

DESTRUCTION'S LIGHT



Resources for managing travel and pursuit
in chapter 4 of Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden

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INTRODUCTION

The chardalyn dragon's attack on Ten-Towns in "Destruction's Light," chapter 4 of *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*, is one of the most challenging and controversial chapters in the campaign. The detailed flight plan and timetable set up a tense, high-stakes pursuit, and the punishing overland travel mechanisms force players to make some difficult decisions about which towns to save.

If run strictly as written, however, the overland travel rules presented in chapter 1 of *Rime of the Frostmaiden* would make it impossible for the characters to get back to any of the towns in time except Bryn Shander. That robs the players of their chance to affect the outcome and nullifies their moral quandary.

Players should face difficult choices, but not impossible ones. The real horror of the dragon attack is that the players themselves have to make horrible decisions about where to go and whom to save. Do they protect that small village where they've formed friendships or head to the larger settlement down the road? Save the survivors from the duergar or try to head off the next attack before it happens? There are no good answers, and the characters will have to live with the consequences of their actions. But their actions will only be consequential if they can return to Ten-Towns in time to make those decisions.

This supplement provides several options for resolving this problem in your campaign. It also provides optional rules for managing rest, exhaustion, encumbrance, and more. With the tools in this supplement, you can calibrate "Destruction's Light" to the level of difficulty that's right for your campaign, and present a challenge that your players will never forget.

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THE ATTACK

Jewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden presents the dragon attack in chapter 4 as a challenge that forces the players to make the terrible choice of which towns to defend and which ones to abandon. The chapter is written with this dilemma in mind, as it assumes that the players' decisions will determine how many towns they can save:

This chapter describes the dragon's attacks on Ten-Towns and what the characters can do to minimize the destruction and save as many Ten-Towners as possible. The extent to which they can help depends on their actions in the previous chapter:

- If the characters delayed their return to Ten-Towns to confront Xardorok in his lair, **the amount of time they spent in Xardorok's fortress determines how many Ten-Towns settlements are victimized before the characters can intervene, based on the dragon's timeline.**
- If the characters forgo the attack on Xardorok's fortress and waste no time chasing after the dragon, **they have a good chance of catching up to it before too many Ten-Towns settlements are lost.**

The point of this chapter, beyond pitting the characters against a formidable draconic foe, is to make the players aware that **their characters' choices have consequences.**

The designers even present a possible solution that will allow the characters to return to Ten-Towns quickly enough to make a difference:

From the moment it leaves the fortress, the chardalyn dragon begins to carry out Xardorok's plan to level Ten-Towns one settlement after another. The characters can intervene by successfully predicting where the dragon will strike next and confronting it. The "Return to Ten-Towns" section provides characters with **a much-needed ally and a swift dogsled ride back to Ten-Towns.**

However, thanks to one minor provision in the overland travel rules, traveling by dogsled is no faster than walking; even if the characters turn around immediately upon sighting the dragon and never enter Sunblight, they can't reach any of the towns except Bryn Shander before the dragon destroys them.

To see how the players' actions can (and can't) affect events in chapter 4, it is first necessary to know where the dragon will be at any given point during the attacks. The "Dragon's Flight Path" table provides a single timeline for the attacks.

Take note of the weather conditions described in chapter 4: a winter storm strikes Ten-Towns shortly after the dragon leaves Termalaine (hour 26) and continues through hour 50, three quarters of the way through the attack on Bryn Shander. Characters must contend with strong wind and heavy snowfall during these encounters.

DRAGON'S FLIGHT PATH

Destination	Travel time	Arrival time	Destruction time	Damage	Cumulative	Total time elapsed
Dougan's Hole	2 hours	2 hours	30 minutes	-	-	2 ½ hours
Good Mead	30 minutes	3 hours	1 hour	-	-	4 hours
Easthaven	1 ½ hours	5 ½ hours	8 hours	10	10	13 ½ hours
Caer-Dineval	1 hour	14 ½ hours	1 hour	-	10	15 ½ hours
Caer-Konig	1 hour	16 ½ hours	1 ½ hours	-	10	18 hours
Termalaine	2 hours	20 hours	6 hours	5	15	26 hours
Lonelywood	30 minutes	26 ½ hours	2 hours	-	15	28 ½ hours
Bremen	1 ½ hours	30 hours	2 hours	5	20	32 hours
Targos	30 minutes	32 ½ hours	8 hours	15	35	40 ½ hours
Bryn Shander	30 minutes	41 hours	12 hours	10/30	75	53 hours
Sunblight	3 ½ hours	56 ½ hours	-	-	75	56 ½ hours

THE PURSUIT

Sunblight is 12 miles from Dougan's Hole, roughly 6 miles through the mountains and 6 miles over tundra. (The exact distances will vary depending on the route the characters take, but this should serve as a simple benchmark for determining travel times.)

Travel through the mountains is painfully slow, only ½ mile per hour by dogsled. Tundra speed isn't much better, just 1 mile per hour. To make matters worse, the dogsled rules in the "Getting Around Ten-Towns" section of chapter 1 state that the dogs have to take a short rest after every hour of travel or pick up a level of exhaustion. This effectively means the dogs are no faster than traveling on foot. If the dogs reach two levels of exhaustion they travel at half speed, and they will still have to rest an hour after every hour of travel or gain more exhaustion.

