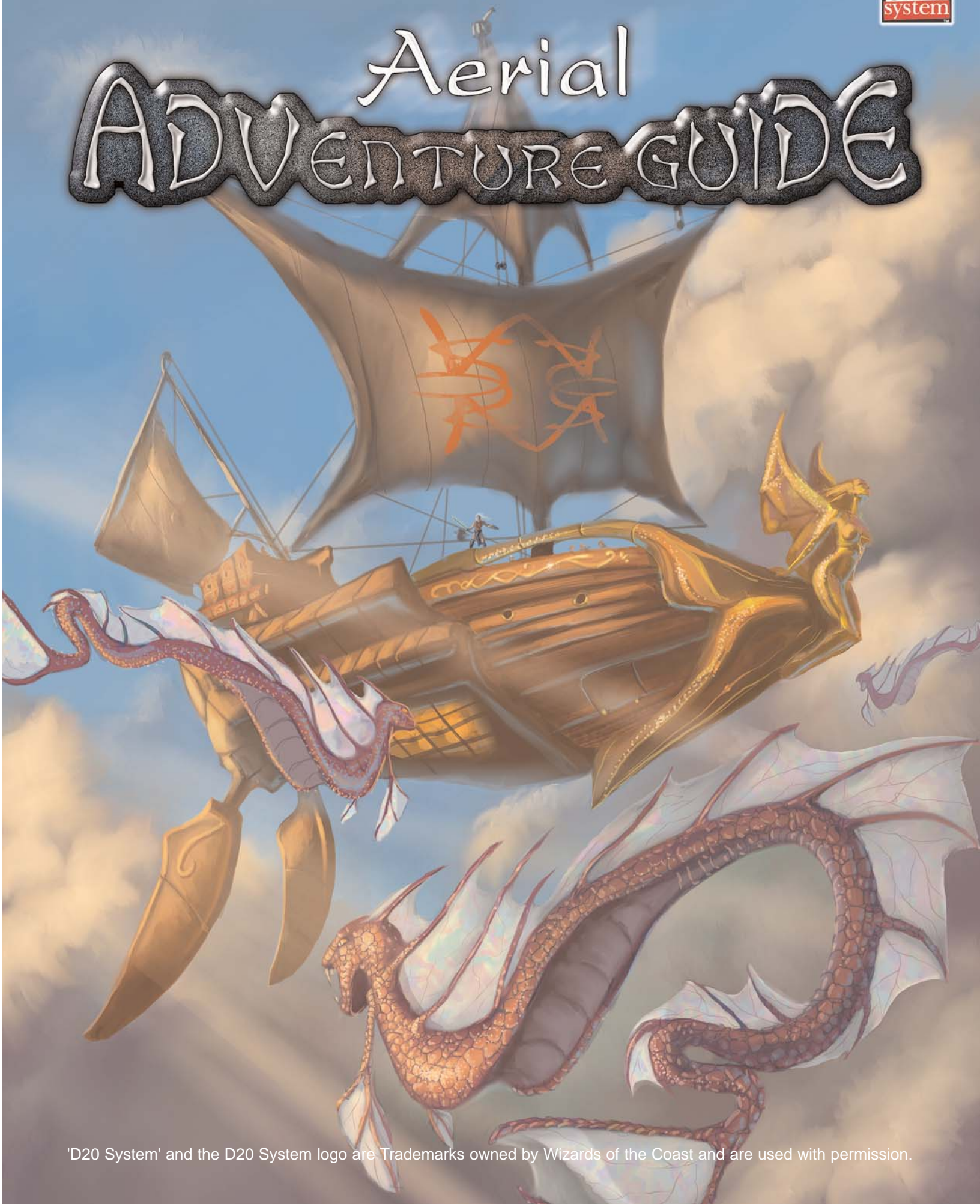




Aerial ADVENTURE GUIDE



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Aerial ADVENTURE GUIDE

Skyships, flying castles, cloud cities, and airborne monsters: all this and more awaits you in the Aerial Adventure Guides. Written by d20 fan favorite Mike Mearls, these stand-alone sourcebooks contain new character options, races, monsters, feats, items, and aerial combat rules that can be integrated into any fantasy campaign -- after all, no matter what world sits at ground level, anything can float above.

