

Baldur's Gate

ENHANCED EDITION

SWORD COAST SURVIVAL GUIDE



[**beamdog**]

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

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WELCOME TO BALDUR'S GATE!

Now that you've cracked open the box and are ready to slip that first CD into your computer, it seems like a good time to say welcome to Baldur's Gate and the AD&D 2nd Edition electronic game world.

Right now there's probably two questions running through your mind—what's this AD&D 2nd Edition thing, and who's the guy writing this anyway?

Baldur's Gate is a huge and varied computer role-playing game—but the game didn't happen out of thin air. Baldur's Gate uses the AD&D 2nd Edition rules, which isn't just any roleplaying game, this is the granddaddy of them all.

So who am I? Well, somebody had to write the 2nd Edition rules back in '89 and I and some other lucky souls were entrusted with that job. Back then, we were creating strictly for the paper-and-pencil, sit-around-the-table, face-to-face game. There was consideration to the needs of a computer game. Sure, it was something we had all thought about, but there was too much to do to spend time worrying about it—not that we knew how we would accomplish it anyway.

How times change. Now, almost ten years later, I'm sitting on the other side, making computer games—and I'm amazed at what Baldur's Gate has done. Baldur's Gate brings the AD&D game alive on the computer like no other game before it—and that's no small task! It is a testament to the depth and richness of the AD&D system that even today's computers are challenged to capture the entire range of flexibility allowed within the AD&D game, and it is a testament to Baldur's Gate that it contains so much of that richness.

Still, face-to-face games don't have a computer for a Dungeon Master. Computers can't make judgment calls (and would you want one to?). That means there are some changes that couldn't be avoided. Even in these changes though, Baldur's Gate is true to the spirit of AD&D gaming. We wanted both experiences, paper and electronic, to be equally fun.

Really this introduction is to thank you for playing our game. You playing—and having fun—is what this is all about.

And I hope you do.

—David "Zeb" Cook, 1998

This guidebook is one of the very finest in my ongoing tour of the Realms. I guarantee you'll find no more diligent guide than your humble servant, Volothamp Geddarm. I've spent the past six months journeying around the fine port city of Baldur's Gate and subjecting myself to horrors beyond belief. Poor food, small beds, drafty accommodations—no peril is too vast for your friend and compatriot, Volothamp Geddarm. In thy service!
—Volothamp Geddarm

Volo? He's getting a little better. His writing now borders on tolerable. Please don't tell anyone I said that.
—Elminster



THE WORLD OF BALDUR'S GATE

WELCOME TO THE FORGOTTEN REALMS AND THE WORLD OF FAERÛN (FAY-ROON)! A LAND OF magic and adventure, Faerûn is a small territory of a larger world, which in turn is only the third world of eight orbiting a central sun, entirely encapsulated in a crystal sphere within a swirling chaos which is just one of myriad alternate dimensions. But for the races of Toril—for the elves and dwarves and gnomes and halflings and humans—Faerûn is a very important place. It is home.

Abeir-Toril (Ah-BEER Tor-RILL), more commonly called Toril, is the name of the orb Faerûn and the Forgotten Realms are set upon, just as Earth is the orb that Eurasia is set upon. The name is archaic, meaning “cradle of life,” and is rarely used in everyday speech. Abeir-Toril is an Earth-sized planet. A large continent dominates its northern hemisphere, and a number of other large landmasses are scattered about its surface. This northern continent is called Faerûn in the west, Kara-Tur in the east, and Zakhara in the south. It is the primary purpose of this tome to deal with the western portion of this huge landmass, in particular the region between the Sword Coast and the Inner Sea, and even more particularly that area around the western city of Baldur's Gate.

THE SWORD COAST

For years, the lands between the great city Waterdeep to the north of Baldur's Gate, bustling Amn in the south, the Great Ocean in the west and the Wood of Sharp Teeth in the east have been thought of as the Empty Lands. Folk venture into this vast, inconvenient stretch of wilderness only to get from one place to another. Legends abound of grisly fates befalling unfortunate travelers at the hands of orcs, trolls, hobgoblins (and worse!) said to infest the area.

Thanks to both human and bestial predators, the trip has always been dangerous—hence the name Sword Coast. Through the ages, many have dreamed of founding a kingdom in the verdant valley hidden in the moors. In recent times, caravans have begun to see a new menace—raiding parties of subhumans, primarily plundering the mines of the Cloud Peak Mountains north of Amn.

The area is littered with the ruins of failed dreams—small villages, empty towers and dungeons, and the occasional town, city, or keep, like Baldur's Gate, Beregost, Nashkel, and Candlekeep. This guidebook directs the traveler to the things to see, as well as the best places to stay in every city. Those traveling the Sword Coast alone are advised to hire armed and trustworthy adventurers as escorts.

Zane Hellar of Amn once described the coast between Waterdeep and Amn thus: “Leagues upon leagues of lawless waste, home to pirates and outlaws who feast on those who go north or south using the Sea of Swords as their guide, keeping it in sight so as not to lose their way.”

Volo may or may not be paraphrasing.

—*Elminster*

Zane was not far wrong. But the Coast today is also home to one of the largest and most powerful cities in the region, Baldur’s Gate. From its gates south to Amn, the land on either side of the Coast Way road is pleasant, verdant farmland. The area north of the river Chionthar as far as the Way Inn is more sparsely populated but more dangerous. It serves as a hunting range for Waterdhavian nobles, wealthy Amnians, and those who must kill wild game to eat.

Travelers are warned that lawlessness is swiftly dealt with by ready, veteran patrols in the lands held by nobles in areas around Baldur’s Gate. Throughout the rest of the Coast, the traveler’s best protection is a ready blade and friendly magic close to hand. Brigands, hobgoblins, and kobolds are an ever-present danger. Many rove in groups, living off stolen livestock, staging raids on travelers, warehouses, and weakened settlements at will, particularly at night or during inclement weather.

On the other hand, game is plentiful throughout this region. Grouse, bustards, rock doves, and other seacoast birds can readily be shot, slung, or even brought down by nets flung by those with the necessary skill. It is not uncommon for a fat Calishite merchant with a hand crossbow to get three or four rabbits for an evening meal while servants tether, unsaddle, and water the horses. It is also, one must always remember, not uncommon for three orcs with a trip snare and ready clubs to bring down that fat merchant just as quickly... and then dine on him and his rabbits! As long as safety is kept uppermost in mind, travelers can also expect to find plentiful nuts and wild raspberries and enjoy delicious wild greens (provided those greens are gathered while young and tender). The Coast provides well for patient stalkers who know where to look, be they traveler or fell beast.

CANDLEKEEP

Candlekeep is your home, I understand. You probably remember more about it than I, my friend! All apologies for any errors!

—*Volo*

This citadel of learning stands on a volcanic crag overlooking the sea. Once home to the famous seer Alaundo, the many-towered fortress preserves his predictions along-

side all written records and learning of the Realms that can be assembled. Candlekeep is certainly no tourist resort, though a store, temple, and fair inn can be found here. The price to enter the Keep proper is a book. Those wishing to examine any writing in the Keep's library must gift Candlekeep with a new tome of no less than 10,000 gold pieces in value.

This applies to you as well, even though you called the keep home for many years. The monks make few exceptions. Only their true membership is exempt from the entrance fee. Gorion's influence alone allowed you free access. Such strict enforcement of a rule is not to my tastes.

