Often a life bloom will end when a lava flow erupts nearby. From time to time, a particularly fast-moving flow will leave behind what's known as an igneous glen; the plant life is essentially "flash fossilized", leaving behind a region of statues of the plants and animals that once lived there. While the wandering kor and humans see these regions as beautiful and a sign of good luck, the elves will often destroy them when found, feeling that no matter how aesthetically appealing, a monument to the destruction of life should not stand.

Waterscouts

Rainfall comes to Akoum in violent torrents during the winter season, and the spring will often see the surface transformed, lakes atop crystal beds will form overnight, and water will cascade across the rock spires—a beautiful sight, and fleeting as anything else within Akoum. These pools and rivers last

days or months before the next tremor causes the water to drain away beneath the surface. The kor and humans who sparsely populate the region send waterscouts—part architect, part explorer, part engineer—to respond to these flows, and try to direct the water into cisterns that serve as a supply for the year to come. With very few static sources of water to draw from, water is a precious commodity.

Glasspool

This is the one fixed body of water of any notable size in the region—a huge lake, strangely hexagonal in shape, over two miles across. The water is always cool, clean and clear—and yet most intelligent creatures steer well clear of it. Its name is derived from the complete stillness of the surface of the water at nearly all times. Seismic activity somehow fails to affect it. Even when the surrounding lands are shaken by quakes, the lake remains magically still. Amphibious aquatic drakes make the lake their home, drawn perhaps to this, the only reliable source of blue mana in the Akoum mountain range.

Ior

Explorers have spotted a ruin site at the bottom of Glasspool from the height of a nearby jagged peak. Though little is known about its origins, some researchers have posited that it was once an ancient center of learning, home to a repository of some civilization's magical knowledge.

Murasa and Sejiri

The island continent of Murasa is a vast, steep-walled plateau that rises sharply from the sea. Although smaller than other continents of Zendikar, Murasa conceals an incredible diversity of environments hidden behind its sheer, stony cliffs. Inland from these cliffs, the land drops off sharply, wreathing Murasa in an irregular “wall” of mountainous cliffs. The largest break in this wall is the Sunder Cove, an enormous, tide-wracked bay clotted by the massively trunked harabaz trees.

The interior of Murasa is a rugged landscape of steep, windy hills and precipitous jungle valleys. The most notable exceptions to the interior elevation are the Skyfang Mountains, the Na Plateau, and the canyon lands of Kazandu.

There are four main means used by inhabitants of Zendikar to reach the interior of Murasa.

This huge bay is filled with a maze of the multi-trunked harabaz trees. These massive plants grip the seabed in their entwined roots, joining to form one titanic organism. The harabaz trees grow blade-shaped prows on their seaward sides that enable them to cut the giant waves that smash toward land during the worst of the tides, and after the rising of krakens or the great sea monster Lorthos. Ships attempting to make passage through the Harabaz Forest must remain vigilant against submerged harabaz and maintain tight control of their vessels lest they be smashed against a blade-prow. Making passage during the changing of the tides, a storm, or a manifestation of the unpredictable Roil spells sure doom.

Fortunately, elves of the Tajuru tribe and assisting merfolk have set up a network of flags and beacons to mark the safest route. Sometimes the elves are able to spot sundered ships and reach them in time to save a few crew, but no Tajuru risks travel through the harabaz forest at night or when the water is rough.

These cliffs represent the only maintained cliff-side ascent of the exterior of Murasa's Wall. Set up by the Tajuru elves but now maintained mainly by humans, the Cliffs of Kazuul are named for the pass's current ruler, an ogre slave-master who demands tribute from any who seek passage. Those who pay (including a bribe to the lift operators at various points on the path) are allowed to traverse the steep zig-zagging trails cut into the cliffs between each harrowing vertical ascent using log-and-

rope elevators. Those who reach the top without proper tribute for Kazuul are cast out—sometimes literally hurled to their deaths in the crashing ocean.

This passage follows the route of the rushing Vazi River as it heads out to sea. Boats can navigate the rough waters for a couple miles inland through the canyon of Thunder Gap, but travelers must then disembark and take the precarious trails and rope bridges that run along the canyon walls, across the thundering water, and beneath or above the many waterfalls that burst from side canyons or the plains above. Some trails lead up and out of the canyon while others follow the river for its length, eventually leading to the ground beyond Murasa's Wall.