This rule merely serves to prolong cross-country travel in other chapters, but it poses several problems in chapter 4. For one thing, it means Vellynne Harpell's generous offer of assistance is basically worthless, as the characters might as well walk home. It also means the characters have little chance of returning to Ten-Towns in time to prevent the destruction even if they never set foot in Sunblight.

Assuming the route back to Dougan's Hole is 6 miles of mountain followed by 6 miles of tundra, and with the dogs resting after every hour of travel except the last one, the return trip to will take:

(12 hours mountain travel) + (12 hours rest) + (6 hours tundra travel) + (5 hours rest) = 35 hours total

That only gets the characters back to Dougan's Hole, which was destroyed 32 ½ hours earlier. To get anywhere else in Ten-Towns, they will need to travel some more.

The good news is that travel between the towns is much faster. As described in the Overland Travel tables in chapter 1, the dogs travel about 3 miles per hour on the roads. (Some travel distances are provided in the "Mountain Climb" expedition from Targos; comparing them to the travel times between towns gives us the dogsleds' speed.) These travel times do not account for any short rests on the multi-hour trips; a 6-mile journey is described as taking 2 hours by dogsled. Even assuming that rest isn't a factor when traveling between towns, however, the dogsleds cannot keep pace with the dragon.

Note that the pursuit table, unlike the dragon's flight path, is not linear; once the players reach Good Mead they can branch out in several directions. These travel times assume direct journeys without any doubling back. The tables also assume that the characters can pick up fresh dogs in Ten-Towns and don't spend any time resting or interacting with the townsfolk. Even with these generous assumptions, the characters will have their work cut out for them.

PCS' PURSUIT (AS WRITTEN)

Route	Travel time (dogsled)	Total time elapsed	Dragon's location
Sunblight to Dougan's Hole	3 5 hours	3 5 hours	Targos
Dougan's Hole to Good Mead	2 hours	3 7 hours	Targos
Good Mead to Easthaven	2 ½ hours	3 9 ½ hours	Targos
Good Mead to Caer-Dineval	4 hours	4 1 hours	Bryn Shander
Caer-Dineval to Caer-Konig	1 hour	4 2 hours	Bryn Shander
Good Mead to Bryn Shander	3 hours	4 0 hours	Targos
Bryn Shander to Targos	1 hour	4 1 hours	Bryn Shander

If they head directly to Bryn Shander, they can get there with an hour to spare; if they go anywhere else, the attack on Bryn Shander will start without them. Chapter 4 suggests that going to Bryn Shander is "playing into Xardorok's hands," but as written it's the only rational course available to the characters. Any attempt to help the survivors in the other towns will subject Bryn Shander to the same fate.

The journey back to Sunblight after the attacks is tilted even more heavily against the characters. It only takes the dragon 3 ½ hours to fly back to its home. It will take the characters a full 40 hours to follow it as written—assuming they don't stop to rest. That means the dragon will get 36 ½ hours of repairs, regaining an average of 3.5 hp per hour, or around 126 hp. As written, the dragon retreats after losing no more than 105 hp (75 from the towns + 30 from the players). That will be repaired in 30 hours on average, which means that if the players leave Bryn Shander immediately, with no rest, heading back to Sunblight and entering their 80th hour of travel, the chardalyn dragon will be back at full strength when they arrive, effectively nullifying all the hard work they did to drive it off.

As written, the dogsled travel rules interact with the timetables in chapter 4 to present an encounter that is essentially unwinnable. However, a number of simple fixes can give your players more ability to affect the story, making their choices more meaningful and consequential.

IGNORE THE HOURLY RESTS

Unlike the other chapters in *Icewind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* that feature overland travel and exploration, the travel isn't the really the point in chapter 4; it's merely an obstacle that delays the characters until they can catch up to the dragon. While the journey back to Ten-Towns could take the characters hours or even days of their time, it doesn't

have to take more than a few minutes of game time. There are real advantages in using a simple metric that reduces the travel speed to a single number and calculates how quickly the characters can return home.

Similarly, the best solutions to the impossible travel times in chapter 4 may be the simplest ones. The easiest fix is simply ignoring the dogsled rest requirements mentioned in the “Getting Around Ten-Towns” section of chapter 1 (or assuming they are already factored into the dogs’ travel speed, if you prefer).

There are solid reasons for doing so. The “Overland Travel” rules in chapter 1 ignore the rest requirement in their description of dogsled speeds, even for journeys of several hours. Chapter 4 itself seems to ignore the requirement, as it presents Vellynne Harpell’s sled dogs as a significant aid to the characters. No other part of *Icwind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* mentions the rest requirement, suggesting it is easily omitted from the game.

