

THE TRAVELLERS' CAVES

I am a big fan of Dyson Logos' awesome maps. If you're not familiar with Dyson yet, he's an old-school cartographer who has done official Fifth Edition maps. He's also got a site where he churns out, like, 2-3 awesome maps per week. This is an adventure for 3-5 1st level characters available to use for 5th edition campaigns.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Travellers Caves are a small complex of winding multi-tiered caves and chambers which bear the evidence of several previous tenants over the years – from animal scat and hair to old broken boxes and cold, quiet campsites.

One narrow passage leads down from the complex into deeper caverns...

ADVENTURE HOOKS

If you're not sure where to fit in Dyson's Travellers Map into your adventure, here's a few ideas to get your players' characters moving in the right direction.

- A gang of ghouls has been tormenting a local village. The villagers are offering a reward of 100 gp if the adventurers can help get rid of them. They believe that the ghouls are haunting an old cave known as the Travellers Cave. They can show the characters the way but are too afraid to go in themselves.
- Three months ago, an author and world traveler named Delmar Buckles vanished walking along a road from one major city to another. His publisher believes Delmar ran off with his advance and wants to know what happened to him. The characters start their adventure investigating at a local village where they learn that Delmar stopped there two months ago. Some suspect he may have stopped over at the Travellers Caves when the weather turned bad. Turns out Delmar actually did stop at the Travellers caves. However, he slipped over the edge (in area 2), and busted his head.
- While traveling along a busy road, severe weather breaks out. The only refuge from the downpour is a nearby cave a few hundred feet from the edge of the road. The characters can hide out in the caves overnight. However, that night, they hear strange sounds coming from deeper inside the caverns.

GENERAL FEATURES

Unless otherwise stated, here are the general features for Dyson's Travellers Caves:

Ceilings. Tunnels are 10 feet high and caverns are 30 feet high.

Walls. The walls are hewn stone.

Floors. All floors are smooth, natural stone.

Light. None unless otherwise indicated. The boxed text assumes that the characters have light sources or darkvision.

Stalagmites. Found in many of the natural caverns, these spires of rock rise up from the floor and can be used for cover.

KEYED ENCOUNTERS

All the encounters listed here are keyed to the map of the Travellers Cave (image on next page).

1 - CAVES ENTRANCE

The stairs at the northeast corner of the map descend from a small cave entrance in a hillside roughly 300 feet from a well-traveled road. Read this text block the first time the characters enter the caves:

Descending into the caves, the first thing you notice is the dull smell of garbage. There are broken boxes, glass, and bits of animal scat in this narrow nook.

Unfortunately, there's nothing of any value here. This nook is where many travelers have stayed to get out of the weather, rarely venturing any further into the caverns.

2 - SLIPPERY SLOPE

Mud cakes the floor of this cave, runoff patterns sliding southward past a large stone column.

Walking within 5 feet of the edge of the cliff can be somewhat treacherous. A character that gets too close must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity save or lose their footing and slide down into the pit 10 feet below taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage from the fall.

In addition, the bottom of the cliff is heavily infested with centipedes that live in the cool mud. There are three swarms of centipedes here that attack anything that disturbs their territory.

If characters search the mud with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, they can find the remains of the last unfortunate soul that slipped and fell off the cliff. The skeleton has a small pouch containing 18 copper pieces, plus a small gold bracelet worth 25 gp. The bracelet has the inscription "To Delmar, Thanks for All Your Words" carved into it.

