

TRIBOAR TRAIL NON-COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

*SIX TABLES OF OBSTACLES, HAZARDS AND MEMORABLE
EVENTS FOR WILDERNESS TRAVEL*

BY D J L WALKER



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, WIZARDS OF THE COAST, FORGOTTEN REALMS, THE DRAGON AMPERSAND, PLAYER'S HANDBOOK, MONSTER MANUAL, DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE, D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE, ALL OTHER WIZARDS OF THE COAST PRODUCT NAMES, AND THEIR RESPECTIVE LOGOS ARE TRADEMARKS OF WIZARDS OF THE COAST IN THE USA AND OTHER COUNTRIES. ALL CHARACTERS AND THEIR DISTINCTIVE LIKENESSES ARE PROPERTY OF WIZARDS OF THE COAST. THIS MATERIAL IS PROTECTED UNDER THE COPYRIGHT LAWS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. ANY REPRODUCTION OR UNAUTHORIZED USE OF THE MATERIAL OR ARTWORK CONTAINED HEREIN IS PROHIBITED WITHOUT THE EXPRESS WRITTEN PERMISSION OF WIZARDS OF THE COAST.

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Introduction

This set of tables was written to be used with Part 3 of the adventure included in the 5th Edition Starter Set, but it can be used in any campaign taking place in a temperate mountainous region. It can also be used as a source for generating details and complications for other adventures.

I greatly enjoyed the 5th Edition Starter Set adventure but found that the travel and wandering monster checks could be made more eventful. I also recommend adding a reaction roll for wandering monsters so that encounters do not always immediately lead to combat.

You will find that the events described here are of a “minor but interesting” variety; more remarkable than an ordinary day’s travel, but not so fantastical to distract from the current quest itself. Many are drawn from real life accounts (see the appendix for more information). They are meant to represent memorable occurrences, not statistically probable terrain, weather or encounters.

I had a great time researching and writing these tables and I hope you enjoy adding them to your game.

TABLE 1: SPARSELY FORESTED PLAINS

TABLE 2: PINE FOREST

TABLE 3: FOOTHILLS

TABLE 4: ROADS AND TRAILS

TABLE 5: WEATHER

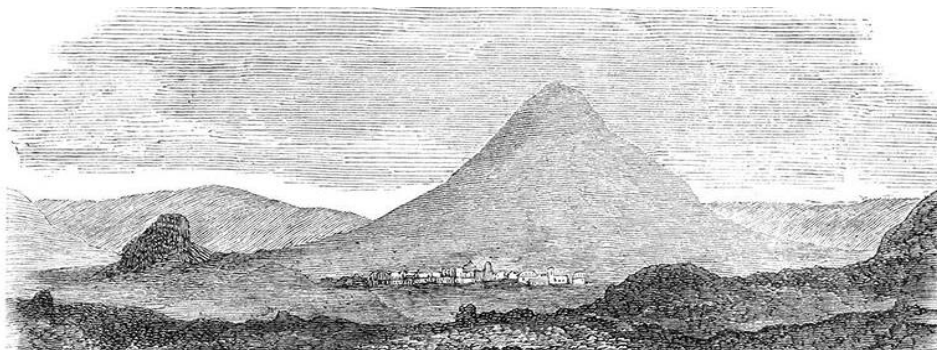
TABLE 6: AT NIGHT / IN CAMP

APPENDIX:

DESIGN NOTES AND SOURCES OF INSPIRATION.

Instructions

- ❖ When rolling **1d20** for wandering monster checks, a roll of **11 to 16** results in a non-combat encounter during daylight, or **13 to 16** at night.
- ❖ Roll **1d20** on the table that matches terrain where the party has travelled most that day; use Table 6 for the night check, or choose whichever table you prefer for a particular occasion. Roll **1d6** if you need to select a random table.
- ❖ Most events will be spotted first by the PC at the front of the marching order. Some events happen to all the party at the same time. Roll **1d6** (or adjust to number of PCs) to determine a place in the marching order if you need to select random party members.
- ❖ ‘Obstacles’ block or severely slow progress. They should not be difficult to deal with; they exist to get the players talking and thinking. Almost any solution the PCs come up with should allow them proceed.
- ❖ ‘Hazards’ do not always slow progress but have a chance of detrimental effects, usually damage.
- ❖ If the party deals with any situation in a particularly creative way feel free to give them an **xp** reward, eg 10xp each.