Eliminating the rest requirement effectively doubles the dogs’ travel speed:

(12 hours mountain) + (6 hours tundra) = 18 hours total

This formula also works for parties that follow the rest requirement but take measures within the game to double their overland travel speed, such as the ranger’s Natural Explorer ability or the *charm of the snow walker* (discussed below). The earlier arrival presents characters with significantly more options upon their return to Ten-Towns, creating the potential for very different outcomes depending on their actions.

They could catch up to the dragon in Termalaine, or intercept it before it reaches Lonelywood. This might not be the best choice, since the dragon will eventually fly off to across Maer Dualdon to Bremen (where they can’t follow it directly), but it’s a meaningful choice. The characters could still double back to defend Targos or Bryn Shander before the dragon strikes. Reducing the return time from Sunblight means that players must decide whether to defend the towns that haven’t been struck yet or give aid to those that have. People will live or die depending on what they choose, and while the players might not be happy with the consequences, at least they will know their actions had consequences.

This timetable also provides a good opportunity to raise the difficulty for your players with rest rules, exhaustion checks, increased travel times due to the winter storm that strikes after hour 26, and so on. The return to Ten-Towns should be a grueling ordeal, but it should be an ordeal that offers the characters a chance to make a difference.

After the attacks are over, the characters will have more opportunities to return to Sunblight. A 23-hour trip to or from Bryn Shander means that characters could take a long rest and still come back to find an injured dragon in Sunblight, especially if they managed to deal more than 30 points of damage before it fled Ten-Towns. The few points it has left to heal might not matter much mechanically, but they would show players that their actions had some lasting effects. And they would guarantee that the dragon won’t be leaving Sunblight before the players take the fight back to the duergar.

PCs’ PURSUIT (DOUBLE SPEED TO DOUGAN’S HOLE)

Route	Travel time (dogsled)	Total time elapsed	Dragon’s location
Sunblight to Dougan’s Hole	18 hours	18 hours	departing Caer-Konig
Dougan’s Hole to Good Mead	2 hours	20 hours	Termalaine
Good Mead to Easthaven	2 ½ hours	22 ½ hours	Termalaine
Good Mead to Caer-Dineval	4 hours	24 hours	Termalaine
Caer-Dineval to Caer-Konig	1 hour	25 hours	Termalaine
Good Mead to Bryn Shander	3 hours	23 hours	Termalaine
Bryn Shander to Targos	1 hour	24 hours	Termalaine
Targos to Bremen	1 ½ hours	25 ½ hours	Termalaine
Bryn Shander to Termalaine	3 hours	26 hours	departing Termalaine
Termalaine to Lonelywood	1 hour	27 hours	Lonelywood

CHANGE THE RETURN ROUTE

The previous travel tables assume the characters head from Sunblight back to Dougan’s Hole, the closest town. But what if they go the other way around the Redwaters and head straight for Easthaven? (This may be especially likely if the players investigate Sunblight and discover the flight plan in Xardorok’s war room.)

Easthaven is 16 miles from Sunblight (2 mountain, 14 tundra). That’s farther away than Dougan’s Hole, but the shorter mountain travel compensates for the increased distance. More importantly, arriving in Easthaven cuts out the loop around the Redwaters and puts the characters much closer to the center of Ten-Towns.

Following all travel rules as written, with dogsled speeds of ½ mph mountain and 1 mph tundra and rests after every hour of travel, the trip will take:

(4 hours mountain + 4 hours rest + 14 hours tundra + 13 hours rest) = 35 hours to Easthaven

At that hour, the dragon is halfway through the destruction of Targos. If the characters head directly to Targos (39 ½ hours) they can catch the dragon in the last hour of its attack, or they could stop in Bryn Shander (38 hours) to set up the defenses and perhaps grab a short rest in the three hours before the dragon arrives there. This offers more options than traveling through Dougan’s Hole, but not by much.

However, if you ignore the rest requirement for the sled dogs, or if the characters have access to magic or class

features that otherwise allow them to double their speed, then the timetable looks very different:

(4 hours mountain + 14 hours tundra) = 18 hours to Easthaven

PCs' PURSUIT (DOUBLE SPEED TO EASTHAVEN)

Route	Travel time (dogsled)	Total time elapsed	Dragon's location
Sunblight to Easthaven	18 hours	18 hours	departing Caer-Konig
Easthaven to Caer-Dineval	4 ½ hours	22 ½ hours	Termalaine
Caer-Dineval to Caer-Konig	1 hour	23 ½ hours	Termalaine
Easthaven to Bryn Shander	3 ½ hours	21 ½ hours	Termalaine
Bryn Shander to Targos	1 hour	22 ½ hours	Termalaine
Targos to Bremen	1 ½ hours	24 hours	Termalaine
Bryn Shander to Termalaine	3 hours	24 ½ hours	Termalaine
Termalaine to Lonelywood	1 hour	25 ½ hours	Termalaine

The characters will arrive too late to save Easthaven or the other towns on Lac Dinneshere, but they can catch up to the dragon in Termalaine or fortify the other towns on Maer Dualdon. They even have the opportunity to take a long rest before the dragon reaches Targos or Bryn Shander—though they must certainly do so with the knowledge that many residents of the other towns will die while they sleep.