—Volo

The monks of Candlekeep are called the Avowed. They who claim to be non-denominational. The Avowed purchase certain books brought to them and will even commission agents to procure writings they desire. Those who wish to browse in the library must normally be sponsored by a known mage of power. As a result, many books given Candlekeep as payment are minor spellbooks.

Candlekeep is run by the Keeper of the Tomes, assisted by the First Reader (the second in authority and traditionally the most learned sage of the monastery). There are up to eight Great Readers under these two offices, who are assisted by the Chanter, the Guide, and the Gatewarden. The Chanter leads the endless chant of Alaundo's prophecies. Four monks, the Voices of the North, South, West, and East assist the Chanter in this duty. The Guide teaches acolytes, while the Gatewarden deals with visitors, the clergy, and the security of, and supplies for, the community. The central, highest fortress of the Keep is surrounded by a terraced rock garden containing many trees. There are rumors of vast dungeons beneath the keep, dating from ancient times when they were used as burial chambers for the wisest scribes.

Except in rare cases, no visitor can stay in Candlekeep more than ten days at a time or enter the monastery less than a month after leaving it. Order is maintained by the Gatewarden's five underofficers: four Watchers and the Keeper of the Portal, all of whom have a force of armed monks as assistants.

The Seekers are the lowest monks of the Avowed's hierarchy. They research and fetch and carry. Above them are the Scribes, who copy works or compile books from various sources in the library to sell. Such sales are the chief source of income for the community. Above the Scribes are the Chanter and the Readers. The current Keeper of the Tomes is Ulraunt, a proud and haughty minor mage. The current First Reader,

Tethtoril, is often mistaken by visitors for the Keeper because of his intelligent, regal, and sensitive demeanor.

Candlekeep has but one absolute rule: “Those who destroy knowledge, with ink, fire, or sword, are themselves destroyed.” Here, books are more valuable than people.

BALDUR’S GATE

This port city is both shelter and lifeline for the folk of the Coast. It offers the discerning shopper a wide selection of goods, and features six major inns, six main taverns, seven general stores, six primary temples, and a full-service magic store, along with hundreds of lesser buildings. A tolerant but well-policed city of merchants, quiet trade and business are the general order of each day here.

The Flaming Fist Mercenary Company, over a thousand strong, is based in the city. Every tenth person or so is a member of the Fist or a watch agent (well, spy), skilled in battle and within a stone’s throw of numerous armed allies. Visitors can stroll and shop freely. The city’s system of magical lamps provide light during the evening and night hours. This is another reason why the crime rate is so low.

The city is named for the legendary seafaring explorer Balduran, who long ago sailed past the elven homeland Evermeet in search of the rich, fabled isles of Anchoromè (pronounced “Ang-kor-OH-may”). Balduran returned with tales of strange, vast lands across the sea. He also brought back great wealth, which he spread about his sparsely-settled home harbor, commanding some of it be spent on a wall to protect against tribal orc and barbarian raids (still a problem in the area in those long-ago days). Then he set sail again for the wondrous lands he had found. Balduran never returned.

Whatever Balduran’s fate, his money was spent creating a splendid city wall. Building went on at a great pace within it, soon expanding beyond its confines. The farmers responsible for the wall put it around their own holdings, excluding the actual harbor from its protection. This allowed them to tax all carts coming up from the docks to the protection of the walled city. The colleagues of Balduran, sea captains to whom the harbor was home, angrily insisted the gate by which southern trade and harbor traffic entered the city was “Baldur’s Gate”. They refused to pay for entering. The strife ended in the overthrow of the now-wealthy farmers and the sea captains’ seizure of the city (which came to be known as Baldur’s Gate).

The four oldest captains, their days at sea drawing to a close, turned their ships over to younger sailors who supported their installation as rulers of the fledgling city. The four called themselves “dukes” as a joke, but the titles proved useful when dealing with other rulers. They were later glorified by the appellation “grand.” Now called

the Council of Four, elected by the populace for life (or until resignation), the present grand dukes are Entar Silvershield (a talented warrior), Liia Jannath (a powerful wizard), the adventurer known only as Belt (a strong fighter), and Eltan (commander of the Flaming Fist Mercenary Company).

Buildings in Baldur's Gate tend to be tall and narrow, with slit windows located high and covered with shutters to block out winter winds and nesting seabirds. Above them rises the hall of the four ruling grand dukes, a grandly spired palace known as the High Hall—a place for feasts, court hearings, and administrative business. Not far from the palace stands the High House of Wonders, consecrated to the deity Gond Wonderbringer, god of artifice, craft, and construction. It is by far the largest of the Gate's three temples. Its spreading eastern wings face the Hall of Wonders on Windspell Street, where the more successful of Gond's inventions are displayed to the public. Not far from the Hall of Wonders, near the Black Dragon Gate, is the Wide. This huge open space is the Gate's market. Bustling with activity day and night, it is "open space" only in the sense that there are no permanent buildings within it. Temporary stalls, bins, sale tables, and shoppers thronging to them usually crowd shoulder to shoulder. Outside the Wide, Baldur's Gate lacks colorful landmarks. The ever-present damp discourages the use of banners, open shops, and the like.

Those wishing to indulge in drink and the company of attractive strangers are directed to the Undercellar, a little-known warren of linked cellars just off the Wide.

These are but a few of the many landmarks of this fine city. For the rest, I refer you to the excellent city map I have prepared for would-be adventurers in Baldur's Gate. I've tried to indicate most of the inns, taverns, stores, and temples there for you, my friends.

—Volo

HALL OF WONDERS—MUSEUM AND SHOP

This huge, high-pillared stone hall displays Gond's grandest glories to the faithful and the curious. Its cellars contain replicas of the wonders on display. Folk come from far and wide to see the marvels here. (Many go away thoughtful, determined to create similar devices and save themselves from the awesome prices charged by the clergy.)

Dimly lit by enchanted glowing globes, the Hall is staffed by ever-watchful priests. It is crowded with gleaming mechanisms representing the more successful inventions devised for the greater glory of Gond. The High House, its parent temple, faces it across Windspell Street. The Hall has held many marvels over the years; currently on display are many small devices and a few large pieces. Many of the small devices

seem to be locks or strongboxes designed to look like something else, from goblets to statues to chairs. The larger items include a mechanical scribe, a steam dragon, a pump of Gond, an everlight, a fan chair, and a farseer. Unless one tries to damage, move, or tamper with a device, or states a clear and serious intent to purchase one, the priests are usually too busy fending off relentlessly curious gnomes to speak to visitors. The main Hall's devices are the work of priests who duplicated original prototypes. The originals aren't for sale at any price.

ELFSONG TAVERN

This tavern is the local watering hole, meeting place, and hiring fair for adventurers. A popular destination for pirates and outlaws on the loose in the Coastlands, the city watch turns a blind eye to the place unless rowdiness and battle erupt. Those wishing to fence stolen goods, hire unusual folk for disreputable tasks, and hear tall tales of daring adventure often visit here and stay late.

The tavern is named for an unusual haunting: a ghostly elven woman's voice heard from time to time all over the establishment. Both beautiful and mournful, it isn't loud but can be heard clearly everywhere. No one is sure just who the singer is—although it's clear her song is a lament for a lover lost at sea—or how the haunting came to be. No other music is permitted in the Elfsong.

The ground floor is devoted to a taproom that serves melted cheese sandwiches (spiced or plain, as you prefer), pickles, and fist-sized twists of dried herring—and drinks of all types, of course. Dark, twisting stairs lead to private meeting rooms that can be rented by the candle (the time it takes a short taper to burn down) or for an entire evening. Those with enemies are warned that the dimness on the stairs has concealed many a blade and crossbow bolt.