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TABLE 1: SPARSELY FORESTED PLAINS

1. **Hazard:** Huge wasp nests cover most of the trees in the area you are passing through (*if a solution not found then all party members take 1d4 poison damage*).
2. **Hazard:** Swarms of mosquitoes & midges (*if no action taken, then 1d6 part members badly bitten, all rests for the next 2 days must be 1 hour longer to gain rest benefits*).
3. **Obstacle:** Tread on a "Stray Sod" a fey enchanted clump of grass (*unless first person in marching order is an elf or fey, realize that you have been going in a random direction for the last hour – you travel 8 miles less than normal today*).
4. **Hazard:** Dark-green, waxy poisonous leaves. Some of the plants in this area are poisonous to the touch, leading to rashes with excruciating burning sensation and dizziness (*if pushed through, 1d3 party members are poisoned until after next long rest*).
5. **Obstacle/ Hazard:** High, dense brambles block route (*take 1d6 slashing damage to push through; cutting through with an edged weapon gives -2 damage to that weapon until next sharpened*).
6. Roll on the **Weather** table
7. Travel through a huge meadow of beautiful blue, pink and yellow wild flowers.
8. Cross a small stream with dozens of tiny golden fish leaping out of the water as they swim against the current.
9. You walk around a cool, serenely silent pond (*lose half an hour and 2 miles of travel today as you are lost in peaceful thoughts staring across the still water*).
10. You disturb clouds of hundreds of blue-silver butterflies, chased by incredibly fast flightless birds who snap the butterflies up when they near the ground.
11. You see something washed up on the side of a stream (*roll on the **Basic Ruleset** trinket table*).
12. You find a dead human commoner lying in a field. There is no obvious cause of death, no injuries, and no sign of battle, not even any tracks or footprints, including his own. He seems to have all his meagre belongings (*including 1d6 sp*) but nothing to identify him.
13. A massive termite mound that looks uncannily like a famous castle. You feel like you are being watched as you pass it.
14. You meet a team of wood cutters. They are friendly and can give directions
15. This area has ancient overgrown ruins, stubs of stone barely visible through the undergrowth. It is uninhabited.
16. Roll **1d6** to determine sub-table and roll on that table no matter where or when you are.
17. Roll again – event happens simultaneously with a **wandering monster**.
18. Roll twice again – both events happen simultaneously.
19. Roll on the **Weather** sub-table.
20. A majestic herd of wild horses passes by in the distance.

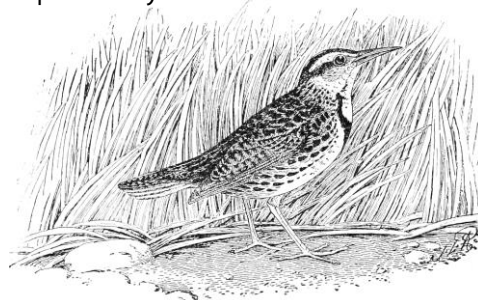
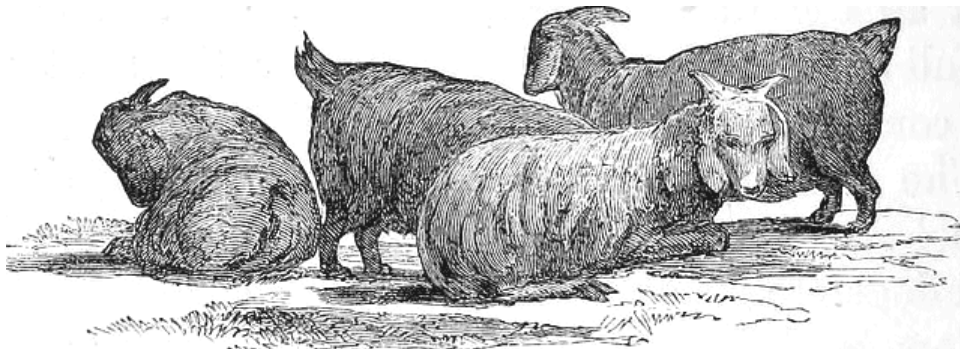


