Encounters

Each day the party spends exploring outside of a town, draw a card from your action deck. If the card is a face card, an encounter occurs. Roll on the Encounter Table for that area to see exactly what the party has run into. If a Joker comes up, roll twice—the group has run into two things at once. Reshuffle the deck after every encounter.

Think about the encounter a bit before setting it up. A few minutes pause before you hit the heroes with some terrible beast or dire storm can make a "random encounter" a very memorable experience.

If your heroes are crossing the mountains and you roll "Bandits," for example, just tell them they see campfire smoke in the distance. It's up to them whether they want to approach or not. The same goes with monsters. A blood flea attack in a swamp shouldn't just be a quick roll. Describe the first few pests biting the heroes and causing giant welts. Let them take some action then adjust the encounter accordingly.

Fantasy Bestiary Toolkit Encounter Tables

Encounter Difficulties

This advice first appeared in 50 Fathoms. *However, it applies to all settings, so we've printed it again.*

You might be wondering about the difficulty of the encounters listed throughout this book. Are they intended for characters of Novice Rank? Seasoned?

The answer is none of the above. The encounters are created to reflect the natural organization of the characters or creatures listed. That means your group had best be warned that this isn't like certain other games that automatically set the challenge level to something they can deal with. Sometimes a dragon needs to be avoided, or clever tactics or hired swords are needed to defeat it.

We do this both because it's more natural, it's more of a challenge, and any system we created would have a difficult time fitting the nature of your characters. If the player characters hire 40 veteran mercenaries, it doesn't make sense that every group of bandits and orcs suddenly grows exponentially to defeat them. That means that just as in real life, exploring the world with a larger party is much safer. Of course it also means the heroes have to feed the extras and provide them a share of the Treasure (or pay) as well. They must also contend with the many mutineers and other troublemakers who are likely to infiltrate their army. There are bad apples in every bunch, as the old saying goes.

All that said, the GM should tweak encounters to fit the nature of his party. If they truly are walking around in a group so large nothing is a threat, feel free to up the difficulty of encounters that make sense—such as orc tribes or a hunting party of giants. You'll have a good handle on what your party can handle after a few sessions without the need for some sort of formula. And don't worry if the heroes lose a few extras along the way. Even famous heroes rarely make it to the finale of their adventure with all their loyal men.

Crypt Encounters

Crypts are specifically underground chambers or catacombs in which corpses were interred. This table is helpful for quickly populating a small crypt, but isn't suitable for randomly populating a necropolis—that should be a fully fleshed out Savage Tale.

d20	Encounter
1–2	1d3 Thieves, robbing the crypt
3–6	Trap
7	Draugr
8–9	1d4 Ghouls
10	Grave Guardian
11	Mummy Lord & 1d3 Guardian Mummies
12–13	1d3 Wights
14	Liche
15–16	2d6 Skeletons
17	1d3 Young Vampires
18	Ancient vampire
19	Corrupt Naga
20	2d6 Zombies

Desert Encounters

This encounter table is specifically for hot deserts.

d20	Encounter
1–2	Game
3–6	1d3+1 Giant Scorpions
7	Basilisk
8–9	Nomad camp inhabited by 1d20+10 nomads. Half are noncombatants. Combatants use Ranger stats.
10	Sand Troll
11–14	Oasis. Roll again to determine what creatures are using the pool
15	Merchant caravan. 4d6 Citizens and 2d6 Mercenary guards
16	2d6 Nomads on patrol (use Ranger stats but add Riding d6)
17	1d6+1 Scorpion Men
18	Hippogriff
19	Siren Bush
20	Djinni

Dwarf Mountains Encounters

Dwarf Mountains contain one or more dwarven settlements, usually tunneled into the mountain.

d20	Encounter
1–3	Game
4–5	1d6 Khazoks
6	1d2 Common Giants
7–8	2d6+2 Orcs on patrol
9	Griffin
10	Golden Ram
11–12	1d4 Gargoyles
13	2d4 Bandits
14–16	3d6 Dwarves on patrol
17	1d2 Trolls (common variety)
18	Hippogriff
19	1d3 Cyclops
20	Wyvern

Elf Forest Encounters

Elf forests are usually well-tended and low on large predators. Elves always have patrols set up around their settlements.

d20	Encounter
1–5	Game
4–5	Dryad
6	Naiad, in pool
7	Elf village. 1d20 x 10 inhabitants, half of which are non-combatants
8	Bear
9	Siren Bush
10	1d3 Giant Spiders
11	Boar
12	1d3 Rangers
13	Viper
14–16	2d6+2 Elves on patrol
17	1d4 Moss Men
18	1d6+1 Wolves
19	Methusaleh Tree
20	Tree Man

Forest Encounters

This encounter table is for temperate or cold forests. Although there may be some elf settlements, the elves do not claim the land as their own, hence dangerous prey is more common.