This special PDF preview file will give you a taste of what's to come. It covers two of the most interesting aspects of aerial adventuring: the cloud realms and the creatures that live there. You'll learn the basics of the cloud realms, and quite a bit about the terrible arachial that prowl there. All of the material in this preview is drawn from the first volume of the Aerial Adventure Guide. The next two volumes will have even more to offer.

You can find more information at the Goodman Games web site: www.goodman-games.com. Should you have any questions, feel free to e-mail us at goodmangames@mindspring.com.

And now... on with the preview!



www.goodman-games.com

Three Volumes of Aerial Adventure

The Aerial Adventure Guide series is being released in three volume. Each volume focuses on a different aspect of aerial adventuring: rules, settings, and monsters/items. Each of the three volumes can be used independently, or they can be combined and used together. If you want an extensive aerial campaign, buy all three... but if you only want a single adventure, pick the volume that's best for you.



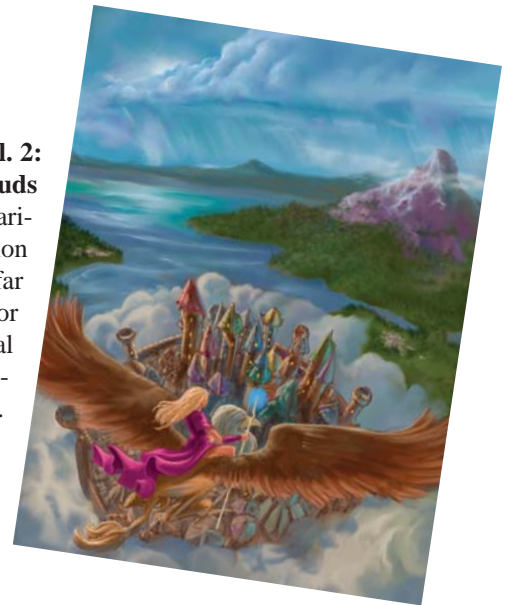
Aerial Adventure Guide, Vol. 1: Rulers of the Sky

Rulers of the Sky (September release) covers the basics of aerial adventures. These include an overview of the sky realms, three new races that dwell in the clouds, two new prestige classes, guidelines for how the core classes operate in the air, new feats specific to aerial adventures and the creatures that dwell there, expanded rules for aerial combat, rules for building and operating sky ships, and eight new monsters specific to the cloud realms.
GMG2000, \$11.00

Aerial Adventure Guide, Vol. 2: Sellaine, Jewel of the Clouds

Sellaine, Jewel of the Clouds (October release) describes a variety of drop-in settings for aerial adventures. The main attraction is the sky elves' floating city of Sellaine. Nestled in a cloud far above the surface world, Sellaine serves as the nerve center for a vast economy in the sky. Surrounding it are unusual aerial locations: floating mages' towers, undead clouds of necromantic energy, and other unique hazards.

GMG2001, \$11.00



Aerial Adventure Guide, Vol. 3: Monsters, Magic, and Sky Ships

Monsters, Magic, and Sky Ships (November release) covers the magic items, sky ships, and monsters of the skylanes. It includes stats for the basic sky ships of the known races, as well as rules for a variety of unusual variations: autogyros, zeppelins, undead hulks, halfling villageships, orc junkheaps, and more. There are 11 new monsters, all native to the air, and a host of new weapons, armor, and items (both magical and mundane) specifically designed for use while flying.
GMG2002, \$11.00



Introduction

Welcome to a world of fantasy and adventure that quite literally may have been hanging over your campaign's head for years. Flying ships and wondrous castles floating amongst the clouds have long been a staple of fantasy. The fairy tale Jack and the Beanstalk features a castle perched high in the sky, while classic fantasy epics such as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* include intelligent flying races like the great eagles. In a world where magic makes almost anything possible, perhaps an industrious race of powerful magicians could take to the sky and settle there permanently, free of the trials and tribulations of life on the surface. Of course, this being a game of fantastic adventure, life in the sky comes with its own set of challenges, villains, and fearsome monsters.

This book posits a simple idea: what if in your campaign world some of the clouds that drift overhead harbor small cities, villages, ruins, castles, and other settlements? What sort of creatures would live up there? What kind of cloud islands could you encounter? How do creatures travel? Do they interact with the surface world?