TABLE 2: PINE FOREST

1. **Obstacle:** A deep gulley with a muddy stagnant bottom (*if you climb down and back up to cross, disadvantage to stealth checks for one day because of the stench*).
2. **Hazard:** A forest fire is burning nearby (*lose 5 miles to avoid the smoke or take 1d6 poison damage if no precautions taken*).
3. **Hazard:** Soft, swampy ground – you are easily tracked (*roll twice for wandering monster check that night, ignore second result if it is a non-combat encounter*).
4. **Obstacle:** 1 random party member gets a foot stuck in snarling tree roots. How will you get them out?
5. You find a Ritual Circle drawn out in red powder on a bare patch of earth. Stubs of used black candles surround it and there is a dark stain on the ground nearby (*proficiency in arcana skill confirms that magic was cast here, but not which spells - the runes have been scrubbed away*).
6. You skirt a giant conifer tree, 25 feet around at the base.
7. You cross a clearing completely carpeted to nearly a foot deep in pine cones (*if a battle breaks out here it counts as difficult terrain*).
8. You pass a small but incredibly beautiful waterfall that reflects the sunlight in blinding flashes around the glade.
9. You pass two twisted trees that remind you of a man and woman dancing together.
10. A magnificent elk stops as it passes by and stares into your eyes, completely calm and unafraid. After a couple of minutes it moves on.
11. Odd collections of sticks tied together, hanging on rope from the trees. On the ground beneath each one is a small pile of stones (*nothing inside and nothing happens if they are disturbed*).
12. You think you see figures flitting between the trees in the distance. They seem to be dancing. They are always heading away from you and you can't catch up.
13. You pass through an area infested with a very odd looking fungi that resembles human hands reaching out from the tree trunks (*if anyone is silly enough to eat some, they are **poisoned** and dexterity reduced by 4, for 1d6 hours*).
14. **Obstacle:** A stream gulley here can only be crossed using a slippery log bridge (*DC10 acrobatics check, or DC 15 to leap the gulley. Anyone who falls in takes 1d6 falling damage and must be retrieved somehow*).
15. You meet an ugly old woman out in the forest alone (*if you are hurt she offers you a weak healing potion that restores 1d6 HP*).
16. You meet an old man tending a charcoal burner. He is not very talkative.
17. Roll 1d6 to determine table and roll on that table no matter where or when you are.
18. Roll again – event happens simultaneously with a **wandering monster**.
19. Roll twice again – both events happen simultaneously.
20. Roll on the **Weather** table.

