

Riding the Rails

Thunder Train Cars & Their Contents



Although the nation of Urbana is not well regarded by many throughout the Known Lands, there are very few who hold that same low opinion of the Thunder Trains. The most massive mechemagical constructs ever created, the Thunder Trains constantly scour the continent, bringing trade and relatively safe travel back to a world on the brink of ruin in the aftermath of the Darkfall. Before the Thunder Trains were created, trade between nations, even between settlements, was virtually non-existent. What little trade did occur was exorbitantly expensive because of the large numbers of soldiers necessary to protect merchant caravans as they braved the wilderness and the nocturnals that attacked anything moving through it. Entire villages succumbed to starvation because crops could not be moved from more arable lands to those accustomed to purchasing their food in exchange for whatever was produced there.

The Thunder Trains have changed all this. The volume of cargo they are capable of moving can change the fates of entire cities or even provinces, in the case of the largest of the trains. While Urbana profits disproportionately from the Thunder Trains' trade, those who were without trade before them accept that fact as the price of survival. When one of the trains arrives at a Thunder Station, representatives from all surrounding settlements flock to the area to conduct trade with one another, as well as the local merchants responsible for selling product in the name of Lord Urbane. The events are like small festivals that celebrate commerce, with the two or three days (depending upon the amount of cargo being carried at the time) the train remains at the Thunder Station being a whirlwind of money and goods changing hands, beloved by merchants and thieves alike for the outrageous opportunities that abound.

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A Thunder Train picks up cargo at every stop throughout its journey, and of course unloads cargo as well. Merchants sometimes accompany their goods on the trip, but just as often they pay a nominal fee so that the Urbanan quartermasters who ride the train as an adjunct to the Iron Guard can oversee their goods and ensure they are sold at the proscribed price. The goods will arrive at their destination, be sold, and the funds will be returned to the merchant the next time the train passes through that particular Thunder Station. This is a lengthy process that can take months, meaning that merchants can have long, sometimes painful waits in between getting their payment, but most agree it is vastly superior than trying to transport the goods themselves, and infinitely safer.

CARGO CARS



Other than the engines and, in at least one instance, a supply cart for a massive mechemagical weapon, the Thunder Trains are made up of a large number of cargo cars. These cars are almost all identical, with roughly sixty of them in use among the four trains at any given time. There are many others kept in a state of readiness or repair, depending on the circumstances, ensuring that cars that suffer damage or require maintenance can be rotated out of use and replaced with ready cars instead.

The standard configuration for a transport car for the Thunder Train calls for a large, open first level that is comparable in many ways to a mobile warehouse. There is a smaller second level that houses weapon emplacements, supplies, and bunks for the Iron Guard and various other staff of the Thunder Train. These levels are off limits to passengers unless there are unusual circumstances. On occasion, for instance, when a train comes under attack from external forces, some passengers are allowed on the upper level so that they can join in the battle against whatever threatens the train.

On the first floor, the layout of a transport car is largely static. There are four small chambers for passengers, with varying levels of comfort depending upon the price paid. All the chambers are roughly the same size, but are intended to accommodate a single passenger, a pair, a trio, and a quartet among the four. The single passenger compartment is identified as a "luxury accommodation," but there is no one in the civilized world who would regard its stark amenities as luxurious under even the most charitable viewpoint. In addition to the four passenger chambers, there are two small alcoves, little more than the size of perhaps a large closet, that house defensive measures. In some cars, these are the Sentinels (see below). In others, they are less powerful but nevertheless dangerous golems utilized by the various mechemages serving aboard the ship. The lion's share of the car's spacious first floor, however, is devoted to cargo.

There are eight sectionalized compartments devoted to cargo storage on the main floor. Two of these are secured by heavy iron doors and are

used to transport especially valuable, or sometimes volatile, cargoes, while the others are open in front to allow the train's quartermasters to constantly monitor the inventory and ensure that no theft or damage has taken place during the lengthy voyage. In addition to these alcoves, less fragile cargo can be stacked and stored in rather extensive volumes throughout the main floor. It is typically secured by heavy lashes and cargo netting and used to shape the open floor into corridors much like hallways. This can be a dangerous place, because it is not unheard of for the crates to break free from their lashings and fall, which can seriously injure or kill passengers. The Iron Guard warn anyone boarding the train of this possibility and, as such, they do not consider it their problem. The quartermasters are little better, more worried about the welfare of the cargo than the passengers, but such is to be expected from men and women of their training.