MAGIC AND CLASS FEATURES

Adventurers have many powerful abilities at their disposal. Although they are still relatively low level in chapter 4, the characters may have access to various magical means that can hasten their travel, along with certain class features that duplicate their effects.

Ignoring Difficult Terrain. One such solution is already detailed in the campaign: the magical gifts of the chwingas. If the characters amuse or indulge the tiny elemental spirits, the chwingas may bestow the *charm of the snow walker*, which allows the characters and their allies to ignore difficult terrain caused by snow or ice for 24 hours. Since difficult terrain causes characters to move at half speed as described in chapter 8 of the *PHB*, characters with the *charm of the snow walker* should be able to double their speed over the tundra or mountains.

Each character would need to have the charm (or at least every other character, with the charmless ones riding on their sleds). The 15 foot range doesn't reach much farther than a sled and two dogs; if the sleds have more dogs, the leaders

CHARM OF THE SNOW WALKER

This charm has 3 charges. As an action, you can expend 1 of the charm's charges to gain the following benefits for 24 hours:

- * You and your allies within 15 feet of you ignore difficult terrain caused by snow or ice.
- * You can see through areas heavily obscured by snow to a distance of 60 feet.
- * You are immune to the effects of extreme cold, as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (though you gain no protection from cold damage). Once all its charges have been expended, this charm vanishes from you.

won't be affected by the charm. But the travel rules make no provisions for the sleds' speed based on the number of dogs, only the weight they can carry. Sleds will be limited to 2 dogs pulling up to 720 pounds of weight (including the sled, the driver, and any passengers) if the characters attempt this maneuver. The "Weight and Encumbrance" section provides more details on weight limits and travel speed.

Assuming that charmed players and their sleds travel at 1 mph through mountains (as the charm allows them to ignore difficult terrain caused by ice or snow, not rocks and elevation) and 2 mph over tundra, and that the sled dogs still have to rest one hour for every hour of travel, the characters will double their speed, returning to either Dougan's Hole or Easthaven in 18 hours; use the "PCs' Pursuit (double speed)" tables to determine travel times to the other towns.

Some characters can also ignore difficult terrain through class features such as the ranger's Natural Explorer ability. While this ability is nonmagical, it achieves the same results as using the *charm of the snow walker*, allowing the characters to double their speed on the appropriate terrain.

Note that these solutions only help the characters while they are out in the wild. Once they return to Ten-Towns, neither the charm nor the Natural Explorer ability increase their speed, because the terrain isn't difficult anymore (unless the characters venture off-road, in which case their base speed drops significantly). The dogsleds are already traveling at their top speed on the roads, but the dragon is still twice as fast, so the characters will still be forced to play catch-up as they triage the situation. These abilities simply cut down on the time out on the tundra when the characters can't affect anything, and move them back to the towns where they face the same tough decisions.

Ignoring Rest. Another magical solution (one that was rumored to have been included in earlier drafts of *Rime of the Frostmaiden* before it was cut from the final version) makes Vellynne Harpell genuinely helpful, albeit in a rather sinister way. When she shows up outside Sunblight, the necromancer has killed her sled dogs and raised them as undead so they don't need to worry about exhaustion or rest.

Because the undead sled dogs ignore the hourly rest requirement, they use the travel times listed on the "PCs' Pursuit (double speed)" tables. This requirement is already

ignored in the travel times between towns, so the undead dogs are no faster than living ones on the roads. Undead dogs cannot travel at a fast pace.

Not all characters (or players) will appreciate Vellynne's assistance. Some may balk at the thought of harnessing the undead dogs or even attack them on sight if Harpell does not approach them carefully. However, this solution allows the characters to return to Ten-Towns quickly without changing the overall travel rules.

(Note that according to the *Monster Manual*, skeletons are immune to exhaustion but zombies are not. However, you should feel free to ignore this distinction if you prefer the image of zombie sled dogs pulling the characters across the dark tundra. Vellynne Harpell is an experienced necromancer and member of the Arcane Brotherhood with access to rare and powerful magics that others cannot replicate.)

COMBINATION OF METHODS

Some of these travel methods duplicate each other and cannot stack: the *charm of the snow walker* and the ranger's Natural Explorer ability ignore the same difficult terrain, so using both at once will not increase the characters' speed. Others might be mutually exclusive: you can make a good case that the chwingas' charm may not affect the undead sled dogs, which are an affront to the natural world.

But some of these abilities complement each other—the undead sled dogs and the ranger's Natural Explorer feature, for example. In such cases, the characters can effectively travel at four times the base speeds listed in the book. (This combination would not increase speeds between the towns, where the dogs are already traveling at their fastest pace.)

At dogsled speeds of 1 mph mountain and 2 mph tundra with no rest requirement, the trip will take:

(6 hours mountain + 3 hours tundra) = 9 hours to Dougan's Hole

(2 hours mountain + 7 hours tundra) = 9 hours to Easthaven

These speeds result in radically different timetables. The characters can catch the dragon in Easthaven, Caer-Dineval, or Caer-Konig, and have ample opportunity to set up a defense in Bryn Shander, Targos, Bremen, Termalaine, or Lonelywood. Any of those choices will preclude certain others and the players will have to make some tough calls. Still, if your players form strong attachments to any of the towns on the eastern side of Icewind Dale, and if they are able to combine methods to optimize their travel speed, they could earn a chance to fight for their friends and neighbors.