TABLE 3: FOOTHILLS

1. **Obstacle:** A slippery shingle slope blocks your path. How will you get up it?
2. **Hazard:** A few pebbles roll down the cliff next to you. Then a few more. Then the whole hillside sags! You trigger a landslide *(if no other action taken, pass DC15 dexterity check or take 1d10 bashing damage)*.
3. **Obstacle:** A gorge with a broken rope bridge. How will you cross?
4. You pass a rock formation that looks like a seagull carrying a salmon.
5. You find a huge carving of the outline of a door on the side of a cliff. *(The door does not open and the stone behind it is solid. It is just a carving)*.
6. You meet a prospector. He asks if you have seen any gold ore or old mine entrances.
7. You cross a stream that has sparkling flecks of gold on the bed beneath clear crystal water *(if they spend all day here the party can collect 1d6gp worth between them!)*
8. You cross a small hill, on the crest of which is a bowl-shaped depression holding an ancient stone circle. The stones are small and heavily weathered. It is very quiet here *(no sign of magic)*.
9. You find an injured bird. With a little help maybe it will fly again.
10. You find a shallow cave. Inside is a collection of small barrels and odd glassware. It's a Moonshine Still! *(Anyone who even sips the moonshine is poisoned for 1d6 hours)*.
11. You meet a Halfling prospector taking a break. He knows the hills well and can tell you about a shortcut *(save 2 hours or move an extra 10 miles travel today)*
12. Ancient crab-apple tree growing on a hilltop. The 1d10 apples are sour but nourishing and keep for 3 weeks.
13. Roll 1d6 to determine sub-table and roll on that table no matter where or when you are
14. Roll again – event happens simultaneously with a **wandering monster**.
15. Roll twice again – both events happen simultaneously.
16. Roll on the **Weather** table.
17. You spot a very dirty looking hermetic monk living in a small hollow halfway up a sheer cliff face. He refuses to look at you, talk or come down, but he will point at a direction or object if it answers a question.
18. **Hazard:** An old collapsed mine entrance lies disguised by fallen brush. Natural pitfall trap! *(See the Goblin Trail section in Part 1 of the Starter Set Adventure, or the Dungeon Master's Guide)*.
19. You find a crystal-clear spring. Refill your water rations.
20. You meet a friendly goat-herd. He is happy to share some of his rations with you.



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TABLE 4: ROADS AND TRAILS

1. **Obstacle:** Gaping potholes block your path (*picking a way through costs 1 hour or 3 miles of travel for that day*).
2. **Obstacle:** A fallen tree blocks the path. How will you get past it?
3. **Obstacle:** The path ahead is flooded (*wading requires dexterity check or else 1d6 days of rations are spoiled, along with anything else perishable in water*).
4. Roll on the **Weather** table
5. Several smashed kegs lie by the side of the road. They smell strongly of moonshine whisky.
6. A donkey wonders along the road towards you. It has a harness but there is no sign of an owner. (*It will allow itself to be led by the party but stubbornly refuses to leave the road or trail. If led back to town one of the merchants will purchase it for 30gp*).
7. You meet a middle-aged human man in a long brown coat. He has a hand-pushed cart stocked with all kind of bottles. He is willing to sell you a **Tonic of Vitality** for 4gp! (*This is just a sugary herbal drink, but when not in combat it restores 1d3 HP from placebo effect. The salesman knows Thieves Cant and if this is used he will give the location of a very safe hidden campsite nearby. Gain 50xp for using campsite and no wandering monster check needed that night*).
8. **Hazard:** Tumbleweeds are blown down the road towards you (*these are actually **Tumbling Cageweed!** If no action is taken 1d3 party members must make a dexterity check DC15 or the cageweed wraps around a foot or leg, giving **disadvantage** on all athletics or acrobatics checks and reducing speed by 10 feet in combat and 10 miles a day. Chopping or burning the cageweed off requires a DC15 medicine or nature check – failure causes 1d6 damage to victim*).
9. This stretch of road is lined with tribal orc warning totems made from bones, feathers and who knows what else.
10. Roll 1d6 to determine table and roll on that table no matter where or when you are.
11. Roll again – event happens simultaneously with a **wandering monster**.
12. Roll twice again – both events happen simultaneously.
13. Roll on the **Weather** table.
14. Road-side sign bearing a wanted poster for a local thug.
15. You encounter a group of weary-looking travelers, humans and halflings. They are performing a burial at some crossroads. They refuse to talk about how the person died.
16. This stretch of road is strewn with torn up pages; you find the remains of a charred book cover near some scorch marks. Some of the grass is still on fire (*A DC15 arcana check on the pages results in 1 random level 1 spell that can be added to a wizard's spellbook*).
17. Good going! This is an excellent stretch of road (*save 2 hours or travel an extra 5 miles today*).
18. This part of the path is covered in muddy footprints (*the party gains **surprise** on the next wandering monster encounter as long as it happens in the next 24 hours*)
19. You pass a tiny roadside shrine, a roofed box on a 6 foot pole. It is dedicated to a god of travel (*making an offering gives **advantage** on wandering monster checks for the next 2 days. Any kind of disrespect to the shrine gives **disadvantage** to the same*).
20. This part of the path is very overgrown. Roll on **Table 1: Sparsely Forested Plains**