The only other feature of the transport cars are the points of egress. Each of the passenger chambers has a door leading out of the car, and there are large double doors in the car's center on either side, allowing for quick loading and unloading. There is a narrow, wrought iron spiral stairwell leading to the upper level of the car, usually situated at the rear of the car. There are doorways at each end that lead to the cars ahead and behind each car in the train. These doors lead to narrow walkways connecting the cars, and are among the most dangerous places on the entire train because there is little in the way of protection from external threats, much less the risk of falling between the cars and perishing.

Although there is no hard and fast rule about passengers outside of those who pay the significant fee for one of the passenger berths, the Iron Guard and crew of the Thunder Trains are generally willing to allow others to purchase passage on the trains for a fee, leaving them to make their own berths among the open cargo flooring. On many legs of the trip, there are empty cargo areas after a particularly profitable unloading, so this is a simple matter. For most, it's much like camping except that there's no risk of attack while sleeping (unless it is from other passengers) and there is constant noise and jostling. Getting a good night's rest is difficult at best, but the faster travel and relative safety make it appealing nonetheless.

Passengers on a Thunder Train are incredibly varied. The only requirements are the ability to pay the cost demanded for passage by the Iron Guard and the lack of any overtly corrupted nature on the part of the passengers. Once aboard, passengers are largely left to their own devices. The train's quartermasters police the inventory for any sign of theft, which is punished swiftly and incredibly harshly, often by being thrown off the train while it is in motion. Violence between passengers is discouraged not because of the Iron Guard's interest in their passengers' well-being, but because it could risk the cargo or, even worse, serve as a distraction for some greater threat to the train. Because of the Iron Guard's lackadaisical practices in accepting passengers, there have been numerous documented cases of known criminals fleeing justice by giving the Iron Guard a handful of coins and an assumed name. Other than checking the passenger manifest, local law enforcement is not allowed to search the Thunder Trains.

The Four Thunder Trains

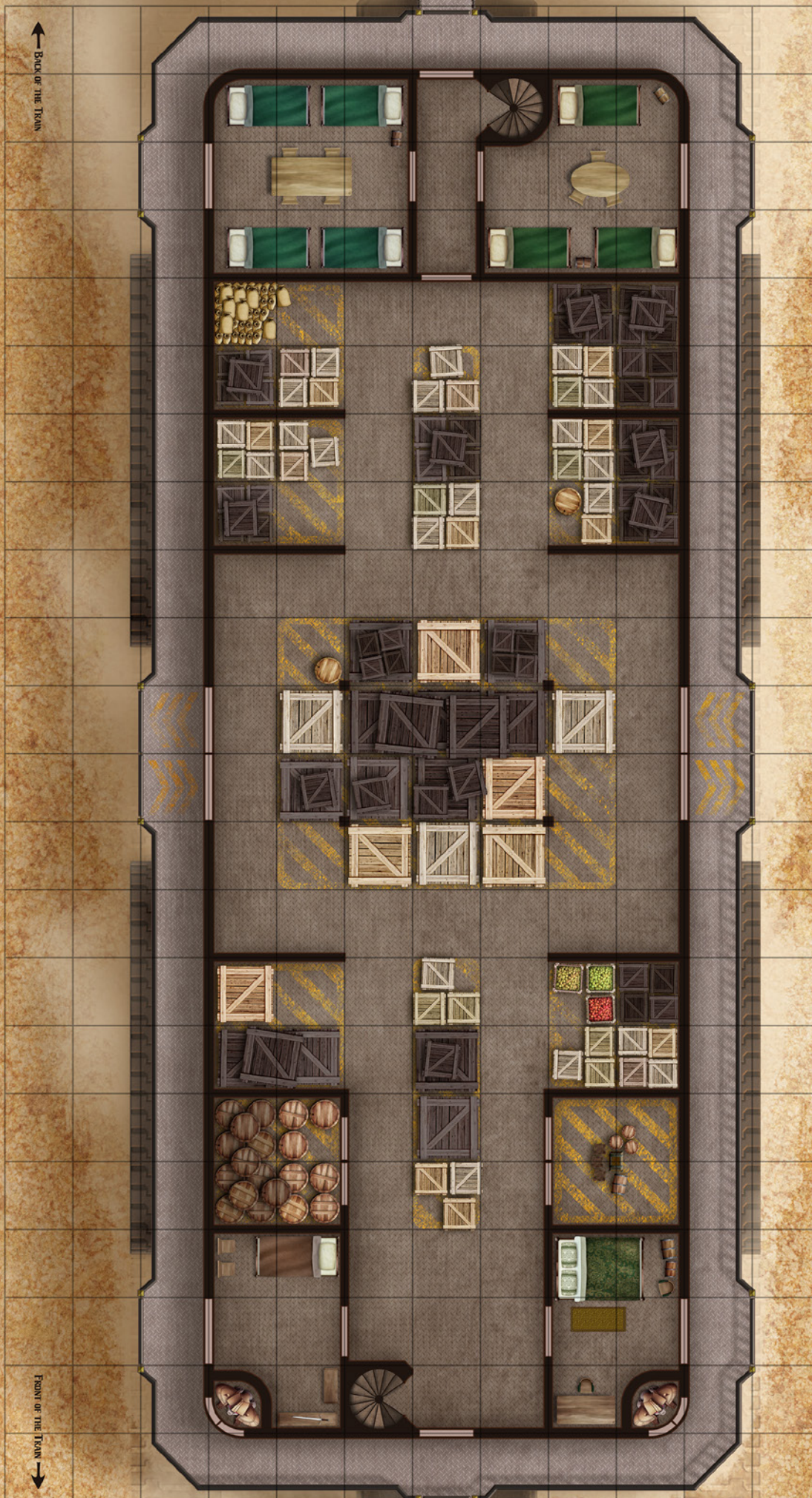
More information on the Thunder Trains is available in *Thunderscape Worlds 2: the Thunder Trail*, but here is a very brief summary of the four trains and their capabilities.