The bartender has a predilection for spreading gossip and rumors when his palm is weighted with gold and some drinks are quaffed. Patrons can—and are expected to—go armed inside the Elfsong. The unspoken but widely known rule is that all within are expected to protect their own backs.

THE BLADE AND STARS

This inn is named for its enchanted signboard, looted from a ruined village in Amn after a long-ago trade war. It's a large black sign displaying a curved saber held by a delicate, long-fingered woman's hand. The sign's stars wink and slowly drift around the blade. The inn itself is less exciting but still good, safe, and clean: a pleasant place to stay.

The Blade is a long, tall building with attached stables and kitchens on one side

and upper room balconies on the other. Its furnishings are clean and fairly new. There's a small lounge off the front lobby for guests to meet with citizens. Vigilant stair-watchers on staff keep track of guests' comings and goings, discouraging street thieves and even doppelgangers, who are a growing problem.

Rowdy or reckless guests are warned once. If something else occurs, they are firmly asked to leave. On cold nights, the proprietor, Aundegul Shawn, is happy to talk, but only when his palm is liberally greased with gold.

THE BLUSHING MERMAID

The Mermaid is known up and down the Coast as a meeting place in which to conduct illicit business. It is a noisy, brawling establishment. I can recommend it only to those who go well-armed, know how to use their weapons, and have many loyal friends with similar skills.

The Mermaid is a long, low, ramshackle place with a confusing maze of wings, out-buildings, stockade enclosures, and stables surrounding it on three sides—the better to give cover to those trying to approach or leave unseen, most Baldurians say. It has at least four cellar levels—more, some say—and rumors abound of secret passages, and even connections to an underground stream connecting with the harbor.

Maybe Volo means the sewers? Not a stream I'd fancy crossing.

—Elminster

The Mermaid's rooms are low-ceilinged, dingy, and apt to be furnished with mismatched pieces that have seen better days. In general, they are loot-and-salvage pieces that saw heavy use before and after their installation here.

Mermaid visitors will find an astonishing collection of smooth-tongued old sea dogs nursing drinks at all hours. Each is a contact person for this or that cabal, thieving brotherhood, smuggler, mercenary band, fence, panderer, or other shady professional interest. Negotiations with such contacts usually consist of a nasty grin and a case of temporary deafness until at least a few coins are offered—whereupon their voice, hearing, and manners are miraculously restored and they inquire as to your own fortune. Once satisfied the coins you've dropped are of sufficient quality, they'll tell you what you want to know and arrange a meeting or send you to one who can. I report all this secondhand, of course...

A stay at the Mermaid is apt to be safe, so long as one does nothing overly insulting or stupid. The Mermaid's beer is sea ale (thicker and more bitter than most tongues find enjoyable), stout, and a light, golden-hued lager from Mintarn. No wines are available, but one can get whisky strong and smoky enough to strip paint from

wood. It brings tears to the eyes of most that drink it and probably worse things to their insides!

THE HELM AND CLOAK

This grand inn, rooming, and feasting house is favored by those with plenty coin to spare—both citizens of the Gate who enjoy the dining room and travelers. There's even a floor of long-term rental rooms; most are currently occupied by Knights of the Unicorn, romantic adventurers described by one regular patron as “elegant buffoons”. The Helm is the fashionable place to dine and chat, much favored by those of power. Many an important business deal or alliance has been negotiated in its luxurious alcoves.

The Helm avoids the haughty and gaudy, unerringly choosing the best of informal good taste, traditional furnishings, and thoughtful service. Warmed robe and slippers are brought to your room when you're heard to rise in the morn. There's also mead (very ordinary) and cinnamon-spiced milk (hot or cold, as you prefer) available, but no beer of any sort to be had.

“We're not running a tavern here, m'lord,” sniffed a senior servant when I inquired as to why.

—Volo

THREE OLD KEGS

This cozy timber-and-stone inn has three old kegs hanging from a roof pole in place of a signboard. Those bold or whimsical enough to enter will find one of the best inns in all Faerûn. Everything is comfortable, if a little shabby, but the staff is quite friendly. Where there aren't paintings, there are bookshelves crammed with old diaries, travel books, collections of ballads and legends, and grand and overblown histories of heroes. Regular patrons snooze and read the days away, rousing themselves from time to time for a glass of wine, mug of broth, or a game of dice, cards, or shove-skittles. The wine and broth are both excellent, but they, iced water, and dark and nutty malt bread, are the only fare to be had. The thick beastskin rugs, paneling, books, and tapestries absorb most sound.

The Kegs is a quiet place. Come here for a rest, a haven from the bustle of business or adventure. Patrons are asked to keep their weapons in their rooms, and excessive rowdiness is not permitted. Drunks often awake in the morning to find themselves out back, sleeping in the hay pile by the kitchen door.

The innkeeper is a tall, quiet man with a mane of long, curly black hair and a sword scar running diagonally from his nose across one cheek. A Tethyrian noble's

retired guard who fled that land when civil strife erupted, his name is Nantrin Bellowglyn.

BEREGOST

Tired travelers in the Coast Way between Baldur's Gate and Amn often stop in Beregost. Located about a day's travel south of where the Way of the Lion branches off from the Coast Way, this town, while much smaller than Baldur's Gate, boasts three inns, two stores, a magic shop, a temple, and a decent tavern. It's within reach of the northern border of Amn. Merchants of that land often use it as a rendezvous for caravan assembly before attempting the perilous overland runs north to Waterdeep or east to the Sea of Fallen Stars. As a result, the small town can become very crowded at unpredictable intervals.

Begun as a farming village under the protection of a school of wizardry, Beregost is now dominated by the Song of the Morning, a major temple of the god Lathander.

A point of interest near Beregost is the ruin of Ulcaster's school. The mage Ulcaster, a conjurer of note, founded his school over three hundred years ago—but grew too successful, attracting would-be wizards from all over the Sword Coast. Calishite mages came to fear the school's power and destroyed it in spell battle. Ulcaster disappeared during the fray and was never found. The school burned to an empty shell which still stands on a hill east of the town. Local fear of the ruins, said to be haunted by spell-casting phantoms, caused Beregost to expand west of the Coast Way road, leaving the eastern hills to the sheep. On a related note, Beregost has only one tavern: the Burning Wizard (of course!).

The governor of Beregost is Kelddath Ormlyr. A tireless proponent of farming, business, and urban improvement, he is also Most Radiant of Lathander (high priest of the temple). His temple troops police the town, keeping it safe. In this venture he has two powerful allies: the wizard Thalantyr, a conjurer of no little repute; and the smith Taerom "Thunderhammer" Fuiruim. Although Beregost has a five-person town council, the governor's word is law.

HIGH HEDGE

West of the main settlement of Beregost stands High Hedge, Thalantyr's estate. The conjurer is a courtly man who is sometimes seen walking the countryside, his long, black staff in hand. Locals say he's interested in far-off places and things, and is consequently sometimes absent for long periods. Those who've seen his abode say it's a dark, turreted stone house overgrown with pines with a fishpond behind it.