d20	Encounter
1–4	Game
5	1d6+1 Elves on patrol
6	1d3 Common Giants
7	Bear
8	1d2+2 Moss Men
9	Giant Centipede
10	Dryad
11	Methusaleh Tree
12	2d5 Giant Bees
13	1d3+1 Rangers
14	Siren Bush
15	1d6+1 Giant Spiders
16	3d4 Bandits
17	1d3 Arachnaurs
18–19	1d6+2 Wolves, Dire Wolves, or Frost Wolves
20	Tree Man

Hills Encounters

This table assumes the hills are only partially covered with patches of forest and are situated away from cultivated lands.

d20	Encounter
1–4	Game
5	Manticore
6	Hippogriff
7	1d2 Common Giants
8	1d4 Cyclops
9	2d3 Gargoyles
10	1d4+2 Centaurs
11	1d3 Trolls (common variety)
12	Hydra
13	1d4+2 Wolves, Dire Wolves, or Frost Wolves
14	1d4 Ogres
15	2d4 Bandits
16	1d6+1 Crocottas
17	1d2 Lions or Sabre-Toothed Tigers
18	Chimera
19	Griffin
20	Wyvern

Jungle Encounters

Jungle is found only in hot climates.

d20	Encounter
1–3	Game
4	Siren Bush
5	1d6+1 Jabber Birds
6	1d2 Ahuizotls
7	Hydra
8	2d3 Glide Monkeys
9	1d3 Giant Centipedes
10	Dryad
11	Methusaleh Tree
12	2d3 Moss Men
13	2d3 Cavemen Warriors and a Shaman
14	2d6 Giant Bees
15	1d6+1 Giant Spiders
16	1d3 Common Giants
17	2d4 Lizard Men
18	1d6+1 Elves on patrol
19	Naiad
20	Tree Man

Marsh Encounters

Marsh can be anything from wet fenlands to ancient, dank swamps heavy with the stench of decay.

d20	Encounter
1–2	Game
3–4	1d3 Marsh Trolls
5	2d3 Harpies
6	1d3 Giant Toads
7	Catoblepas
8	Hag
9	1d3 Giant Centipedes
10	Dryad
11	2d4 Stymphalian Birds
12–13	3d4+2 Lizard Men hunters
14	Will-o-the-Wisp
15	1d6+1 Giant Spiders
16	Snake (viper)
17	Piranha Swarm (as normal swarm)
18	Naiad (often an evil variety)
19	Snake (constrictor)
20	Tree Man

Mountain Encounters

Mountains are desolate places, home to terrifying creatures.

d20	Encounter
1–2	Game
3	1d2 Frost Giants
4–5	1d6 Khazoks
6	1d3 Common Giants
7–8	3d6+2 Orcs on patrol
9	Griffin
10	Golden Ram
11–12	2d4 Gargoyles
13	3d4 Bandits
14	2d6+5 Dwarves on patrol
15	2d6 Dire or Frost Wolves
16	3d4 Cavemen hunters
17	1d3 Trolls (common variety)
18	Hippogriff
19	1d3 Cyclops
20	Wyvern

Plains Encounters

Plains can cover icy steppes through to prairie and cultivated farmland. This table assumes the region is reasonably wild.

d20	Encounter
1–5	Game
6	Herd of Aurochs
7–8	Hippogriff
9	2d4 Horse Nomads (treat as Ranger but add Riding d10 and Steady Hands)
10	Merchants. 2d6 Citizens and 3d4 Mercenary guards.
11–12	2d4 Centaurs
13	1d4+1 Crocotta
14	Griffin
15	2d4 Wolves, Dire Wolves, or Frost Wolves
16	2d4+2 Orcs or Goblins
17	1d2 Trolls (common variety)
18	1d2 Lions or Sabre-tooothed Tigers
19	Manticore
20	1d3 Common Giants

Sea Encounters

Sea encounters cover everything from the center of the ocean to a few hundred yards off the coast. The table assumes the characters are on the surface.

d20	Encounter
1–6	Game
7	2d4 Mermaids
8	Sea Serpent
9	2d3 Sharks
10	Ghost Ship crewed by 3d4 Zombies and captained by a Wight.
11	Nereid
12–13	3d4 x 10 Pirates. Treat as bandits but add Boating d6.
14	Great White Shark
15–16	Merchantman. 3d6 Civilians with Boating d6 and 2d4 Mercenaries
17	Roc
18	1d3 Sea Trolls
19	Giant Octopus
20	Sea Giant

Settlement Encounters

Settlements can range from small hamlets to sprawling cities. This table is designed for towns and cities.

d20	Encounter
1–4	1d6+2 Watch on patrol.
5–6	Thief, at work picking pockets
7–8	Priest and 2d6 followers
9	Noble with entourage of 1d4 Courtiers and 2d6 Veteran City Watch guards
10	Gang of 2d4 Street Urchins (as Civilians)
11	1d3+2 Drunks (as Militia)
12–13	2d4 Street Vendors (as Civilians)
14	1d4 Prostitutes (as Civilians)
15	1d6+1 Visitors (any race)
16–17	1d3+1 Entertainers (treat as Civilians but add Acrobat)
18	Knight plus Squire (as Militia)
19	2d3 Rat Men (in disguise)
20	Veteran Mage and entourage of 1d3 Novice Mages

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