

MOUNTAINS, HILLS AND ENCOUNTERS



Follow Me, And Die!
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MOUNTAINS AND HILLS AND ENCOUNTERS

Mountains and hills provide sweeping vistas to delight one's eyes. They can ignite one's imagination for adventure ideas both for overland travel in the case of a hexcrawl, or for the setting for a dungeon or other adventure location. The following pages offer suggestions to help GMs with their game prep. As with all random tables, often one need not roll on them for creative results. Just looking at the suggested possibilities can get our own creative juices flowing.

Rather than a collection of encounter tables, the Encounters section is geared towards situations for encounters in hilly and mountainous terrain. Often, the composition of a creature or group that is encountered is easy to determine, but the reason or business of the encountered party is what adds a level of interest to the meeting.

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Hilly and mountainous terrain present lots of possibilities for surface adventure and potential entrances to the underworld. The nature of the terrain and possible vegetation makes for both natural hazards and points of ambush. One may encounter intelligent beings, large carnivores, and monstrous creatures. Some can be reasoned with and some just want to eat you.

HILL vs. MOUNTAIN

This is an arbitrary definition. For simplicity sake, we can go with the modern definition of some countries that a hill is up to 2,000 feet (nearly 610 meters) above sea level. Thus a mountain is anything over this height. As GM you are free to change your definition to suit the needs of your campaign, or your own cultural or personal preference.

NATURE OF TERRAIN

Roll on the following tables to determine terrain for a region, such as a hex on your map, or a single hill or mountain for the location of an encounter or adventure.

d6	GEOLOGY
1-2	Sedimentary (shale, sandstone, limestone, flint, chert)
3-4	Metamorphic (soapstone/talc, pipestone, slate, gneiss, marble)
5-6	Igneous (pumice, basalt, obsidian)

d6	COMPOSITION
1	Earth & Clay 50% barrow mounds
2	Shale
3	Limestone
4	Granite
5	Basalt
6	Mix

2d6	ROCKS & BOULDERS
2	Large rocks 10 pounds +
3-5	Buried rocks & Boulders
6-8	Small Boulders
9-11	Large & Small Boulders
12	Boulders from Small to Huge

2d6	STABILITY OF TERRAIN
2-	Severely Unstable
3-5	Unstable
6-8	Mix of Stable and Unstable
9-11	Stable
12+	Very Stable

Earth & Clay, and Shale have a -2 modifier.
Limestone has a -1 modifier.
Granite & Basalt have a +2 modifier.

d8	SOIL COMPOSITION
1	Bare/None
2	Poor/Thin
3	Poor/Rocks, large
4	Poor/Rocks, small
5	Arable, Large Rocks
6	Arable, Small rocks
7	Arable
8	Arable, rich soil

FARMING

- Terraces
- Washed out gullies/over farmed

d10	VEGETATION
1	None
2	Grass/Weeds/Wildflowers
3-4	Shrubs & Bushes
5	Scrub Trees
6	Small Trees up to 20 feet
7	Medium Trees up to 50 feet
8	Large Trees 50 to 100+ feet
9	Enormous Trees think redwood & sequoia
10	Colossal Trees thousands of feet or miles

d6	VEGETATION DENSITY
1	Sparse/Spotty
2	Thin/Light
3	Varying Light & Medium
4	Medium
5	Varying Medium & Heavy/Dense
6	Heavy/Dense

d6	TOPOGRAPHY
1	Low with gentle slope
2	Low with steep slope
3	Medium with gentle slope
4	Medium with steep slope
5	High with gentle slope
6	High with steep slope

d8	ELEVATION
1	50-100
2	100-200
3	300-500
4	600-900
5	1000-1200
6	1300-1500
7	1600-1800
8	1900-2000

d8	TRAILS & ROADS
1	None
2	Game Trails
3	Narrow Footpaths
4	Wide Paths
5	Dirt Roads
6	Gravel Roads
7	Stone Roads
8	Raised Stone Roads

d6	WATER
1-2	Springs
3-4	Streams
5	Lakes
6	Steam Vents, Hot Springs, & Geysers if there is vulcanism in the area