THUNDERHAMMER SMITHY, ARMOR MAKER AND WEAPONSMITH

Taerom “Thunderhammer” Fuiruim is a burly giant. His chestnut hair and mut-ton-chop whiskers are now shot through with gray and white, but his huge hands remain strong and deft. He is a master armorer, and his battle skills are nearly without equal. He’s made items for Thalantyr to enspell on numerous occasions. Even dwarven smiths admire his work. Taerom keeps over a dozen apprentices busy with all the orders that come his way (mainly from Amn). He fights with a huge iron staff and has been known to slay gnolls with a single blow, but he is generally a quiet man. He has little interest in leading others, but is highly respected in town.

THE BURNING WIZARD

This tavern is a bustling place favored by locals and visitors alike. Acolytes of Lathander keep lively conversations and entertainments going here. It’s a good little place, featuring several small rooms adorned with bric-a-brac donated by loyal regulars. It’s a delight to find a room with cushions sufficient to allow one to comfrably sit up in bed!

FELDEPOST’S INN

Named for its now-deceased founder, this is an old and comfortable place. Service is careful and kind, if a trifle slow, but rooms come with a fire alight (except in hot weather) and a warm bath filled by elderly men of many smiles but few words. The food is exceptional. Don’t miss the cheese and cucumber buns, or the onion and mushroom tarts served by the hearth in the evenings. (The tarts are free if you order drinks.) The inn cellar includes an excellent sherry.

Sometimes I suspect Volo of being a lush.

—*Elminster*

THE RED SHEAF

Beregost’s largest inn is favored by merchants wanting to hold business meetings or sit in quiet contemplation. Folk come to the Sheaf for fast service. The inn prides itself on getting you to your room or a board in the dining room as quickly as possible. If the weather is cold or wet, you’ll find yourself in a warm house robe before a crackling fire just as quickly, your wet things taken to the warming room behind the kitchen to dry on stone shelves.

THE JOVIAL JUGGLER

This inn is on the town’s edge on the west side of the road. Its huge sign features a laughing carnival juggler in jester-like garb that identifies the place instantly. It’s an average roadhouse, but young Beregostans love it—it’s their dancing and drinking

club. It outpays Feldepost's for minstrels and other entertainers, and scarcely a night at the Juggler passes without some sort of loud revelry. There is almost continuous feasting on oxen, hogs, and boars roasted whole. Thankfully, the party is confined to one wing so patrons actually can manage to get some rest!

THE FRIENDLY ARM INN

This walled hamlet on the Coast Way several days north of Beregost consists of a stone keep (the inn) with stables, gardens, a horse pond, and caravan wagon sheds. It also shelters a few houses, a large meeting hall with a many-pillared entrance, a small store and magic shop, and a temple to Garl Glittergold, chief god of the gnomes. The Friendly Arm was once the hold of an evil priest of Bhaal, whose undead form was destroyed by adventurers led by the gnome thief and illusionist Bentley Mirrorshade. Bentley set his comrades-at-arms to work renovating the keep. Soon it opened as a fortified waystop on the Coast Way in territory often overrun by brigands and raiding bands of orcs, kobolds, bug-bears, and trolls. Though these perils have lessened somewhat since the Arm was founded, the safe, clean inn is still a favorite spot.

Bentley once confided in me that the secret to his success was a powerful magic ring, which he has since lost. Although methinks he misses it dearly, some precious things are better left unfound. If ye find Bentley's ring, t'would be a kindness not to mention it to him.
—Elminster

THE TEMPLE OF WISDOM

Countless illusions fill this temple to the gnome deity Garl Glittergold. Without them, the gems and gold nuggets studding the low building's interior walls would be a tempting target for thieves and others of dubious moral character. Human worshippers, some of whom have dubbed the temple the Shrine of the Short, are welcome here.

THE FRIENDLY ARM

Inside the Friendly Arm's walls, peace is maintained by common agreement that this be one of the rare neutral havens in Faerûn. Of course, there is always the magic and adventuring help Bentley can call on, and rumor has it some of the fetching barmaids are really iron golems concealed by powerful illusions! I was unable to confirm this, though one serving wench certainly has a grip of iron, which she demonstrated while throwing me out of the bedroom she was tidying! (Perhaps the inn was named after her. She did help me up afterward.) Bentley and his wife Gellana are the energetic

and affable hosts of the Arm; they also preside over the temple. The couple is kind, perceptive, and could probably deal an Amnian merchant out of his last copper piece—no small task! The house they keep has large, airy rooms and good, simple food. Everything is clean, cheerful, and uncrowded—unless there’s a meeting underway. The Arm has become a favorite spot for business gatherings and negotiations alike.

NASHKEL

South of Beregost and north of the Cloud Peak Mountains is the village of Nashkel. I’m told it’s a nice enough place, but I haven’t had time to visit myself. A little smaller than Beregost, it apparently has a temple, an inn, two stores (one reputed to sell some magical goods), and a fine tavern. I’ll try and get there when next I journey through the Sword Coast. If you hear that I stay away for fear of kobolds or some evil presence in the mountains, let me assure you that is not the case!

GULLYKIN

This small village of halflings is in the eastern part of the Baldur’s Gate region. I didn’t make it there after I heard about the kobolds around Nash... I mean, because I’ve never been partial to halfling holes. But the halflings have at least one temple, so it might be worth your while to have a look, if you’re out that way, that is.



POWER GROUPS OF THE SWORD COAST

IN ADDITION TO THE VARIOUS CITIES AND TOWNS, A NUMBER OF OTHER POWERS OPERATE WITH-
in Faerûn, often ignoring national boundaries and invariably working to their own
ends. These secret societies, cults, and adventuring companies pursue their own
agenda, seeking only to further their cause, whatever that may happen to be.

THE HARPERS

A semi-secret society based in the Heartlands, the Harpers have seen a number of in-
carnations through the years. They are primarily allied with an indeterminate number
of good-aligned churches and receive support from powerful neutral parties, includ-
ing druidic circles. Their aim is to hold dangers to civilization at bay. Among these
dangers: goblin raids; dragon flights; and the insidious control of other groups like the
Zhentarim, Red Wizards, and the Cult of the Dragon.

The Harpers believe in the power of individuals, the balance between the wild and
the civilized, and the good of humankind and its allied sentient races. They also strive
to preserve the tales of the past, so that one may learn from them in the future. The
Harpers attract a wide variety of character types, but the society is most attractive to
elves, rangers, and bards.

Harpers are spread throughout the North and the Heartlands, often operating
in secret. They are, by their nature, meddlers, and often operate alone or in small
groups. Except when battling long-term enemies, they think it unimportant that their
name be connected with their actions (their own tales and songs are another matter).
The Harpers are an amorphous organization, and as such have no main base of oper-
ations. They are a force of good in the Realms, and good-aligned characters may find
themselves aided by unseen allies if their business aids the organization. The only
hint as to these allies' identity is the group's harp and moon symbol.

THE IRON THRONE

Independent merchants generally tend to deal on face value and (at least reputed)
honesty. Beyond currying favor with whomever or whatever is currently in charge
of their favorite watering holes and way stops, they also tend to avoid politics. Mer-
chants who trust to their luck but hire mercenaries as protection may manage to
make and sustain a profit. The lands they pass through are ruled by others, including
retired members of their craft, whom they trust to give them a fair shake.

The Iron Throne is an exception to these customs. A mysterious organization
operating over the past few decades, little is known of its purpose or backers. The

Iron Throne operates through agents, mostly low-level thugs and brigands who have only recently taken legitimate employment and entered into service of the merchant roster. The turnover is apparently high, since Iron Throne agents often seem to lapse into their old ways. The Throne denies all complicity in any of their agents' criminal acts, and replaces them regularly. Clearly, the organization wishes to maintain a patina of respectability, however thin.