Chapter 1 provides some guidelines to answering those questions and maps out some basic ideas for what a cloud realm may look like.

Chapter 2 details three races that dwell amongst the clouds: the sky elves, the evil arachial, and the barbaric avians. Each is given a brief description of their culture along with complete game rules for playing characters of those races.

Chapter 3 introduces two new prestige classes that are at home in the sky and provides guidelines for how the core classes operate in the air.

Chapter 4 describes new feats useful to aerial adventures and the creatures who dwell in the realms above.

Chapter 5 includes expanded rules for aerial combat, allowing you to fight out battles in the sky with ease.

Chapter 6 gives rules for sky ships, vessels much like sailing ships that can soar through the sky and provide the primary means of transportation in the aerial realms for wingless creatures.

And of course, no adventuring environment would be complete without a few monsters to threaten the heroes. Chapter 7 summarizes the core monsters that are appropriate to an aerial realm and introduces several new threats tailored for use in the sky.

There will be two more books that expand on these concerns. The second volume of the *Aerial Adventure Guide*, *Sellaine: Jewel of the Clouds*, will describe airborne settings that you can easily integrate into any campaign. The third volume will introduce even more monsters and items of the air.

So, strap on your *wings of flying*, board the waiting Warhawk sky ship, and prepare to explore a new vista of adventure.

The Sky Realms

Far above the daily bustle of life, there floats a completely separate realm atop some of the seemingly innocent clouds that drift through the sky. At the highest points of the atmosphere, dimensional rifts shunt energy to and from the elemental plane of air. Occasionally, the diaphanous cloud materials of the elemental realm drift through a gate. While these masses appear to be normal clouds, they are in fact durable bodies of solid material. In the elemental plane, they serve as floating islands upon which civilizations grow and prosper. From the bottom, they look like puffy, white clouds. Anyone viewing them from above can see the thick layer of soil and the small, stunted forests that grow upon them. Within these verdant realms, wild animals, humanoids, and other creatures can grow and flourish. Fed by light rain from even higher clouds and the moist winds that sweep over them, cloud realms are viable homes for most creatures.

Solid clouds are rare in most worlds of the prime material plane. The typical barony may see one drift overhead every decade. However, in some worlds these formations are much more common, particularly those that are tightly bound to the elemental plane of air. In these realms, a full 10% of clouds are capable of sustaining life on their upper sides.

In worlds where cloud realms are common, flying races colonize them. Creatures such as wyverns nest amongst the clouds, as do griffons and sphinxes. Dragons who wish to be alone with their hordes find a suitable cloud realm, burrow a small cave or other shelter into its center, and rest there for years free of bother from crusading knights, greedy thieves, and other pests.

Cloud realms truly come into their own when intelligent humanoids tend to them. Sleek flying ships crafted by the sky elves soar through the air, glinting in the sun as they approach to land at a sky town's docks. Brave adventurers assemble valiant crews to sail across the sky in search of undiscovered cloud realms that may hold alien civilizations, forgotten treasure caches, and terrible monsters. Enterprising halflings use magic and perhaps a "liberated" sky ship to establish trade between the clouds and the surface. With a high level of magic, it is possible for the cloud realms to become as densely settled and as well traveled as the surface.

Adding Cloud Realms to Your Campaign

As a default, this book presents three races that dwell almost exclusively amongst the clouds: the sky elves, the arachial, and the avians. All three races have little contact with the surface, as travel between the ground and the sky is rather limited. All are civilized to varying degrees, and all claim ownership to various





cloud realms.

If you want to run a game where contact between earth and sky is not a common occurrence, then travel to the skies is incredibly rare. Few if any spellcasters possess the knowledge needed to construct a sky ship. Items such as *wings of flying* are too rare to make travel there possible for anyone aside from a few powerful individuals. The two realms are mostly ignorant of each other.

The default setting as presented here assumes that some travel takes place between the two regions but that travel is too difficult for lasting bonds to emerge. Sky ships are common amongst the clouds but almost unheard of on the surface. Sages and other learned people may know a bit about their opposite region, but many commoners on both sides consider the surface or the clouds to be mythical, mysterious realms. Of course, cloud dwellers are a bit less leery of the surface world as most have seen high mountains or caught a glimpse of the ground while traveling. Still, they consider it a place best avoided.