PCS' PURSUIT (4X SPEED TO DOUGAN'S HOLE)

Route	Travel time (dogsled)	Total time elapsed	Dragon's location
Sunblight to Dougan's Hole	9 hours	9 hours	Easthaven
Dougan's Hole to Good Mead	2 hours	11 hours	Easthaven
Good Mead to Easthaven	2 ½ hours	13 ½ hours	departing Easthaven
Good Mead to Caer-Dineval	4 hours	15 hours	Caer-Dineval
Caer-Dineval to Caer-Konig	1 hour	16 hours	en route to Caer-Konig
Good Mead to Bryn Shander	3 hours	14 hours	en route to Caer-Dineval
Bryn Shander to Targos	1 hour	15 hours	Caer-Dineval
Targos to Bremen	1 ½ hours	16 ½ hours	Caer-Konig
Bryn Shander to Termalaine	3 hours	17 hours	Caer-Konig
Termalaine to Lonelywood	1 hour	18 hours	departing Caer-Konig

PCS' PURSUIT (4X SPEED TO EASTHAVEN)

Route	Travel time (dogsled)	Total time elapsed	Dragon's location
Sunblight to Easthaven	9 hours	9 hours	Easthaven
Easthaven to Caer-Dineval	4 ½ hours	13 ½ hours	departing Easthaven
Caer-Dineval to Caer-Konig	1 hour	14 ½ hours	Caer-Dineval
Easthaven to Bryn Shander	3 ½ hours	12 ½ hours	Easthaven
Bryn Shander to Targos	1 hour	13 ½ hours	departing Easthaven
Targos to Bremen	1 ½ hours	15 hours	Caer-Dineval
Bryn Shander to Termalaine	3 hours	15 ½ hours	departing Caer-Dineval
Termalaine to Lonelywood	1 hour	16 ½ hours	Caer-Konig

TRAVEL RULES

Though they are not mentioned in chapter 4, the standard travel rules from the *PHB* and the *DMG* can have a substantial impact on travel in Icewind Dale. Characters can improve their travel speed by pushing themselves or their sled dogs to the limits of endurance. As with everything else in chapter 4, however, there will be trade-offs that can pose additional costs and significant risks.

TRAVEL PACE

Characters can choose to travel at a fast pace, increasing their travel speed by a third. This will lower their travel times by up to one quarter ($4/3$ speed over the same distance = $3/4$ of the time). Parties that travel at a fast pace have a -5 penalty to passive Wisdom (Perception) scores to notice hidden threats and a -5 penalty to Wisdom (Survival) checks to avoid becoming lost, as described in chapter 5 of the *DMG*.

Characters cannot maintain a fast pace indefinitely. If they attempt to do so for the entirety of the return trip, you should apply the forced march rules or the variants discussed in “Realistic Travel.” Maintaining a fast pace for more than 8 hours, or after more than 8 hours of travel at any pace, should trigger the forced march rules even if you are otherwise relaxing them. Characters may have to choose whether they wish to expend their energy on the long trip across the tundra or in furious dashes between towns.

A fast pace alone is unlikely to make much of a difference on the tundra. Traveling for 8 hours at a fast pace will only save the characters 2 hours of travel time. That might allow them to reach one additional town before the dragon strikes, particularly if they already have a means of ignoring difficult terrain or the rest requirement.

Characters can push themselves at a fast pace for more than 8 hours, but they run the risk of exhaustion. If they can sustain a fast pace, the trip from Sunblight to Dougan’s Hole or Easthaven takes $26\frac{1}{2}$ hours as written, or $13\frac{1}{2}$ hours if the characters can ignore difficult terrain or rest. Note that undead sled dogs cannot travel at a fast pace, making it impossible for them to travel faster than four times the base speed.

Traveling at a fast pace can make a significant difference between towns, where distances are shorter and base speeds are higher. The “Fast Pace Travel Times” table provides times for travel between towns. This table assumes the characters are using dogsleds or mounts to travel between towns; if they are on foot, double the travel times. Characters or their animals will have to make Constitution saving throws for each hour of fast travel after they have traveled more than 8 hours.

If the characters’ pace varies between different stages of their travel, use the “Custom Travel Table” at the end of this supplement to calculate their new arrival time for each town and the dragon’s location at the time of their arrival.

FAST PACE TRAVEL TIMES

Route	Fast pace (dogsled)
Dougan’s Hole to Good Mead	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours
Good Mead to Easthaven	2 hours
Good Mead to Caer-Dineval	3 hours
Caer-Dineval to Caer-Konig	45 minutes
Easthaven to Caer-Dineval	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours
Easthaven to Bryn Shander	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours
Good Mead to Bryn Shander	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours
Bryn Shander to Targos	45 minutes
Targos to Bremen	1 hour
Bryn Shander to Termalaine	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours
Termalaine to Lonelywood	45 minutes

MOUNTS

A number of possible mounts can be found in Ten-Towns, including swift-moving axe beaks. Mounts halve the travel time on the roads between towns, achieving the same speeds as dogsleds as described in the “Overland Travel” rules in chapter 1 of *Rime of the Frostmaiden*.