Thunder Gap was known as the safest means into the interior and had been well-maintained by Tajuru elves and a clan of kor that lived along the Pillar Plains above Thunder Gap. But two decades ago, something happened to the kor. Travelers found kor bodies strewn along the path of Thunder Gap, their corpses hung like butcher's meat from their own hooked lines. The trail hasn't been maintained since, and the most shadowed sections of the pass are said to be haunted by tortured kor ghosts.

"No sign of the Wall of Omens the elves said would be here. Instead we find dire omens of our own—horrible sights of bodies that don't quite exist, eyes of kor that leer at us, screaming ghost-sounds, strands of moonlight reaching out for us from the cliffside. We know we have awakened guardians from some far realm, but we do not know how to calm or free their bound souls."

—Anitan, Ondu cleric

A huge sea cave leads under the east side of Murasa's Wall, and at its rear lies a cavern opening accessible when the tide is low. If a traveler can follow this cave far enough before the tide rises to fill it again, the way through Glint Pass lies open to him. Although torches or other means of illumination are necessary in many part of the journey, the caverns of the Glint Pass gained their name from the light given off by flame-quartz, clusters of crystals that jut from the rock throughout much of the underground passage. These faceted stones shine with the light of internal fire, like lanterns lit by fires in the earth. In some places along the trail, the fire of the earth is obvious as the path wends its way over rivers of magma.

Only those who know the path can find their way through the labyrinth of the Glint Pass, but fortunately for travelers, a vampire guide can often provide safe passage. The pass opens into an ancient structure of diamond-shaped passages on the far side of Murasa's Wall, and vampires have lived there for as long as any can remember. The vampires keep to themselves and hide their settlements out of sight in side passages. No outsider can say how many live there nor why they continue to live beneath the oppressive stone, and the vampires do not tell.

These high, steep-sided mountains are covered in forests. They extend from the western side of Murasa and wind deep into its interior, dividing the western half of the continent in two. Those who wish to get over the mountains must brave the dangers of its beasts and the perils of its "fangs"—huge stalactite-like shards of rock that float above the mountains when the sun shines on them but that plummet down to stab the mountainsides when the sun sets or when a passing cloud blocks the light.

Flight is the safest way to go through the Skyfang Mountains, but the next best path is the aptly named Shatterskull Pass. A wide trail passes through on a relatively shallow incline. Yet dozens of "fangs" hang above the pass, their bottoms blunted into flat surfaces by countless ground shuddering impacts into the ground. Travelers through Shatterskull must beware not only the fall of the "fangs" but also the local rocs that might not be patient enough to wait for a meal of carrion.

The Na Plateau rises from the land just east of the center of Murasa. Roughly a quarter mile high, its forested top is about as high as Murasa's Wall. Wurms dwell in the cracked cliffs of the plateau,

hunting the surrounding lands for miles around for beasts large enough to make a meal. The plateau is also home to several screeching goblin tribes that battle over the scraps they can retrieve from peril seekers and archaeophiles who come to plumb the secrets of the Singing City.

This ruin is a cyclopean maze of strange structures and tumbled towers hidden somewhere near the center of the enormous Na Plateau. Known by legend throughout Zendikar, the Singing City is so named for the eerie, almost musical sounds that come from underground chambers below the ruined buildings. The sounds have driven many explorers mad, causing them to turn on companions or hurl themselves from great heights, but enough have survived with proof of great treasures and powerful magic to draw others to grim fates. Goblin tribes dwell around the ruin, offering aid to those who would enter the Singing City and then hovering like vultures in the surrounding trees, waiting for their chance to pick up the pieces.

"I believe the influence of the Eldrazi is strong here. The notes that play in my skull spell out what feels like a message, the words of which I feel I can just barely translate in my dreams. When I wake, though, the morning shreds my revelations like damp paper. No matter. I can feel a breakthrough coming. [autocard]Tomorrow[/autocard] we journey into the ruin's heart, and I will finally know what they wish to tell me."

—*Journal of Aida Lunda*

The Vazi River rushes down a sloping and twisting canyon to crash into the sea. The river splits many times as it passes through the Pillar Plains, but these side channels typically rejoin with the river in crashing waterfalls. Its waters are difficult but navigable for a few miles inward from the ocean, but then most of its length consists of thundering rapids supplemented by roaring waterfalls from the plains atop Murasa's Wall and from higher side channels.