TABLE 5: WEATHER

1. An incredible cloudscape stretches out into the distance, catching the light in breath-taking ways.
2. **Hazard:** Pouring rain. The hammering raindrops drown out any sound. Lasts **1d12** hours (*cannot hear noises, advantage on sound-based stealth checks. If clothing not changed or dried out by next long rest, gain one level of exhaustion*).
3. **Hazard:** Baking heat. Lasts all day (*must drink double water rations this day or else gain one level of exhaustion*).
4. **Hazard:** It's very, very windy today. Lasts all day (*disadvantage on ranged attacks and for any acrobatics checks outdoors*).
5. **Hazard:** Bright, burning sun (*if no precautions taken then wisdom checks: failure = sunburn, +1 level of exhaustion*).
6. Drizzle. You feel miserable. All day.
7. A rainbow! Awww. (*Double chances of encountering a unicorn*).
8. **Hazard:** Lightning storm! Lasts **1d12** hours (*If anyone uses a spell or weapon with lightning damage while outside, roll a d4. On a roll of 1 the caster is struck by lightning from the sky. On a roll of 4 the target of the spell is struck. Lightning strike as per level 5 lightning bolt spell*).
9. Strange rain lasting 15 minutes (*roll 1d6: 1-2 = fish, 3-4 = frogs, 5 = wriggling worm-like creatures, 6 = blood*).
10. A dead Orc falls from the cloudless sky and lands nearby... at least, you assume it was already dead. Absolutely no sign where it came from. Not carrying anything of value.
11. *Roll on this table again – event happens simultaneously with a **wandering monster** encounter.*
12. **Hazard:** Freak hailstorm. (*Shelter for 1d3 hours or take 1d4 bashing damage*).
13. **Hazard:** Freezing rain and snow. If you don't light a fire at the next long rest suffer one level of exhaustion.
14. Very dark and overcast today, the sun is completely hidden behind thick black brooding clouds (*advantage to stealth checks. and most monsters normally affected by daylight are fine*).
15. Strange voices carried on the wind. You can't tell where they are coming from, but they put you on your guard (*no player or creature with hearing can be surprised*).
16. A trick of the atmosphere makes it look like there are three suns. It is a Sundog: a good omen (*all party members get inspiration*).
17. Ground mist – white foggy tendrils cover the area up to knee level. Spooky!
18. Humid and sticky. Yuck.
19. *Changeable – roll 3 times, changes every 4 hours*
20. Perfect travelling weather. Not too hot, not too dry, not too cold, not too wet or windy (*save 2 hours or travel an extra 5 miles today*).

TABLE 6: AT NIGHT / IN CAMP

1. You watch an incredible sunset.
2. **Hazard:** The night-time animals are especially loud tonight, with their chirping, chattering, screaming and barking (**DC10 nature check or lose sleep, causing 1 level of exhaustion**).
3. The stars are unbelievably bright and clear tonight. You feel like they are looking down on the world below and thinking about... something.
4. You see a shooting star.
5. You see a shooting star. Suddenly it stops very still for 2 or 3 minutes before shooting off in a totally different direction.
6. You dream (or if an elf, have a vision) of an odd creature that looks like a floating eyeball. "Hello" it says in a thick friendly voice, and seems to be trying to smile.
7. *Roll on the **Weather** table*
8. The night sky is lit up by a wondrous aurora!
9. Fireflies dance around you in slow intricate patterns as you sit around your campfire.
10. *Roll on the **Weather** table and re-roll on this table, events happen at the same time.*
11. In the night there is a terrible crashing sound in the darkness, but you cannot see what is causing it. In the morning you find several trees mysteriously knocked down nearby.
12. A very old, unkempt dwarf wanders into your camp and sits by the fire. He totally ignores you and is gone in the morning, but all the camp-work has been done expertly. You can set off early saving 2 hours or travelling an extra 5 miles.
13. You find an old camp site. Save time, setting off early tomorrow to gain 1 hour or 2.5 miles travel.
14. You find a recently used campsite. There is cooked food still (*save 1 set of rations today*) but no sign of the previous campers.
15. You wake up in the morning to find footprints of an unknown person. They moved all around the camp, but nothing is taken or damaged.
16. One random party member finds a rock that looks like a grinning face.
17. The area around the campsite is infested by huge bugs (**DC15 nature results in an extra set of rations, if you can stomach it!**).
18. A Halfling woodsman approaches your camp. He brings some freshly caught rabbits and shares amusing stories with you (*in the morning 2d6 gp has been stolen from 1 random party member*).
19. Ants get into your pack! (**1d4 party members lose 1d4-1 rations**).
20. When you wake up in the morning you feel like the trees around the camp have moved. Or maybe the tents have moved? Weird.