If you want a campaign where the sky realms are just another kingdom or region, then sky ships are common modes of transportation. Major cities may have docks set up in their harbors to serve ships that travel from above and drop anchor beside those that sail the ocean. In some places, air travel might eclipse ground movement or ocean voyages as the preferred method of transportation. Armies march to war with small flotillas of sky ships soaring overhead, ready to drop catapult and ballista fire upon their enemies.

Regardless of how you choose to introduce cloud realms into your campaign, it is best to remember that no change exists in a bubble. If a nation produces sky ships for trade, they also use them in war. If air travel is common, then trade takes place over long distances and

brings far-flung kingdoms and empires into contact. Before rushing to integrate cloud realms into your game, be sure to carefully consider the repercussions they may have. As a rule of thumb, it is best to stick with the first two options presented above unless you plan to run a sky campaign from the outset. Introducing these elements too quickly or on too large a scale into an existing world may cause you problems down the line.

Designing Cloud Realms

A cloud realm can take on many shapes and forms. They can range from miles wide to no more than a hundred feet across. They can be thin and littered with holes that can drop an unwary traveler to the surface, or thick and honeycombed with passages and tunnels.

The bottom portion of a cloud realm is composed of thick, fibrous white material. The upper half on most is covered in a layer of moist, loamy soil capable of supporting plant life, though some cloud realms feature radically different terrain. Most clouds have a temperate environment, though they tend to mirror the climate of the area beneath them. When a cloud wanders to the polar regions, it becomes much colder and snowy. Over deserts it grows dry, while over the ocean it becomes wetter and warmer.

Clouds generally follow a predictable path over the course of a year. The high winds push them through the sky, giving them a regular turn of seasons and sometimes causing cloud realms to temporarily combine into one large mass. When two allied communities combine, they celebrate with festivals and holidays until their clouds part. If two rivals collide, the clouds are torn by war and skirmishes until they finally drift away.

Cloud Communities

Generate cities, towns, and villages just as you would for a surface region. However, magic is much more common amongst the clouds. On average, a cloud settlement's maximum level spellcaster is two levels higher than those found on the surface. Sky communities also have large, complex harnesses to catch and hold sky ships that dock there. Many sky ships are not maneuverable enough to hover. Thus, they must have specially built landing cradles to hold them while they are in port.

Few communities bother with walls unless they are built on cloud realms where dangerous creatures wander their wilderness. Most towns feature a low stockade to impede attackers, but in the aerial realm attacks from above are far more common. Thus, defensive fortifications tend to be spread throughout a town or village. The outer wall features guards and artillery designed to thwart ground attacks, while taller towers form successive, concentric rings within the settlement. These towers are manned by archers and ballistae and serve to repel aerial assaults.

Most towns require approaching ships to move



directly towards the town docks. Ships sailing above a settlement risk attack or serious fines. In the wilds of the sky, it is best to shoot first and apologize later rather than risk a pirate or arachial attack.

Buildings are normally built from wood and other organic materials. While trees and other plants flourish on clouds, stone and metal are both relatively rare. Sky elf military bases and their ancient, original cities are small, roofed colonies forged from iron, steel, and bronze. These wondrous colonies are few in number but provide a critical line of defense for the elf kingdoms. Many incursions against the elves have worn themselves thin with successive, futile assaults against these almost impregnable fortresses.

Sky elf cities are built with defense first, aesthetics second. Sky elf commoners learn to wield weapons and every adult is expected to respond to an alarm, ready to fight. The town guard in sky elf towns is renowned for its no-nonsense attitude. A few wrong words can get a surface-worlder or stranger thrown in the stocks.

Trading cities spring up whenever the surface and sky worlds cross paths. These cosmopolitan centers are run either by sky elves or by trading companies founded by a surface merchant guild. These places tend to be much more lax in terms of security and patrols than sky elf towns.

Frontier settlements are small, crude communities founded by independent-minded explorers, settlers, prospectors, or exiles who would much rather avoid civilization. Rough-and-tumble in the extreme, these towns sometimes serve as havens for pirates and other criminals. Sky elf raids on suspected bandit strongholds are common and have led to tensions and minor wars between the elf nations and independent cloud realms.