Thunder Gap cuts through a section of Murasa's Wall known as the Pillar Plains. There the wall is cracked and broken into thousands of massive pillars, the tops of which are grassy plains buffeted by sea winds. For generations a clan of kor dwelt atop the pillars living a simple herders' lifestyle, a strange blend of the pastoral and perilous. They crossed between the pillars on bridges they crafted of rope and bone, or they swung from leaning menhirs (large, upright monoliths) to cross the gaps between pillars the oxen could simply leap. Living in simple tents and herding the hardy pillarfield oxen, they received all else they needed through trade with travelers through Thunder Gap. Now the campsites are abandoned, the oxen run feral across the pillarfields, and only a memory of the kor haunts the Pillar Plains.

An unknown number of vampires dwell within Murasa's Wall in the region of the Glint Pass. They live beyond a water-logged maze of diamond-shaped passages cut into the wall by unknown hands ages ago. The purpose of these chambers has yet to be determined by researchers—largely due to the ferocity with which the vampires protect their secret city. Travel through the main passage to the Glint Pass is the only permissible trespass.

The Glint Pass hides the fabled Cipher in Flames, an ever-burning and complex glyph set in the heart of the rock. It is said that those who can survive the journey and decipher its magical instructions can perform a ritual that transports them anywhere in the world. Whether or not this is true or what other effects the Cipher might have are unknown—none have returned from seeking it except a bedraggled few who found the search too perilous or who failed to read its magic.

Jurworrel trees have dark twisting branches that bristle with thorns. The thorns leak a thick green sap that can knock creatures unconscious. Jurworrels possess a mean intelligence, but they can move only by growing, which they do very slowly. The jurworrel beneath the tumbled palace has been trying to

push that edifice into the sea for centuries for reasons unknown. It has even wrapped itself around the floating portions of the structure and seems to be attempting to push them down.

This human and elvish ore-mining operation surrounds Raimunza Falls, a raging torrent of water that cascades off the southern side of the Na Plateau. The huge waterfall is used to propel log-and-pulley winches that raise and lower the miners and their hard-won treasures. They honeycomb the cliff face with crude, shallow, hand-drilled caverns, racing up or down the face of the plateau while dodging the tailing tossed down by other miners.

Any cave left unattended for long is taken by giant wasps for the laying of their young. The normally solitary hunters would attack the miners, but the huge number of possible egg chambers tends to draw wasps during their spawning phase when they eat less. The wasps fill their fireproof nests with deadly acid-spewing larvae that live there until they grow wings. After they've left, the humans can collect the metals laid bare by their acid.

Hedron-shaped caverns in the side of the Living Spire draw great draughts of air like a breathing thing. Titanic hovering vines whorl from the surface of the plant-shrouded Spire through the center of these stone throats until they reach the chamber of the Grindstone Crucible. There they encompass the Crucible in a spherical latticework of life. The Crucible itself is a thundering mass of huge, rune-covered boulders and shards of rock compacted together and grinding rapidly—sure death to any creature that comes close. The Crucible is a font of wild mana, but to draw on its strength one must stand on the latticework or between it and the Crucible. Yet when the air is drawn into the chamber it is sucked into the Grindstone Crucible with hurricane force, taking with it pieces of the latticework. When the air is not being sucked in, the vines grow, thrash, and writhe, struggling to encompass the Crucible before its next inhalation. The cause of this inhalation and the purpose of the Crucible are unknown.

Kazandu riots across Murasa as a broken landscape dominated by tangles of the mountainous jaddi trees. In a cataclysm lost to memory, the region that is now Kazandu collapsed into the earth as though a bubble burst beneath the skin of the world. This has left the ground a mass of irregular canyons, twisting valleys, and high broken steppes, all dotted here and there by plateaus that tower above the landscape—surviving pillars of the previous ground level. Most of the lower areas are dominated by the strange jaddi trees, many growing nearly as tall as the plateaus. Only the sheer cliffs at Kazandu's borders keep the titanic jaddi trees from crawling across more of the world. This is the seat of power of a group of elves who have dissociated themselves from the larger Tajuru nation, known as the Kazandu Splinter.

"Kazandu is the last place I'd expect to find myself—literally, I expect it to be my final resting place. Its devouring canyons and immense flora swallow my mind, not letting me rest, drawing me back in expedition after expedition. I have mapped and remapped its corridors and its sheer drops. I have lost friends and allies to its treacherous broken cliffs. I have found artifacts lost from a distant age and have drunk the earnings from their sale. I orbit Kazandu like a weary satellite, always hoping I can break free from its pull, never liberated."

—Mkema Leatherfoot

The jaddi trees form a massive web of branches. These enormous plants support whole ecosystems and villages of elves upon their limbs. Countless plants grow upon them, and whole species of creatures live and die in their canopy, many never even seeing the ground. The trees are so tall and their branches so wide that the ground beneath them exists in eternal shadow. Jaddi trees grow slowly but dauntlessly. The wood of a jaddi tree is as hard as stone and grows over cuts, making habitation of the trees a surface affair. No one knows how long a jaddi tree can live—none have ever died.