✧ **The Dominant** – The first Thunder Train, the Dominant was recently refitted with a massive weapon, the Storm Cannon, on the front, so powerful it was used to blast through mountains to clear the Thunder Trail to eastern Aden. The Dominant pulls eleven cars, although only ten are available for cargo. The eleventh is support for the Storm Cannon.

✧ **The Pride of Mekanus** – The second Thunder Train and by far the largest, the Pride of Mekanus is the largest vehicle ever created and easily the most powerful. Bristling with weapons and possessing an incredibly powerful engine, the Pride of Mekanus pulls a staggering thirty-six cars.

✧ **The Boundless** – The smallest, and perhaps most advanced of the Thunder Trains, the Boundless is capable of incredible enchantments that allow it to phase outside of the material plane and briefly enter other planes, which in turn permits it to pass through solid obstacles that would take a great length of time to circumvent. The Boundless' small size limits it to only two cars for hauling cargo, ensuring it is used for only the most valuable, sensitive trips into the land beyond Urbana.

✧ **The Scouring Eye** – An arcane development of the weapon found on the Dominant, the Scouring Eye possesses a massive magical generator, the Arcane Matrix, that can project massive blasts of arcane energy more powerful than any simple spell. Although it travels the Thunder Trail like the other trains, the Scouring Eye is also commonly used to transport valuable items and personnel for the Inquisitors of the Eye. The Scouring Eye normally pulls twelve standard cars.



← BACK OF THE TRAIN

FRONT OF THE TRAIN →

PASSENGERS AND CARGO

You will find below a series of tables providing help with populating the cars of the Thunder Trains with random passengers and cargo.

Table 1: Random Passengers

D20	Passengers
1-2	Academics
3-4	Adventurers
5-6	Bodyguards
7-8	Craftsmen
9-10	Criminals in disguise
11-12	Entertainers
13-14	Law enforcement (traveling, of course)
15-16	Mercenaries
17-18	Merchants
19-20	Nobles-in-exile

Table 2: Random Cargo Type

D20	Cargo Type
1-5	Perishable Goods
6-10	Mercantile Goods
11-15	Raw Materials
16-20	Manufactured Goods

Table 3: Perishable Goods

D20	Goods
1-2	Beans
3-4	Corn
5-6	Dried fish
7-8	Fruit
9-10	Nuts
11-12	Pickled meat
13-14	Soybeans
15-16	Tubers
17-18	Vegetable mix
19-20	Wheat

Table 4: Mercantile Goods

D20	Goods
1-5	Bolts of cloth
6-10	Lantern oil
11-15	Gunpowder (kept in secure storage)
16-20	Spellcasting components

Table 5: Raw Materials

D20	Materials
1-5	Gemstones
6-10	Iron ingots
11-15	Lumber
16-19	Precious metals
20	Special materials (adamantine, manite, mithral, heartwood, etc.)