Recently, the veneer has become thin indeed. The Iron Throne has been charged with attempted assassination of competition, extortion, thuggery, trading weapons to humanoid tribes, and trafficking in smokepowder, poison, and contraband. There have been frequent reports of conflicts between Iron Throne caravans and those sponsored by the Zhentarim. The group was recently banished from Cormyr for a year. Many suspect they are branching out to new locales.

The Iron Throne's masters are at present unknown and have, to date, resisted all attempts to magically divine their identities or intentions. This indicates some level of magical ability or protection on their part. Rumors are rampant. Some say the Iron Throne are secretly agents of the Zhentarim or of Cormyr, and that previous actions against those groups are only to obscure their connection. Some claim a god such as Cyric or an even darker power (if such a thing is possible) is involved. Other rumors point to undead beholders, expired deities, sentient lizards, or pale-blue sea giants as the merchant company's true masters and the secret of its power. The truth remains to be seen.

THE RED WIZARDS

The Red Wizards run the nation of Thay, choosing that land's powerful ruling Zulkirs from among their number. The Red Wizards abroad throughout Faerûn are generally spies and agents of their homeland. Their actions supposedly benefit their country's government, but each Red Wizard has their own agenda to pursue.

The Red Wizards' stated goal is to establish Thay as the supreme political and magical force in Faerûn. Those encountered outside Thay may work toward this end, but are likely more interested in advancing their own causes or seeking to discredit others, including fellow Red Wizards. Their byzantine plots are so involved that it is often difficult to determine where one ends and another begins. The Red Wizards are many things, but one thing they are not is subtle. Swaggering, boastful, loud, insulting, and dangerous, yes, but never subtle. It takes great control for a Red Wizard to affect personal humility, no matter how slight, or tolerate even the most subtle challenge to Thayvian superiority. Despite this, there seems to be an endless supply of Red Wizards eager to engage adventurers as either agents or adversaries.

THE SHADOW THIEVES

The Shadow Thieves are a wide-ranging guild of thieves, spies, and assassins involved in particularly dangerous, evil-aligned, and lucrative ventures. Their activities, unlike those of most thieving guilds, are not limited to a single city; they range the length of the Sword Coast from Luskan to Calimport. Once the thieves' guild of Waterdeep, they were driven out of that city by the Lords of Waterdeep. Now they directly oppose the Lords and all their allies. The Shadow Thieves are based in Amnian city Athkatla (south of Baldur's Gate), where they have a massive training complex and a testing ground for sponsored assassins.

This secretive organization's long-term goal is the slaughter of all the Lords of Waterdeep. In the meantime, they appear to have reached some sort of agreement with the merchant lords of Amn, who benefit from turmoil in their trade rival (and perhaps also wish to avoid joining the assassins' list of targets themselves). Under this pact, the merchant lords leave the Shadow Thieves alone, and are left alone in return.

The Shadow Thieves operate up and down the Sword Coast; their trademark is a black silk mask impaled upon a stiletto blade (usually used in assassinations, or left behind at the scene if a garrote or poison is employed instead). No names, descriptions, or even numbers of Shadow Thieves are known; extremely experienced operators are thought to be few.

THE ZHENTARIM

The Black Network of the Zhentarim is a not-so-secret group of mages, priests, and warriors devoted to dominating trade, and therefore power, throughout the Heartlands region. To that end, they work towards the downfall of an ever-increasing list of enemies, including the Dalelands, the Harpers, rival Moonsea cities, the Cult of the Dragon, Cormyr, Sembia, and anyone else who gets in their way. That which cannot be infiltrated and controlled must be cowed into obedience or destroyed.

The Black Network is active throughout the Heartlands but currently has three major bases of operations. Darkhold has been established as a base within the Far Hills (a few weeks east of Baldur's Gate), and stands as a terminus in the Western Heartlands for caravans from the northern, southern, and eastern realms. The Citadel of the Raven, on the borders of Thar, is a major military base as well. The third headquarters and birthplace of the organization, Zhentil Keep, has become less influential over the years, owing to the rise of the church of Cyric. Despite having a major church figure in their employ, the Zhentarim have been less than effective controlling the new faith than they were the church of Bane. As a result, most of the daily devil-

try of the Black Network comes from the other two locations, which have the added advantage of having no native civilian population to get in the way (or lead a revolt).

Trade is a major component of the Zhentarim's income. They are not limited morally to the transport of ores and finished goods; they also do business in poisons, contraband, weapons, and slaves. Conquest is also high on the Zhentarim agenda, often achieved us the forces of Zhentil Keep or a catspaw such as Voonlar or Llorckh. They make extensive use of humanoid tribes and mercenaries, usually promising payment with the spoils of pillage after the battle. The chief goal in battle is to punish enemies or weaken rivals, but such battles usually only occur after attempts to influence a community from within have failed.

THE MAGES OF HALRUA

A rising presence in Faerûn comes from the mystical and near-legendary land of Halruaa, to the south. Reputedly controlled by powerful wizards, magic there is supposedly incorporated into everyday use. Castles there float on the breeze, water runs uphill, and even the meanest scullery maid knows a few cantrips to make her lot easier. The true nature of Halruaa is best known by those who have traveled within its mountainous borders.

In Faerûn, Halruaan mages are best known for their flying ships, slung beneath great bags filled with volatile gases. These ships often appear off the coasts of port cities, approaching from the water in the manner of standard boats, but remaining "above it all." The merchant-mages who control the ships seem above it all as well. They seek specific items, often of little worth to their owners, frequently paying extravagant prices. Some say they seek the perfect components for their mighty spells; others claim the act of trading is merely a cover for darker, more sinister acts. What is known is that every sailor on these ships has magical abilities.

It has been increasingly apparent that the Mages have a second set of operatives working quietly within the great trading cities of the north and the Heartlands. These shopkeepers, merchants, and common traders act as the eyes and ears of the Halruaans, keeping abreast of new developments, particularly the appearance of powerful magical items. Such artifacts are regularly sought out by the Halruaans, though whether they wish to research them, destroy them, or merely keep them out of other hands is unknown.

Caution is advised when dealing with any of these factions. I fear some may be even more influential than Volo indicates.

—Elminster



MAJOR FIGURES OF THE SWORD COAST

See the above summary for more people—particularly the dukes of Baldur’s Gate and other notables in that fair city. These below are a few of note I also wanted to mention to you, dear reader.

—Volo

DRIZZT DO’URDEN

(Dritst Doe-URR-den) Drizzt the dark elf (Chaotic Good, Drow Elf Male, Ranger 16th level). A renegade drow ranger who escaped the oppressive regime of his underground homeland, Drizzt Do’Urden’s deeds on the surface have made him one of the most famous drow in Faerûn. He may be found abroad, engaged in acts of daring, particularly in rolling back the tribes of goblins and evil humans in the north. His fame and hatred of his former home have made him a target of other drow who hope killing him will earn them favor with their goddess Lolth. Drizzt wears mithril chain mail +4, a gift of King Bruenor. He wields two magical scimitars simultaneously. These scimitars are Icingdeath, a frostbrand +3, and Twinkle, a defender +5, which glows when enemies are near. His most prized possession is a figurine of wondrous power of an onyx panther. The panther’s name is Guenhwyvar. He doesn’t use the panther unless severely taxed, as he is limited to using it for a certain period of time each day.