This rushing flow of water runs from the base of the Na Plateau and wends its way to the edge of Kazandu. There it falls onto the wide branch of a jaddi tree that grew under the water's flow. Now the river flows along jaddi branches for miles. While some stretches are relatively level and quiet, others dive like waterslides or fall from a great height only to be caught by another channel in a branch. Eventually, the river plunges into the marshy Blackbloom Lake in the center of Kazandu.

Deep beneath the canopy of Kazandu, in the valleys created by the roots of the jaddis, crevasses open into the earth. Three such dark regions exist within Kazandu. One is the Doom Maw, dominion of demons and bone-hoarding dragons. The second, Silent Gap, is plumbed by a group of vampires that seek some secret beneath the earth. The third is the migratory home of deadly species—caustic crawlers, giant bats, and shadow scorpions—each inhabiting the crevasse at a different time.

Sejiri is Zendikar's subpolar cap. It is like an enormous mesa; impossibly tall cliffs encircle its entire parameter, and its surface is a rocky, wind-blasted tundra. Expeditions have explored this region but almost no permanent settlements exist here. Of the humanoids that have taken up residence, most are goblins who have no association with a major tribe.

Aside from climbing sheer rock faces, Midnight Pass is the only way to access Sejiri. The surrounding seas crash into this narrow pass between cliffs, and only ships with a dedicated Ula-creed merfolk navigator have any real hope of successfully steering into the pass. Within the pass, the cliffs loom so high over the waters that virtually no light is admitted. Deep into the pass, once the seawater can no longer churn the waters, ships can dock and begin the slow ascent to the tundra plateau — a path riddled with switchbacks, rockslides, and sheer drops of many hundreds of feet.

Stark, beautiful, and extreme, Sejiri is a vast, icy tundra. Pelted by storms of ice and wind, its freezing wastes are a breeding ground for natural hazards. Travelers here must contend with brittle ice bridges over rapidly-flowing rivers, frost-breathing predators, and enormous, floating stone “urns” that spill avalanches of ice and snow across the landscape.

In the thawing season, lichens and scrubby grasses appear in patchy meadows across Sejiri. These resilient plants provide just enough sustenance to feed its population of shaggy, velvet-antlered deer, which in turn feed Sejiri's population of drakes, wolves, yeti, and snow rocs. The tundra deer have a layer of special fibers underneath their outer wool, which is thought to allow them to repel the fierce mana that rages in Sejiri's atmosphere. The deer have little to fear from humanoids, as even semi-permanent structures of humans, merfolk, and kor are destroyed by the exposure to the harsh elements or by the marauding ice elementals themselves, keeping the humanoid population low.

Despite the dangers, rugged Sejiri does support a handful of staunch explorers. The kor and human wolf-sledders of this region are known for their especially hardy breed of gray-white wolves, whose hot breaths beat back the wind. The kor have mapped a substantial portion of Sejiri, but the winds and ice storms of the region tend to wipe out known landmarks after months or weeks, rendering most of their maps historical oddities rather than valuable guides. Some kor believe that the ice shelves of Sejiri actually move in regular patterns, and that their maps in fact point to a feasible model of the spiritual forces that lie beneath the tundra.

“I sailed here eight years ago, unpaid, in the long dark of the blizzard season, against the passionate arguments of everyone I knew. They told me I would find nothing but ice and death. Instead I found everything I ever wanted—beauty, extremity, savagery—a world stripped of everything false and illusory. My sinuses don't bleed anymore from the altitude and icy air. My skin glows in the wind now, instead of cracking and flaking away. And my mind has adapted, too—I no longer miss the mundane comforts of lesser places.”

—Jalaradi, Ikiral outrider

Outposts in Sejiri are few and far between, but in the ruins of a massive stone monolith huddles the settlement and trading post called Ikiral. The huge hedron lies awkwardly on its side, partly sunken into the icy tundra, split down the middle. In the split in the architecture, partly sheltered from the elements, cluster the wind-scoured stone buildings of Ikiral. Frequented by wolf sledders, tundra scholars, and the occasional planeswalker, the outpost is the best place to find supplies, rumors, and an up-to-date map of the surrounding area.

No one knows whether this underwater shrine actually exists. If it does, it lies under one of Sejiri's deep riverbeds and houses remnants of a lost culture of ice merfolk—and perhaps other secrets as well.