However, mounts do not otherwise increase a group’s travel pace. The travel rules in chapter 8 of the *PHB* do not assign faster travel speeds to mounted characters (except during a gallop) and chapter 8 of the *DMG* specifies that hourly travel speed is not determined by round-to-round movement speed. An axe beak (50 ft./round) may be faster than a sled dog (40 ft./round) in combat, but over long distances they are no faster than a group of adventurers wearing snowshoes.

Sled dogs are an exception to this rule as they are one of the only land creatures that is given a separate long distance travel speed. This makes them a tremendous asset on the open tundra—or it should, if you ignore or modify the hourly rest requirement.

These rules should provide different flavor to the various working animals of Ten-Towns. Axe beaks are pack animals who move goods over the short distances between towns; sled dogs are draft animals who pull sleds across the open tundra. Axe beaks are sprinters, whereas sled dogs are bred for distance running.

Mounts can provide faster travel speeds for short periods of time. As described in chapter 8 of the *PHB*, mounted characters can ride at a gallop for no more than one hour at twice their fast travel pace. Axe beaks can cover $2\frac{2}{3}$ miles (round up to 3 miles) in one hour on the tundra, or up to 8 miles in one hour on the road between towns. At that point they will be reduced to a normal travel pace and will need a long rest before they can gallop again. Axe beaks and other mounts are good for hauling gear, but they will not speed the characters’ progress back to Ten-Towns.

FLYING MOUNTS

These rules do not apply to special mounts such as flying creatures, magical items, or creatures summoned by spells such as *phantom steed*. As described in chapter 8 of the *DMG*, characters traveling by such means can cover a number of miles per hour equal to their movement speed divided by 10. However, the spells available to characters at these levels all have strict time limits (one hour for *phantom steed* and just 10 minutes for *fly*) that will limit their utility in the pursuit.

With a speed of 90 feet per round, the chardalyn dragon should be able to fly at 9 miles per hour. However, comparing the dragon's travel times to the overland distances and travel speeds provided in chapter 1 (particularly along the Targos-Bryn Shander route) shows that its speed is only 6 mph. The dragon is flying at two-thirds its normal speed—mercifully, otherwise the characters would stand no chance of catching up to it.

Assuming that the reduced speed is due to strong winds and extreme weather conditions in Icewind Dale, a similar penalty should be applied to other flying creatures (such as griffon mounts from Skytower Shelter). Characters should not be able to outpace the dragon, except in short bursts and through extraordinary means that tax their abilities. Characters should face difficult decisions about how to spend their resources and where to set up their next defense.

FORCED MARCHES

The travel rules in chapter 8 of the *PHB* assume that characters can travel for 8 hours without tiring. For each additional hour of travel, each character must make a Constitution saving throw at the end of the hour. The DC is $10 + 1$ for each hour past 8 hours. On a failed saving throw, a character suffers one level of exhaustion.

Consider these rules carefully before deciding whether or how you will implement them in chapter 4. If the characters will take 18 hours to return to Ten-Towns, then they will be making DC 20 Constitution saving throws by the time they get back—and the DC will only rise with each additional hour of travel within the towns until they take a long rest. At two levels of exhaustion the characters' speed is halved, and at five they can no longer move at all. If you follow a strict implementation of the forced march rules, exhaustion could kill your party before the dragon does.

You may choose not to apply the forced march rules to the characters if they are riding on dogsleds or some other conveyance—after all, the dogs are doing most of the work. Under this approach, the characters would not have to make Constitution saving throws unless they are walking themselves. This means the dogsleds would provide another significant benefit in addition to their increased speed.

However, the dogs would still have to make Constitution saving throws after the eighth hour of travel. With a Constitution score of just 12 (+1), the dogs are unlikely to make more than one or two saves before they start failing. Once they pick up two levels of exhaustion, their speed will be halved and the return to Ten-Towns will be that much slower. Once they reach five levels of exhaustion, they can no longer move at all.

Once the characters are back in Ten-Towns, they may be able to switch their exhausted dogs for a fresh team. (Whether such teams are available in towns that have already been destroyed and what the characters might have to do to acquire them is up to you.) However, if the dogs grow exhausted on the tundra between Sunblight and Ten-Towns that option will not be available. Characters in that situation will face the choice to walk the rest of the way at a much slower pace (and risk their own forced march) or rest the dogs knowing that the towns are burning while they wait.

As always, you have the option to simplify travel by relaxing the forced march rules. However, if you want to preserve some limits on travel while allowing the characters to reach Ten-Towns in time, there is one other option for returning to town without losing time to rests. Vellynne Harpell's undead sled dogs won't require any rest and won't have to make saving throws on a forced march. If the party travels back on sleds pulled by her dogs, they will not face any problems with exhaustion.