Types of Cloud Realms

Most cloud realms are as described above: lush realms that can support crops, settlements, and creatures. However, the magical nature of these realms makes them apt to take on strange and unique forms. The following list categorizes and describes the commonly encountered cloud realms.

Typical Cloud: The typical cloud realm is covered with light forest broken up by rolling, grassy plains. In moist areas, a cloud may have a small lake at its center. Towards the cloud edges, mountains of cloud material rise up towards the sky, forming a bowl-like shape. As metal ores are virtually unknown in cloud realms, most settlements founded on these places rely on trade with mining colonies established atop the world's towering mountain peaks. From below, the typical realm looks like a white, fluffy cloud.

Fire Cloud: These boiling hot realms are a strange union of fire, earth, and air elemental energies. Sometimes, a dimensional vortex forms a gate between multiple elemental planes. Normally the interplay of opposing energies annihilates the gate, but in some rare cases the mixture of air, earth, and fire energy belches

forth what is commonly called a fire cloud. From below, fire clouds look like thunderclouds that flash and rumble with energy. From above, they are heat-blasted, hellish planes of smoking rock. Most travelers would avoid them, save for their one important feature. Fire clouds are rich in iron ore and other metals. The humanoid races of the skies battle ferociously for the chance to mine these places. Unfortunately, they are rife with fire creatures, including elementals and stray efreets, and are havens for demons, devils, and other planar threats. Still, metal is rare enough in the sky that the potential profits from extracting ore outweigh the risks.

Fire clouds are shaped much like normal ones. They are vaguely bowl-shaped form above, though craggy peaks rise from their central areas. The temperature on a fire cloud ranges from 90 to 110 degrees Fahrenheit. Water is unknown on them, forcing travelers to carry their own. Hell cloud settlements are heavily defended against both aerial and ground assaults. Pirates commonly lurk near these clouds, waiting for an opportunity to seize a shipload of ore.

Floating Island: A floating island is a large chunk of earth that floats through the sky like a cloud. From below, it looks like a large, dark mass that is far too opaque to be a cloud. Floating islands result from magical experiments gone haywire or an attempt to create a flying citadel, tower, or other structure. Floating islands lack the natural ecosystem of a cloud realm but tend to preserve the plant and animal life that lived on the chunk of rock when it was still earthbound. Most floating islands include a wizard's tower, castle, or other structure that was once some powerful archmage's abode. Others have structures built into them, with wondrous cities crafted from brass, iron, and wood suspended between cloud masses. These sky castles serve as trading centers and resting points along trade routes. Most structures built on clouds are inhabited, but many fall into disuse after the owner dies, moves on to a different lair, or grows bored of life in the sky. Dragons, pirates, and other marauding creatures favor these places as lairs due to their defensibility and the presence of pre-built structures of stone. Obviously rock is a rare commodity in the sky, making a stone castle atop a floating island the ultimate fortress. On the other hand such redoubts are not normally designed to repel aerial attacks, making some of them quite vulnerable to attacks from above.

Negative Energy Cloud: Similar to the process that forms fire clouds, a negative energy cloud comes into being when a dimensional vortex forms between the air, negative, and prime material planes. These clouds are inky black masses of frigid matter, with temperatures dipping below freezing. From below, they look like slow-moving clouds laden with rain. They utterly block out the sun. These clouds are infested with undead creatures and serve as a thorn in the side of all intelligent aerial races. Their upper surfaces are covered in thick, black ashes. Dead trees, crumbled ruins, and other blasted wreckage litters the area. Flying undead such as specters and wraiths plague the surface world below these cloud and the aerial region all around them. Necromancers,



cultists who worship dark gods, and pirates aligned with such fiends establish small settlements here. Rumors speak of crypts and mausoleums erected by the living dead in honor of their dread masters. If the stories are true, these tunnels contain great treasures and magic looted from the undead's victims.

All undead creatures gain +2 turn resistance while on a negative energy cloud. This bonus stacks with any resistance the creature normally gains or receives from other sources.

Sculpted Cloud: These clouds represent the pinnacle of sky elf magic. Powerful sky elf magicians take mundane cloud and infuse them with raw elemental energy, transforming them into solid material capable of holding outposts, military bases, and other critical strongholds. The fully enclosed elf enclaves that serve as their final line of defense are perched within these clouds, set within the junction of one or more other



clouds to give them clear lines of sight to areas both above and below.