d6	PRECIPICES
1-2	Gullies
3-4	Gorges
5	Valleys
6	Cliffs (Overlooks/Overhangs)

d6	SPANNING GAPS
1	Nothing/Snow
2	Log
3	Rope or Vine Bridge
4	Wooden Bridge
5	Stone Bridge
6	Aqueduct

d6	STATUS OF SPANS
1	Ruins
2	Disrepair/Weak
3	Poor/Rough
4	Used but maintained
5	New
6	Dwarven or Magical Construction

d6	OPENINGS
1	Caves
2	Caverns
3	Sinkholes
4	Pits
5	Mines
6	Burrow/Tunnel

d8	HAZARDS
1	None
2	Landslide/Avalanche
3	Rock-slide
4	Tree-fall
5	Boulder(s)
6	Sinkholes
7	Caves/Caverns
8	Unstable paths/footing

MINES

Mines can be active, inactive, abandoned, or lost. Each may have it's own animal or monstrous hazards in addition to the hazards of altering the rock.

Open pit mines such as quarries and for ore deposits near the surface.

Shaft mines follow the path of a vein or seam of ore. Dwarves construct mines that are unlikely to have collapse.

CAVES, CAVERNS, MINES

All of these can become lairs for wildlife, such as wolves, mountain lions, and bears. Monsters and intelligent creatures will also use these places as they need not work hard for a deep and solid home.

SINKHOLES

- **Dry** - Opens to cave/cavern of unknown depth, from 10' to infinity. . . .
- **Wet** - Opens to Deep Rushing River or pool, lake or sea. Possible water monsters.

PASSES

Steep Hills and Mountains will have passes. Passes may be narrow suitable for single file foot traffic, or vary in size from single file mounts, to single file carts and wagons, or broad paths up to many miles wide. Trace is naturally funnelled to passes.

See my [Caravans & Trade](#).

WEATHER

Fog can settle on mountains and hills, often obscuring the land below from the peak and vice versa.

Towering mountains will have a rain shadow with one side well watered and the other side arid and even desert like. Clouds often obscure the peaks.

RIVERS & STREAMS

Hills and Mountains are often the origin points of watercourses. The winter snow pack of mountains will provide a steady flow of water at the spring thaw.

See my [Rivers & River Encounters](#).

SWAMPS

Swamps can form near the bottom of hills and mountains if there is poor drainage.

See my [The Screaming Swamp](#).

SETTLEMENTS

Settlements can be well hidden in hilly and mountainous terrain. When combined with heavy forests, one may not know of a settlement that lies off the beaten path. Secret & hidden places may like to keep to themselves for either innocent or nefarious reasons.

VALLEYS

Valleys can also be well hidden, and such places are often the home of “lost” or hidden settlements or ruins.

SPECIAL

- High mountains or ranges in temperate and arctic regions often have substantial glaciers. These can be the site of cold based creatures isolated in warmer climates.
- Volcanoes can be dormant or active. Dormant volcanoes vary from silent for eons to suddenly erupting. Eruptions can be smoke and gentle lava flows, or explosive pyroclastic flows. Active volcanoes can alternate between “gentle” and “dangerous” eruptions. Some may have constant “gentle” eruptions for decades.
- Craters can be formed by extinct volcanoes or meteorite impacts. Volcanic craters may merely be dormant.

ENCOUNTERS

MINES

Active mines will have some type of settlement nearby. If it is a new mine, it may just be a camp of the prospector(s) who found it, or it could be a tent village. When precious metals or gems are involved, there could be a boom town. A consistent and productive mine will support a formal village, town, or city depending on how ore rich the region is.

Mines established near a dwarven region tend to be controlled by dwarves. Dwarves are jealous of their technology and techniques and do not allow non-dwarves. Exceptionally productive dwarven mines often give rise to new settlements.

Non-dwarven mines may have a dwarven manager if those who own the mine can afford them. Having a dwarven mine manager will increase safety and productivity by 10%-40% (1d4).

d4	Access to the mine
1	Hand and footholds carved into the rock.
2	Winding path of ore: level, up, or down.
3	Straight in along path of ore then branching.
4	Deep shaft via elevator: muscle, wind, or magic powered

Ore crushing may be accomplished by hammers or by machines driven by muscle power, wind, or magic.