More controversially, if the party's sled dogs hit the wall and can run no further, Vellynne could offer to euthanize them and raise them as undead. However, many groups will find this repugnant—particularly if Vellynne first suggests killing the dogs not when they can no longer move (level 5 exhaustion) but when they drop to half speed (level 2 exhaustion). This tactic would save hours of travel and hundreds if not thousands of lives in Ten-Towns while establishing Vellynne as a dangerous and amoral ally, but it might enrage the characters—or their players.

As with everything else in *Dungeons & Dragons*, know your table. More palatable options would include having Vellynne Harpell show up with the dogs already undead, thus removing the moral choice from the players, or using one of the other methods discussed here to reduce travel times back to Ten-Towns so the dogs have to make fewer Constitution saving throws.

REST AND EXHAUSTION

The journey back to Ten-Towns will be long and arduous. Between the initial trip to Sunblight, the return, travel within the towns, and battles with the dragon, characters will likely be awake for 24 or even 48 hours without a long rest.

According to the long rest rules in chapter 8 of the *PHB*, long rests require at least 6 hours of sleep and no more than 2 hours of light activity. Even a single hour of strenuous activity (such as walking) is enough to interrupt a long rest. Characters should not be able to take a long rest while traveling over the tundra or between towns. If they want to sleep, they'll have to stop and face the consequences.

Chapter 2 of *Xanathar's Guide to Everything* provides optional rules for going without a long rest. After 24 hours without finishing a long rest, characters must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion. For each consecutive 24-hour period without a long rest, the DC increases by 5. Characters will likely face one or two saving throws while journeying to and from Sunblight and pursuing the dragon.

While this rule is optional, it makes a good compromise between applying the forced march rules every hour and

removing all limits on travel. With characters rolling Constitution saving throws every 24 hours, they run the risk of gaining one or two levels of exhaustion—enough to impede their fight against the dragon, but not enough to take them out of it entirely.

RULES VARIANTS

This rule would also make a good compromise for measuring the effects of forced travel on the sled dogs, at whatever increment you deem appropriate. For example, you could have the dogs make DC 10 Constitution saving throws after 8 hours of travel without rest, raising the DC by 5 for each subsequent 8-hour period without a long rest. The dogs would be able to travel for at least 16 hours before failing two saving throws and gaining two levels of exhaustion.

At your discretion, you could pair this rule with a requirement that the dogs' next long rest must equal or exceed their running time. For example, if the dogs run for 12 hours, they must rest for 12 hours. This will bring dogsled travel in *Icwind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden* much closer to how sled dogs run in the real world (although they do so at significantly faster speeds; real world precedents can only get you so far, so use them with care).

These long rest rules allow the characters to return to Ten-Towns in a timely manner without completely ignoring exhaustion. A strict application of the forced march rules would require repeated Constitution saving throws for the sled dogs at a stage in the chapter (tundra travel) when nothing else is happening. Those saving throws can only slow the characters' progress, delaying the main action of the chapter still further. The long rest rules presented here will likely begin to impair the characters and their dogs while they are in pursuit or combat between the towns, providing an additional complication to an already difficult challenge without interrupting it.

WEIGHT AND ENCUMBRANCE

According to the "Getting Around Ten-Towns" section in chapter 1 of *Rime of the Frostmaiden*, a single sled dog can pull up to 360 pounds. This is the maximum weight that a creature with a Strength of 12 can push or drag according to the carrying capacity rules in chapter 7 of the *PHB*.

However, according to those same rules, a dog pushing or dragging weight in excess of its carrying capacity (180 pounds) can only move 5 feet per round. This would greatly hinder travel, requiring multiple dogs to pull any sled. Even an empty sled weighs 300 pounds as described in "Getting Around Ten-Towns," although this figure is wildly inflated compared to actual dogsleds. The following rules variants provide greater mobility without ignoring the weight limits entirely.

RULES VARIANTS

A single sled dog can pull up to 90 pounds with no encumbrance. A sled dog can pull up to 180 pounds at **light encumbrance**, which drops their speed to 30 feet per round. This does not affect their overland travel speed, but it means they cannot travel at a fast pace. A sled dog can pull up to 360 pounds at **heavy encumbrance**, dropping their movement speed to 5 feet per round and limiting their overland travel

speed to half their normal pace (or ½ mph on tundra, the same as walking in snowshoes).

The 300-pound sled weight listed in "Getting Around Ten-Towns" should be understood as referring to a fully loaded sled. An empty sled weighs 75 pounds and can carry up to 225 pounds of cargo, not including the driver.

A fully loaded sled, including the driver, could easily weigh 500 pounds, requiring a team of at least 6 dogs to travel at a fast pace or 3 dogs to travel at a normal pace. Extremely heavy characters such as goliaths may require significantly more dogs.

These weight limits will greatly increase the cost of sled teams. If you follow these rules, you may wish to consider halving the cost of sled dogs to 25 gp each (in line with the *PHB* prices for a mastiff). Feeding the dogs costs 5 cp per dog per day, and kenneling them costs 5 sp per dog per day. Maintaining a team of 6 dogs will cost 30 sp and 30 cp (or 3 gp and 3 sp) each day.