Elves typically use sculpted clouds as military bases. Their favorite stratagem is to hollow out a cloud and station a military base within it. Elf rangers and scouts keep watch outside the cloud for pirates and other enemies. When they spot their prey, they launch a diversionary attack to drive the pirates to the apparent safety of the clouds. Unfortunately for the pirates, as they close near to what looks like cover, a small flotilla of elf ships emerges from it to seal their doom.

Wild Cloud: Wild clouds are essentially unsettled standard clouds. Forests run rampant over them, as do wild animals, griffons, and other fierce creatures. Some of these clouds hold ancient ruins from older civilizations and lost outposts from an earlier era, making them an attractive destination for adventurers.

Cloud realms aren't the only phenomenon an aerial mariner can encounter in his travels. The following hazards pose a threat to anyone who travels the airways.

Elemental Pocket: These seemingly tranquil areas are actually rife with powerful winds and dangerous vortices. A skilled captain can navigate these pockets with ease, but the greatest danger they pose is to inexperienced travelers who fail to note their signs. Most pockets are 5 miles wide. From the outside, an observer must make a Wilderness Lore check (DC 20) to notice the very vague hints that a pocket lies ahead. An experienced flier can sense the slight shift in the winds and the strange, erratic movement of clouds through this area. Each ten minutes a sky ship sails through these areas, its captain or helmsman must make a Profession (sailor) check (DC 20) or the ship suffers 1d6 points of damage. Sky ships travel at half-speed through an elemental pocket.

Floating Graveyard: Floating graveyards are the bane of aerial shipping. Within these zones of dead magic, sky ships slowly grind to a halt. Most graveyards are visible from a distance, as they are littered with the wrecked hulks of disabled ships. Worst of all, the graveyard's effect slowly drains a ship's power, leaving it stranded roughly half way through its area. Graveyards are normally four miles wide. They are haunted by the ghosts of sailors who starved to death within them and are rife with undead and planar creatures. These areas are attractive to adventurers despite their risks because many of the ships caught within them are left untouched, their treasures and cargoes waiting to be claimed.

Flying creatures move through graveyards normally. Only sky ships and other magical means of flight, such as spells and magic items, are cancelled by them.

Adventures

When designing adventures in the sky, remember to emphasize the three dimensional nature of the realm. Enemies commonly attack from above and below. When the PCs find a new cloud realm, they undoubtedly will fly over it and see what interesting features and terrain they can find. Count on this happening and design adventures that assume the PCs can scout ahead at will.

When designing aerial encounters, use mundane clouds to shelter monsters and allow pirates to strike with surprise. While a fight in the skies lacks a lot of the terrain that can make a ground battle exciting, you can compensate for that shortcoming by using clouds, floating debris, and other interesting features.

Falling is a constant danger in an aerial adventure. The PCs undoubtedly stock up on spells such as *levitate* and *feather fall*. If a PC does fall from a ship or cloud, allow him to make use of scrolls, potions, or magic items that can save his life. Do not arbitrarily rule that a PC cannot manage to grab such an item from a pouch or pack. After all, it is a long way to the surface. In battle the bull rush attack becomes a much more attractive option, especially aboard sky ships.



are almost always evil, with most of them tending towards lawful evil. Arachial colonies are arranged into strictly ordered hierarchies, with the nobility holding tight control over those beneath them in the pecking order. Arachial society depends on rigidly defined sets of laws, codes of conduct, and rules of etiquette to prevent the self-centered, murderous spider creatures from turning on each other in struggles for dominance. Within the tight confines of a floating colony, the arachial learned the hard way that order and structure are necessary to rein in their evil impulses.

Arachial Space: The spider creatures go where they please and do as they will. Only the efforts of heroic adventurers and brave flotillas of human and sky elf warships prevent them from overrunning the skies. Arachial colonies are great masses of webbing that float through the sky. Within the colony, labyrinthine passages hold workshops, slave pens, feeding chambers, and living quarters. Few dare sail the skies in areas where the arachial have conquered their rivals and driven forth all opposition. Given the arachial's lust for conquest and food requirements, they rarely linger in one place for long before seeking new regions to raid and despoil.