Pumps may be used to evacuate water or supply fresh air.

Ore may be hauled out in baskets or ore carts. Ore carts are more efficient if they have rails.

Smelting is usually accomplished in another location. However, dwarves tend to be efficient and will erect smelting facilities unless the yield is too poor to justify the expense.

d6	Mine Hazards
1	Unstable: collapse or slump. 50% internal or external.
2	Water: Risk of flooding
3	Gas: Risk of asphyxiation, poisoning, or explosion
4	Monster: Powerful monster decides it has a new home.
5	Monster: Something was uncovered.
6	Dispute: Faction or enemy attempts take over.

Inactive mines may be seasonally inactive if there is some aspect of weather that makes access to the mine impractical. Harsh winters cutting off resupply, heavy rains overwhelming the pumps used to keep it dry, seasonally active monsters, religious reasons, etc.

Abandoned mines may at first be indistinguishable from inactive mines.

d6	Why Abandoned
1	Flooded
2	Gas
3-4	Tapped Out
5	Monster Moved In
6	Monster Revealed

CAVERNS vs. CAVES

Caves are geological features formed by geologic processes. Caverns are formed by dissolution of the rock. Size is not part of the formal definition.

For all practical purposes, caves, caverns, and mines are the same. Mines may encounter voids in the rock that may be isolated or connect to cave systems. Mines, caves, and caverns could potentially be connected. As lairs for a bandit hideout or monsters, there is little practical difference between caves, caverns, and mines. However, mines may have the presence of usable equipment.

The deepest cave systems form the underdark. Mines may connect to such systems. Surface openings such as crevasses and sinkholes may provide a way to access this system.

PEAKS

Peaks of mountains and tall hills, or cliffs near the sea are natural homes to flying animals and monsters. Eagles of both the normal and giant variety, rocs, wyverns, and dragons.

The peaks that touch the clouds may provide a way for cloud giants to easily access the ground without using magical means.

Flying creatures and magical devices may not be able to cross the highest peaks. For example, if the realism of not enough oxygen is desired, or because the creature or device is incapable of the required altitude.

Settlements often arise on hill or mountain tops for ease of defense. They have a secure means of access and a sure supply of water. Wise rulers will stockpile food. This is most known in the Western world by the acropolis of the Greek city states, which means high part of the city. This is a type of citadel, or a core of the city. This will involve

the strongest walls and towers, and may represent the “old city” or original walls or a long established city or town that grew into a city.

PREDATORS

Carnivorous animals, such as lions, bears, wolves and others will commonly be encountered hunting herbivores or other smaller carnivores.

HERBIVORES

Herbivores may be solitary species or herds.

Surefooted animals like mountain sheep and goats will be the main herd animals found there. Some mountain dwelling groups may have domesticated them.

HUMANOIDS

Any intelligent species. Determine if those encountered are native to the area or traveling through. If traveling, determine if they are lost or on their desired path.

They may be:

- **Citizens** of a nearby settlement.
 - Less likely to be lost unless a child, etc.
- **Adventurers**
 - Either going to/from a nearby adventure location, or on their way to an adventure location somewhere “that way” (d8 for random direction). If from, what is their physical condition and were they successful in finding treasure?
- **Bandits/Raiders**
 - Bandits same species as nearest settlement, Raiders different nation or species.

- **Merchants**
 - See my [Caravans and Trade](#).
- **Laborers**
 - Farmers, Herders, Miners, Builders, Loggers, etc.
 - Going to or from work, or running from something.

MONSTERS

Any creature that makes sense for your game.

d6	Type
1	Burrowing
2	Walking
3	Swimming
4	Flying
5	Summoned
6	Extra Planar/Planetary Travelers

d6	Status
1	Sick/Injured
2	Hungry/Hunting or Eating
3	Commanded/Charmed
4	Fleeing something bigger
5	Returning to lair
6	Resting

An example of a sick or injured monster could be a water creature on dry land, a wounded dragon, etc. The examples are meant to evoke ideas and not limit the GM.