Appendix: design notes and sources of inspiration.

These tables were inspired by several sources, including various websites about hiking, the Fortean Times journal of strange phenomena, short stories by HP Lovecraft and various books about folklore. You may also recognize references to popular films and music. You can find many of these resources listed below.

I decided that I would base my version of The North on Colorado, given the Western themes in the 5E Starter Set adventure.

The events were written to evoke a 'weird tales' vibe – nothing too outright fantastical or magical (that can be saved for the adventure proper) but occurrences that give an uncanny atmosphere; the kind of things that could happen to you in real life and give you the creeps.

The probability adjustment to the random event roll/wandering monster check was made so that these events actually get used (there's no point in having tables if they don't get rolled on!) If your PCs do a lot of travelling over a long period of time you may want to reduce the probability of a non-combat event so that you do not run out too quickly, and to make the events feel more special.

The tables were designed to interact with each other, which adds further variety and unexpected results.

*An earlier version of these tables were originally posted to
Wizards of the Coast Dungeons and Dragons 5th Edition Forums.*

Books and Magazines

Fortean Times, journal of strange phenomena: <http://www.forteanimes.com>

Trolls: An Unnatural History by John Lindow <http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1780232896> (I can't recommend it enough for serious students of folklore)

Faeries by Brian Froud <http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/0810995867> (I use this book CONSTANTLY and it has influenced my D&D games more than any other)

Necronomicon: The best weird tales of H.P. Lovecraft <http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/0575081562>

Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry by W.B. Yeats <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Fairy-Folk-Tales-Irish-Peasantry/dp/1494888084/>

Websites

Unusual Weather Phenomena: http://www.planetpals.com/weather_phenomena.html

Wild West on TV Tropes: <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/TheWildWest>

The SCP Foundation, short horror fiction: <http://scp-wiki.wikidot.com/>

Old West Legends: <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/oldwest.html>

Ecosystems of Colorado: http://www.landscape.org/colorado/ecosystems/featured_ecosystems/iconic_ecosystems/

Hiking hazards:

<http://kevingong.com/Hiking/HikingTips.html>

<http://hikingwebsite.com/hiking/problems/index.htm>

Real life hiking stories:

<http://thoughtcatalog.com/hok-leahcim/2014/04/25-hikers-and-backpackers-reveal-the-creepiest-scariest-things-theyve-found-in-the-wild/>

Wilderness survival guides:

<http://www.wildwoodsurvival.com/survival/index.html>

<http://www.wilderness-survival.net/chp1.php>

<http://www.mensfitness.com/training/endurance/12-outdoor-survival-skills-every-guy-should-master?page=2>

Images

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Page 5: from "The five great monarchies of the ancient eastern world; or, The history, geography, and antiquities of Chaldaea, Assyria, Babylon, Media, and Persia" (1862) courtesy of [Flickr Commons](#).

Page 7: from "Outdoor life and Indian stories : making open air life attractive to young Americans by telling them all about woodcraft, signs and signaling, the stars, fishing, camping ... : also stories of noted hunters and scouts, great Indians and warriors ... all of them true and interesting" (1912) courtesy of [Flickr Commons](#).