Religion: Arachial worship Azlach Natha, queen of the webs and binder of sorrows. The arachial clerics teach that Azlach Natha wove the stuff of the universe into all of creation. The other gods, jealous of her labors, cast her into an infinite pit of darkness and seized her rightful creation. In retaliation, she gave birth to her children the arachial and set them adrift in the cosmos on tiny kites crafted from her webbing. Now, they spread through the multiverse and seek to conquer and despoil in her name. Azlach Natha's domains are Air, Evil, Law, and Trickery. Her favored weapon is the short sword. Her holy symbol is a stylized web set into a silver circle.

Language: Arachial speak an utterly alien tongue taught to them by Azlach Natha. A newly born arachial begins life fully capable of speech. The creatures' tongue is a combination of hand gestures, clicks, and spoken words. Despite great effort and long centuries of study, no scholar has decoded the arachial language.

Arachial script is formed using webbing cast in unique patterns of texture, color, and density. The arachial read their script by slowly running their hands along long threads of web. In addition, most scholarly arachial learn Common, Elvish, and other languages of their enemies and allies to facilitate communication and make use of captured magical items and tomes.

Names: As the arachial tongue is incomprehensible to other races, the spider creatures adopt nicknames in Common that reflect their goals, appearance, or temperament. Goldbelly, Quickvenom, and Skyweaver are all names used by arachial in dealing with other races.

Adventurers: Since arachial define an adventure as swooping down on a settlement to carry off the inhabitants as foodstuff, adventurers struggle against these creatures rather than work with them. Amongst the arachial, rogue, sorcerer, and cleric are the most common classes. Barbarians and druids are almost completely unknown.

Arachial Racial Traits

- +2 Dexterity, +2 Intelligence, -2 Constitution, -2 Wisdom: Arachial are nimble on their eight feet and have adapted to life in the air where one misstep can lead to disaster. They are also relentless planners, thinkers, and strategists who dispense with emotion and intuition in favor of cold, calculating logic. Their limbs are rather slender and the flesh beneath their tough outer hide fragile, making them susceptible to physical injuries. Their alien nature makes it difficult for them to comprehend others' emotions and thoughts, while their vanity and confidence lead them to overlook potentially dangerous details.
- Medium-size: As Medium-size creatures, arachial have no special advantages or penalties due to their size.
- Multi-limbed: With their six legs and two arms, arachial can stand stable against grapplers and those attempting to bull rush them. They are considered to have four or more legs for purposes of bull rushes and other effects. In addition, arachial count as one size larger for grapple checks and trip attacks.
- Arachial base speed is 30 feet.
- Low-Light Vision: Arachial can see twice as far as humans in starlight, moonlight, lamplight, and similar conditions of reduced visibility. They can discern color and other details under these conditions as if they enjoyed normal illumination.
- Wall Crawling: All arachial may crawl along walls, ceilings, and other surfaces as a spider. In addition, all arachial count Climb as a class skill.
- Tough Hide: Arachial have a tough, leathery hide that grants them a +2 natural bonus to AC.
- Great Bulk: All arachial gain an additional d8 hit die and twice their normal Constitution modifier to hit points at 1st level.
- Webs: All arachial can produce light, sticky webbing. Three times per day, an arachial may cast a web at an opponent in order to entangle and trap him. This web attack has a maximum range of 50 feet and a range increment of 10 feet. It is effective against targets the same size or smaller than the arachial. Treat this attack as one made with a net. The web anchors in place, allowing no movement. To escape from an arachial's web, a victim must make an Escape Artist check (DC 20) or break the web with a Strength check (DC 26).
- Creature Type: Arachial count as aberrations. Spells such as *charm person* or *hold person* have no effect on them.
- Automatic Languages: Arachial, Common. Bonus Languages: Any.
- Favored Class: Rogue. Arachial are treacherous creatures with a penchant for ambushes and back stabbing. In their tightly regimented colonies, murder and theft are acknowledged as the two best ways to get ahead in life. Arachial society has powerful laws against such crimes so that only the cleverest and most devious arachial can advance to the top.
- Character Level: Since the average arachial is slightly more powerful than the typical elf, dwarf, human, or halfling, add one to an arachial's character class levels to determine its effective level relative to other characters and monsters.