ELMINSTER

(El-MINN-ster) Elminster the Sage (Chaotic Good, Human Male, Wizard 29th level). Elminster exact age and year of birth are unknown. From his tales, it is suspected he learned the magical arts at the feet of Arkhon the Old, who died in (what is now called) Waterdeep over five hundred years ago. He may have been in Myth Drannor near that magical realm’s final days. The accuracy of these claims remains unproven, but most Faerûnians who know him consider Elminster an eternal force in the world.

The Sage currently makes his abode in the tiny farm community of Shadowdale, living in a two-story house overlooking a fish pond with his aide and scribe, Lhaeo. He is often abroad, in Abeir-Toril or other planes, hobnobbing with the great and not-so-great in a relentless pursuit of knowledge.

Elminster may be the most knowledgeable and well-informed individual in Abeir-Toril. His areas of specialization are Faerûn and its people, ecologies of various creatures, magical items and their histories, and the known planes of existence.

Elminster no longer tutors or works for hire save in the most pressing cases. He seems to prize his independence and solitude, but on several occasions has opened his tower to newcomers and visitors. Elminster's former students and allies include some of the most powerful good individuals in the Realms, including some Lords of Waterdeep; the Simbul, ruler of Aglarond; and the group known as the Harpers.

VOLOTHAMP GEDDARM

Volo (Chaotic Good, Human Male, Wizard 5th level). A roguish magician known for his neatly trimmed beard, stylish beret, and acid tongue, Volo is known throughout Faerûn — known but not necessarily loved, as his honest reporting often puts him at odds with a variety of merchants, constabulary, and wizards. He has written a number of works, including a popular series of city guides and “Volo’s Guide to All Things Magical”, a suppressed work dealing with magic “for the common people.” Volo is an eminent sage who concerns himself with wizards and the geography and lore of Faerûn.

Eminent indeed!

—*Elminster*

Volo is a fountain of knowledge on a multitude of subjects and more than willing to share the juiciest tidbits with whoever will listen. As a result, staying on the move is less a personal preference than a matter of sustaining good health. His frequent travels add to his already voluminous geographic knowledge. Heroes may find Volo anywhere in Faerûn, usually on the run from this irate wizard or that angry innkeeper.

The price of fame, or infamy?

—*Elminster*

BENTLEY MIRRORSHADE, FRIENDLY ARM INN

Bentley (Chaotic Good, Gnome Male, Illusionist 10th level / Thief 10th level). This industrious gnome illusionist abandoned life as an adventurer to run the Friendly Arm Inn, a keep he and his friends cleared of monsters some twenty seasons ago. A clever, alert, curly-haired innkeeper who has a habit of humming when deep in thought and scratching his large nose when concerned, Bentley's always a step ahead of troublemakers and misfortune. A veteran traveling Coast merchant called him a “master anticipator.” Aided by his wife Gellana, he has made the Arm a safe, friendly, clean, well-defended spot, a must-see for overland travelers.

Persistent rumors claim Bentley sponsors adventuring bands and is involved in half a dozen covert schemes or shady merchant cabals. He certainly never seems short of money. On several occasions he's hired mercenaries to bolster his defenses

in the dead of winter or wizards to teleport needed items from far-off cities.

GELLANA MIRRORSHADE, FRIENDLY ARM INN

Gellana (Neutral Good, Gnome Female, Cleric 10th level). This quiet, observant priestess of Garl Glittergold runs the Temple of Wisdom in the walled-in community known as the Friendly Arm and helps her husband Bentley with the inn. Where Bentley is expert at sniffing out the schemes of living folk and determining their immediate needs and wants, Gellana takes a longer view. She ordered and oversaw the digging of deeper wells for the inn's water supply and the rigging of secondary pumps in case the main ones fail or are wrecked by orcs. She also planned the inn gardens, adding window boxes and rooftop beds to the ground plots, and making all garden locations produce food or herbs for the inn's kitchen.

Gellana welcomes humans to her temple and has made many converts. She has become something of a folk hero among gnomes in western Faerûn as "the quiet and true power behind a gnome who made it." Gnome mothers often speak to their daughters of her as someone they should emulate if they'd like to achieve success.

MOST RADIANT OF LATHANDER, KELDDATH ORMLYR, BEREGOST

Kelddath (Neutral Good, Human Male, Cleric 16th level). Governor of Beregost and high priest of the temple to Lathander there, Kelddath is a patient, energetic supporter of local improvement. He's always advising or lending money to new local businesses and farmers seeking to expand or modernize their holdings. His temple troops police the town attentively, preventing adventurers and others from exploring local ruins. Rowdiness and lawlessness are swiftly and harshly dealt with. Kelddath wants Beregost to have a reputation as the safest Sword Coast town in order to encourage trade and travel.

TAEROM "THUNDERHAMMER" FUIRUM, BEREGOST

Taerom (Neutral Good, Human Male, Fighter 5th level). This master armorer has his own smithy in Beregost. His work is admired even by dwarves. Though he's grown white-haired with the passing of years, he's still an active, burly giant of a man. Though he keeps to himself, working at his forge, he's been known to slay gnolls with a single blow of his twelve-foot-long iron staff. Taerom often creates items fine enough for wizards to enchant, but these days he prefers making small, useful things like hooks, locks, hinges, and coffers. His magnificent mutton-chop whiskers cap a frame almost seven feet tall, with shoulders near four feet in breadth.

FIRST READER, TETHTORIL, CANDLEKEEP

Tethtoril (Lawful Good, Human Male, Priest of Mystra, 18th level). This tall, impressive, and soft-spoken man is often mistaken for Candlekeep's Keeper of the Tomes. He is more intelligent, regal, and sensitive than his superior Ulaunt, by far—and Ulaunt knows it. Yet Tethtoril is unfailingly loyal and diligent in his duties, often anticipating troubles and preparing beforehand to spare Candlekeep danger—and Ulaunt any embarrassment. Most Holy Mystra often whispers to Tethtoril in his dreams, bidding him do this or that. This has led him to unearth spells from forgotten tomes; kept Elminster, Khelben, and the Harpers tolerated in Candlekeep; and prevented Ulaunt from being seduced by darker powers (most recently, Cyric).

THALANTYR THE CONJURER, BEREGOST

Thalantyr (Neutral Good, Human Male, Wizard 17th level). An archmage of note, Thalantyr is a courtly, solitary man who enjoys walks in the countryside while armed with his Staff of Power. He dwells in a guarded estate known as High Hedge, west of Beregost. Once an adventurer who eagerly sought the lost magic of Netheril in crumbling ruins, he's now retired. But although he's left the perils of that profession, he'll help other adventurers with advice and spells (for a fee). He'll also warn them they may find more than they intend, as he did, but won't be much more specific. One gathers he met some sort of horrible monster and was enslaved for a time, escaping only through luck. He is said to have won his freedom with spellbooks and other magical relics of Netheril that make him self-supporting and ensure he need adventure no more.

KEEPER OF THE TOMES, ULRAUNT, CANDLEKEEP

Ulaunt (Lawful Neutral, Human Male, Wizard 9th level). The head of fortified Candlekeep, Ulaunt is a proud scholar, one of the most learned—and haughty—people in all Faerûn. His sharp tongue, large nose, and dark-eyed, hawk-like gaze have earned him the name “the Old Buzzard” among acolytes down the years—a term that has even crept into general use in the Coast lands. Ulaunt has access to more spells than most wizards see in their lives, and he reportedly practices casting them in his private turret chamber and caverns deep beneath Candlekeep. A secret passage is said to connect these heights and depths. He holds a magical staff of office rumored to be a Staff of the Magi with extra, extremely potent powers. Ulaunt and those among the Great Readers who are wizards have access to spell scrolls all over Candlekeep—scrolls hidden behind wooden panels and within false tomes. Ulaunt's chief interest is acquiring ever more information. His aims in life beyond making Candlekeep the seat of a land of scholars and a power on the political stage of Faerûn are unknown.