Table 6: Manufactured Goods

D20	Goods
1-2	Armor or weaponry
3-4	Boilers
5-6	Bullets & cartridges
7-8	Firearm components
9-10	Golemoid implants (low-grade)
11-12	High-quality craftsman's tools
13-14	Mechamagical components
15-16	Processed steel
17-18	Steam engine
19-20	Vehicle components

SENTINELS

The most powerful defensive force protecting the Thunder Trains are the Sentinels, deadly steam-fueled golems of extraordinary strength and power. The method of their creation is one of the most closely guarded secrets in Urbana, and they are not employed anywhere other than the Thunder Trains, just one of many signs of the importance placed upon them by Lord Urbane.

For more information on the Sentinels, see *Thunderscape Worlds 2: the Thunder Trail*.



XP 51,200 - CR 15

LN Large construct

Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +20

Defense

AC 32, touch 16, flat-footed 25 (+7 Dex, +16 natural, -1 size)

hp 150 (20d10+40)

Fort +6, Ref +13, Will +6

DR 15/adamantine; Immune construct traits, magic

Offense

Speed 30 ft., fly 100 ft. (poor)

Melee +1 thunderhammer +28/+23/+18/+13 (1d12+9 / 19-20/X3), +1 magmaxe +28/+23/+18 (1d12+10 / 19-20/X3, half of damage counts as fire damage)

Ranged 2 thunder rays +27 ranged touch (2d10 sonic)

Special Attacks powerful charge (thunderhammer +32, 3d12+8 / 19-20/X3)

Statistics

Str 28, Dex 25, Con -, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 9

Base Atk +20; CMB +30; CMD 47

Feats Double Slice, Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Critical (magmaxe), Improved Critical (thunderhammer), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Magma Eruption, Power Attack, Thunder Reckoning, Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Rend

Skills Fly +11, Perception +20, Stealth +13

Special Abilities

• **Immunity to Magic (Ex)** A Sentinel is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance, with the exception of spells and spell-like abilities that specifically affect constructs, which affect it normally. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

- **Thunder Ray (Su)** A Sentinel can fire a beam of pure sonic energy from its mouth at a maximum range of 100 feet twice per round as a single standard action. Enemies struck by these rays must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or fall prone and be staggered for one round. These rays may be directed at the same target or multiple targets.

- **Steamreaver Mastery (Su)** Sentinels possess proficiency with all steamreaver weapons and can dual wield 2-handed steamreaver weapons designed for Medium sized creatures as if they were light weapons. These weapons are considered +1 weapons and are always powered when wielded by a Sentinel. A Sentinel receives two free steam points per turn which it can utilize for weapon abilities or steamreaver feats. The default Sentinel described in this stat block wields a thunderhammer and a magmaxe, but these constructs are known to wield all varieties of steamreaver weapons. Feel free to vary their weapons and feats appropriately.

- **Camouflage (Ex)** While aboard the Thunder Train to which they are bound, a Sentinel may blend into the train's machinery as part of a Stealth check. This grants the Sentinel a +10 circumstance bonus to Stealth checks while aboard its train. Sentinels always use this ability prior to engaging restoration mode.

- **Restoration Mode (Su)** While aboard the Thunder Train to which they are bound, a Sentinel can bond itself to the train's machinery as a standard action, allowing it to draw upon the magic that empowers the Thunder Train to heal itself. While so engaged, the Sentinel gains fast healing 30 but is considered helpless. It can disengage from the train once more as a standard action.

- **Engine-Bound (Ex)** Every Sentinel is bound to a specific Thunder Train. They can innately sense the location of their Thunder Train and its distance from themselves at all times. While they can leave their train at will, they immediately become inert and dormant if they move more than a mile away. An inert Sentinel immediately awakens once more if it moves back into range of its train.

Ecology

Environment any Thunder Train

Organization solitary or small patrol (2-4)

Treasure magmaxe, thunderhammer



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