REALISTIC TRAVEL

The slow speed, onerous rest requirements, and excessive sled weight detailed in *Rime of the Frostmaiden* make travel by dogsled an impractical affair. However, it is also the only means the characters have of returning to Ten-Towns in time to stop the dragon.

If you choose to apply more realistic weight and exhaustion rules, you should also use more realistic travel and rest rules for the sled dogs. A complete set of variant rules for dogsled travel is provided here. These rules balance natural limits on travel and encumbrance with greater speeds that make dogsleds a viable mode of transportation in *Icwind Dale*.

Speed. Trained mushers can maintain speeds of 8 to 10 miles per hour over long distances. However, the characters are unlikely to be experienced mushers, and the group will have to travel at the speed of its slowest team unless they wish to split the party. Assume that the characters can achieve a top speed of 4 miles per hour in ideal conditions (on roads, traveling at a fast pace). The base speed for a dogsled is 3 mph on roads, 1 mph on the tundra, and ½ mph in the mountains. Parties that ignore difficult terrain travel at twice these speeds on the tundra and in the mountains, but note that the *charm of the snow walker* cannot work on sleds pulled by more than 2 dogs.

Rest. The sled dogs need to rest one hour for each hour that they run, but this rest does not have to come after every hour of travel. The dogs can run for up to 8 hours before they have to start making Constitution saving throws at DC 10, with the DC increasing by 5 for each subsequent 8-hour period without a long rest. If the dogs run at a fast pace, they must make Constitution saving throws at the end of every hour of travel beyond 8 hours, with a DC of 10 + 1 for each additional hour. Vellynne Harpell's undead sled dogs ignore exhaustion, but they cannot travel at a fast pace.

Weight. Each sled dog can pull up to 90 pounds with no encumbrance, 180 pounds with light encumbrance, and 360 pounds with heavy encumbrance. A lightly encumbered dog has a speed of 30 feet per round and cannot travel at a fast pace. A heavily encumbered dog has a speed of 5 feet per round and cannot move faster than half their normal overland travel speed. A dogsled weighs 75 pounds and can carry up to 225 pounds of cargo, not including the driver.

Travel times. If you follow these rules, use the “PCs’ Pursuit (double speed)” tables to determine travel times, or “PCs’ Pursuit (4x speed)” if they have some additional means of ignoring difficult terrain such as the ranger’s Natural Explorer ability.

If the characters push hard and spend their resources carefully, they will have accomplished a heroic return to Ten-Towns. Their only reward will be the opportunity to face the chardalyn dragon multiple times on little or no rest. These rules do not hand the players victory, and certainly don’t dictate their failure, but simply give them a chance to win or lose based on their own decisions.

CUSTOM TRAVEL TABLES

Simplicity is key when running travel in chapter 4. It’s easiest to maintain one consistent set of travel speeds, especially as the travel rules already distinguish between road, tundra, and

mountain travel. If you don’t want to deal with further variations in travel times, you can easily disallow fast pace travel if the sled dogs are lightly encumbered.

Nevertheless, travel in chapter 4 is a dynamic affair. Once the characters encounter the chardalyn dragon they will throw off its timetable, assuming they deal enough damage to force it to fly to the next town. At that point you will need to devise one or more new timetables reflecting its new departure and arrival times.

The “Custom Travel Tables” allow you to adjust the dragon’s flight times. The first table is left blank after its arrival at Easthaven, which is likely the first location where the characters can intercept it. The second table leaves all arrival times blank for maximum flexibility. These tables will let you synchronize the dragon’s and the characters’ travel times, running chapter 4 as a dynamic and evolving series of battles.

CUSTOM TRAVEL TABLE

Destination	Dragon travel time	Dragon arrival time	Destruction time	Total time elapsed	PC arrival time
Dougan’s Hole	2 hours	2 hours	30 minutes	2 ½ hours	
Good Mead	30 minutes	3 hours	1 hour	4 hours	
Easthaven	1 ½ hours	5 ½ hours	8 hours		
Caer-Dineval	1 hour		1 hour		
Caer-Konig	1 hour		1 ½ hours		
Termalaine	2 hours		6 hours		
Lonelywood	30 minutes		2 hours		
Bremen	1 ½ hours		2 hours		
Targos	30 minutes		8 hours		
Bryn Shander	30 minutes		12 hours		
Sunblight	3 ½ hours		-		

CUSTOM TRAVEL TABLE

Destination	Dragon travel time	Dragon arrival time	Destruction time	Total time elapsed	PC arrival time
Dougan’s Hole	2 hours		30 minutes		
Good Mead	30 minutes		1 hour		
Easthaven	1 ½ hours		8 hours		
Caer-Dineval	1 hour		1 hour		
Caer-Konig	1 hour		1 ½ hours		
Termalaine	2 hours		6 hours		
Lonelywood	30 minutes		2 hours		
Bremen	1 ½ hours		2 hours		
Targos	30 minutes		8 hours		
Bryn Shander	30 minutes		12 hours		
Sunblight	3 ½ hours		-		