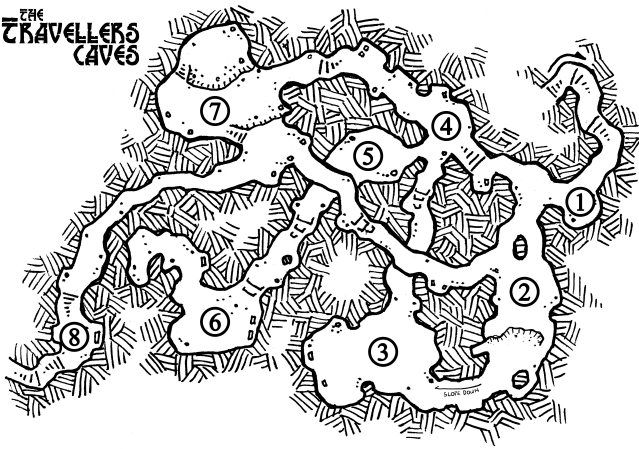
3 - MEPHIT POOL

The mud from area 2 piles heavily in this room. So much mud, in fact, it's attracted the attention of a gaggle of mephits.

The floors of this room aren't easy to traverse and count as difficult terrain.

The mud in this room is nearly knee deep, sucking hard at your boots as you march.

There are two **dust mephits** hiding in the mud. If the characters weren't quiet entering the room, the mephits remain motionless and try to surprise the PCs. Careful characters might hear the mephits complaining from an adjoining room with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check.



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4 - A WARNING

The ghouls from area 6 left warnings to those who dare trespass into their territory. Four skulls hang from the ceiling at the base of the steps leading from area 1.

With bits of flesh still clinging to the bone, four humanoid skulls hang from the stalactites above. It doesn't take a lot of wisdom to know that these skulls are warnings: "Don't go any further."

Not only are the skulls warnings, but they're traps, too. If anyone pulls on the rope holding the skulls in place, the stalactites break off. Avoiding the falling stalactites requires a DC 11 Dexterity save. Otherwise, anyone standing under the trap when they fall takes 1d6 piercing damage. A character can notice the trap with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

5 - RUMP AND YURK

The ghouls keep this cavern guarded with a death dog named Rump and Yurk (it's one **death dog** with two names). If the characters triggered the trap in area 4, then Rump and Yurk will stay hidden behind a cluster of stalagmites.

Bones litter the ground here, cracking under your feet. The stench of death hangs heavy. Once the room opens up a little, you immediately notice two pairs of glowing eyes in the darkness.

Rump and Yurk fight to the death.

6 - GHOUL CHAMBER

The smell is unbearable. And it's clear to see why: carcasses fill the room. And in the center of it all, gobbling the flesh from the bones of what could be an animal (or humanoid) are two hairless, vacant eyed gray-skinned humanoids. Once they see

you, they hiss, exposing their freakishly long tongues, then charge at you.

There are two **ghouls** here. They will fight to the death, driven by the compulsion to eat the flesh of the characters.

Among the carcasses are the discarded goods of those the ghouls have eaten. The characters can find a total of 2,400 cp, 1,200 sp, and 110 gp. Plus, they can find a silver ewer worth 25 gp, a cloth-of-gold vestments worth 25 gp, and a brass mug with jade inlay worth 250 gp.

7 - PROSPECTING PIT

Long ago, a pair of Dwarven prospectors thought they'd stumbled on the motherlode in this cave. Turns out, however, that what they thought was gold was just yellowish quartz, hardly worth the effort to dig.

A large pit clings to the north side of the room. Old abandoned ladders and scaffolding are all that remain of what was probably once a mining operation.

Just as the dwarves discovered years ago, the characters will discover that there's hardly anything of value of here.

8 - OCHRE JELLY

Between flights of stairs, the passage opens up into a small cave. There, feasting on mushrooms, you discover what looks like a creature the color of yellow mud.

An **ochre jelly** has crawled up from the lower caverns, attracted by the ghouls' feasting cave. It stopped midway to feed on mushrooms just at the top of the steps. Once it notices the characters, it will attack, hoping for a bigger meal.

ADVENTURE CONCLUSION

From here, the characters can keep travelling down to the lower lairs, or they can head back on their way with all the loot they've discovered. Either way, they're bound to be changed by this adventure through the muddy Traveller's Caves.