Several tales link him with young ladies of various noble houses, Waterdeep, and Tethyr in his earlier years. More recent rumors tie him romantically to some of the icy-cold, haughty elven ladies who come to the Sword Coast from Evermeet.



COMMON MONSTERS OF THE SWORD

COAST

THIS IS BY NO MEANS A COMPLETE LIST OF THE MONSTERS YOU WILL ENCOUNTER, MY FRIENDS; there are many more in the area around Baldur's Gate. These are a few of the most representative, at least for the safer areas.

You'll probably run into these first, and if you're lucky you won't see any more!

Try not to venture too far from the taverns, friends!

—Volo

BLACK BEAR

A rather common omnivorous mammal, the bear tends to avoid humans unless provoked. Exceptions to this rule can be most unfortunate occurrences.

Bears are, in general, large and powerful animals found throughout the world's temperate and cooler climates. With dense fur protecting them from the elements and powerful claws protecting them from other animals, bears are the true rulers of the animal kingdom in the areas they inhabit.

The so-called black bear actually ranges in color from black to light brown. It is smaller than the brown bear and the most widespread species by far.

BROWN BEAR

The brown bear, of which the infamous grizzly is the most well-known variety, has a very aggressive disposition. They are more carnivorous than their smaller cousins, the black bears. The grizzly in particular will often bring down large game such as deer and elk.

Other types of bears have been seen upon the Sword Coast, but most mind their own business unless provoked!

—Volo

CARRION CRAWLER

The carrion crawler is a scavenger of subterranean areas, feeding primarily upon carrion. When such food becomes scarce or it is threatened, the carrion crawler will attack and kill living creatures.

The crawler looks like a cross between a giant green cutworm and a cephalopod. Like so many other hybrid monsters, the carrion crawler may well be the result of

genetic experimentation by a mad wizard.

The monster's head is covered with a tough hide, but the body is not well protected. It is shrouded in a rank, fetid odor that often warns of its approach.

A drunken adventurer claimed one of these somehow immobilized the party he was traveling with and slowly devoured them... Grisly!

—Volo

DRYAD

Dryads are beautiful, intelligent tree sprites. Elusive as they are alluring, they are rarely seen unless taken by surprise—or they wish to be spotted.

The dryad's exquisite features, delicate and finely chiseled, are much like an elf maiden's. Dryads have high cheek bones and amber, violet, or dark green eyes.

Dryads often appear clothed in a loose, simple garment. The clothing they wear is the color of the oak grove in the season they appear. They speak their own tongue, as well as the languages of elves, pixies, and sprites. Dryads can also speak with plants.

ETTERCAP

Ettercaps are ugly bipedal creatures that get along very well with all types of giant spiders. Creatures of low intelligence, they are exceedingly cruel and cunning, and skilled in setting traps—very deadly traps—much like the spiders that often live around them.

Ettercaps stand around six feet tall, even with their stooping gait and hunched shoulders. They have short, spindly legs, long arms that reach nearly to their ankles, and large pot-bellies. Ettercap hands have a thumb and three long fingers that end in razor sharp claws. Their bodies are covered by tufts of thick, wiry, black hair, and their skin is dark and thick. Ettercaps' heads are almost equine in shape, but they have large reptilian eyes, usually blood-red in color, and large fangs, one protruding downward from each side of the mouth. The mouth itself is large and lined with very sharp teeth.

GHAST

These creatures are so like ghouls as to be physically indistinguishable from them. They are usually found in a ghoul pack. When such a pack attacks, it quickly becomes evident that ghastrs are present, for they exude a carrion stench.

It has also been said that Ghastrs are far more cunning than their lesser counterparts, though it has been some time since I've gotten close enough to find out.

—Volo

Volo may be too skittish to approach these beasts, but I can confirm both their intelligence and their danger. Keep a weather eye and a careful distance when ghouls are about.

—Elminster

GHoul

Once human, ghouls are undead creatures who now feed on the flesh of corpses. Although the change from human to ghoul has deranged and destroyed their minds, ghouls have a terrible cunning which enables them to hunt their prey most effectively.

Ghouls are vaguely recognizable as having once been human, but are horribly disfigured by their transformation. Their tongue becomes long and tough for licking marrow from cracked bones, teeth become sharp and elongated, and fingernails grow strong and sharp like claws.

GIANT SPIDERS

Spiders are aggressive predators dwelling both above and below ground. Most are poisonous and bite prey before devouring them. Unconscious victims are easier to transport to a lair.

Spiders have eight legs and eight eyes. They usually fit into two categories: web-spinners, which have bulbous abdomens and sleek legs; and hunting spiders, which have smaller bodies, larger heads and fangs, and hairy bodies. Most giant spiders are simply much bigger versions of web-spinning large spiders. Their poison causes severe injury, and possibly death, if the victim fails a saving throw.

An Amnian trader once shared with me a frightening tale of a spider the size of a horse with swords for arms and a plated hide! Surely there are varieties even fiercer still!

—Volo

GIBBERLING

They come screaming, jabbering, and howling out of the night. Dozens, maybe hundreds, of hunchbacked, naked humanoids swarming forward. They have no apparent thought of safety, subtlety, or strategy, leaving others with little hope of stopping their mass assault. Then, having come and killed, the gibberlings move on, seemingly randomly, back into the night.

The first impression of gibberlings is of a writhing mass of fur and flesh in the distant moonlit darkness. The pandemonium is actually a mob of pale, hunchbacked humanoids, with pointed canine ears and black manes surrounding their hideous, grinning faces. Their black eyes shine with a maniacal gleam.

GNOLL

Gnolls are large, evil, hyena-like humanoids that roam about in loosely organized bands.

While a gnoll's body is roughly the shape of a large human, the details are those of a hyena. They stand erect on two legs and have hands that can manipulate as well as those of any human. They have greenish gray skin, darker near the muzzle, with a short reddish gray to dull yellow mane.

HOBGOBLIN

Hobgoblins are fierce humanoids that wage a perpetual war against other humanoid races. They are intelligent, organized, and aggressive.

The typical hobgoblin is burly and stands at least six feet tall. Their hairy hides range from dark reddish-brown to dark gray. Their faces' skin is dark red or red-orange. Males have blue or red noses. Hobgoblin eyes are either yellowish or dark brown. Their teeth are yellow. Their garments tend to be brightly colored, often bold, blood red. Any leather they wear is tinted black. Hobgoblin weaponry is kept polished and repaired.

KOBOLD

Kobolds are a cowardly, sadistic race of short humanoids that vigorously compete with humans and humanoid races for living space and food. They especially dislike gnomes, attacking them on sight.

Barely three feet in height, kobolds have scaly hides that range from dark, rusty brown to charcoal black. They smell of damp dogs and stagnant water. Their eyes glow like bright red sparks, and they have two small horns. Because of the kobolds' fondness for raggedy garb of red and orange, their non-prehensile rat-like tails, and their language (which sounds like small dogs yapping), these fell creatures are often not taken seriously. This is often a fatal mistake. What they lack in size and strength they make up in ferocity and tenacity.

Some have also noted small humanoids called "tasloi" and "xvarts." While all are nearly harmless as individuals, they always attack in packs. This is a good reason to travel accompanied, dear readers. It's not just for the

company.

—Volo

OGRE

Ogres are big, ugly, greedy humanoids that ambush, raid, and steal to survive. Ill-tempered and nasty, these monsters are often found serving as mercenaries for orc tribes, evil clerics, or gnolls.

Ogres mingle freely with giants and trolls. Adults stand nine to ten feet tall and weigh 300 to 350 pounds. Their skin colors range from a dead yellow to a dull black-brown, and (rarely) a sickly violet. Their warty bumps are often of a different color, darker than their hides. Their eyes are purple with white pupils. Teeth and talons are orange or black. Ogres have long, greasy hair of blackish-blue to dull dark green. Their odor is repellent, reminiscent of curdled milk. Dressing in poorly cured furs and animal hides, they try to take care of their weapons and armor. It is common for ogres to speak orcish, troll, stone giant, and gnomish, as well as their own guttural language. A typical ogre's life span is ninety years.

Some more advanced ogres can even cast spells!

—Volo

A rather melodramatic description of (admittedly formidable) ogre-magi, which are no longer as rare as the casual traveler might wish.

—Elminster

OGRILLON

The ogrillon is a species of half-ogre, being the fruit of an (unnatural) union between ogres and orcs. The ogrillon displays the general tendencies of its larger cousin with some exceptions. It is even more brutish and violent, and it normally learns to speak only ogrish and a handful of words of common.

The ogrillon is about the size of an orc and closely resembles one. One in ten is born with features and coloration very similar to those of ogres: purple eyes with white pupils, black teeth, yellowish skin with dull, dark green hair. The skin of an ogrillon of either type is covered with small horn plates, giving it a superior armor class and enabling it to fight without weapons. An ogrillon disdains armor and most other material items, retaining only a handful of gold pieces kept as treasured belongings. It is uncertain why they would keep gold, except perhaps for luck. It's likely we'll never know.

SIRINE

Sirines are beautiful, human-like females, at home in any aquatic environment. They have human skin tones ranging to a light yellow-green; their hair can be almost any color, though silver and dark green are the most common. Sirines have beautiful figures and wear little clothing, if that.

Most sirines are antisocial. They try to drive intruders away, with evil sirines taking stronger measures. Other sirines are hungry for social interaction and try to lure male humans or humanoids to join them for a time.

Sirines speak their own language and the languages of the nearest intelligent races. They can breathe water and air, and have infravision to a range of 120 feet.

SKELETON

All skeletons are magically animated undead monsters, created as guardians or warriors by powerful evil wizards and priests.

Skeletons appear to have no ligaments or musculature which would allow movement. Instead, the bones are “magically joined” together during the casting of an Animate Dead spell. Skeletons have no eyes or internal organs.

Be wary of all undead beasts. Aside from the ghouls, ghouls, and skeletons listed here, there are animated corpses, warrior skeletons, and even revived wolves known as dread wolves. Some of the most powerful undead along the Sword Coast, such as the vampiric wolves, are not even affected by normal weaponry and require magics in order to kill!

—Elminster

TROLLS

Trolls are horrid carnivores well known for being hard to kill. All trolls regenerate, and most can only be killed through the use of fire or acid. When a troll is knocked down, it is important to immediately apply fire or acid to its body; otherwise it will stand up and return to the fight.

WILD DOG

Smaller than wolves, wild dogs' appearances vary from place to place. Most appear very wolf-like, while others combine the looks of wolf and jackal.

WOLF

The wolf is a very active, cunning carnivore, capable of surviving in nearly every climate. Shrouded in mystery and suspicion, they are viewed as vicious killers that slaughter men and animals alike for the lack of better things to do.

Northern wolves exhibit colors from pure white to black. Southern wolves are reddish and brown. Although fur coloration varies with climate, all wolves have various features in common. They have powerful jaws; wide strong teeth; bushy tails; tall, strong ears; and round pupils. Their eyes, a gold or amber color, seem to have an almost empathic quality.

WORG

Worgs are an offshoot of wolf stock that have attained a degree of intelligence and tendency toward evil. Worgs have a primitive language and often serve as mounts for goblins.



TIME IN THE REALMS

A DAY IN TORIL IS 24 HOURS LONG. FOR SIMPLICITY THE AM (FOR TIME BEFORE NOON) AND PM (for time after noon) conventions are used herein.

The following calendar is common enough to apply to all regions within the Realms (especially the Sword Coast). The year consists of 360 days: twelve months of thirty days each. Three ten-day weeks are in each month, but herein we refer to days as they relate to the month (that is, one through thirty, of a specific month, rather than specific days of the week). The months are summarized in the table below. Each month's name is followed by a colloquial description of that month, plus the roughly corresponding month of the Gregorian calendar.

Years are referred to by numbers, using the system known as Dalereckoning (DR): Dalereckoning is taken from the year that humans were first permitted by the Elven Court to settle in the more open regions of the forests.

NAME OF THE MONTH	SEASON
Hammer, "Deepwinter"	Winter
Alturiak, "The Claw of Winter" or "Claws of the Cold"	Winter
Ches, "The Claw of Sunsets"	Spring
Tarsakh, "The Claw of the Storms"	Spring
Mirtul, "The Melting"	Spring
Kythorn, "The Time of Flowers"	Summer
Flamerule, "Summertime"	Summer
Eleasias, "Highsun"	Summer
Eleint, "The Fading"	Autumn
Marpenoth, "Leaffall"	Autumn
Uktar, "The Rotting"	Autumn
Nightal, "The Drawing Down"	Winter

THE ROLL OF YEARS

The wide variety of competing and often conflicting calendars causes no end of pain to the historian and the sage. Most use the Roll of Years, a system by which each year has its own personal name. Names for the years are known collectively as the Roll of Years, as they are drawn from the predictions written down under that title by the famous Lost Sage, Augathra the Mad, with a few additions by the great seer Alaundo.

The Roll is a long one; some more important years include the Year of the Worm (1356 DR), the Year of Shadows (1358 DR, the year of the Time of Troubles), the Year of the Turret (1360 DR), and 1368 DR (the current year).

The Time of Troubles, in which the gods of the Forgotten Realms assumed mortal

form and walked Toril, started when the gods Bane and Myrkul stole the Tablets of Fate from the Lord Ao, the overpower god of the Realms. In retribution for this act, Ao banished all the gods from their outer-planar domains (except Helm, who guarded the Outer Planes). The Gods were forced to assume the forms of mortal Avatars until the end of the Time of Troubles, when the tablets were returned to their rightful owner.

During the crisis, Mystra's (goddess of magic) and Myrkul's (god of the dead) avatars were killed, Bane (god of evil and tyranny) was destroyed fighting Torm, and the human Cyric killed Bhaal (god of murder and assassins) in an epic struggle while competing for Bane's portfolio. After the dust settled, Cyric (death, evil, and madness) ascended to new godhood.

Some now-deceased gods had some warning of their impending deaths—or at least the attempts on their lives—and took steps to prevent them. And succeeded, at least in part.

—Elminster

THE LORD OF MURDER SHALL PERISH,
BUT IN HIS DEATH HE SHALL SPAWN A SCORE OF MORTAL PROGENY.
CHAOS WILL BE SOWN BY THEIR PASSAGE.
SO SAYETH THE WISE ALAUNDO.

Hmm... I don't recall writing that...

—Volo