



# THE ROUGH GUIDE TO **XBOX**



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## THE GUIDE

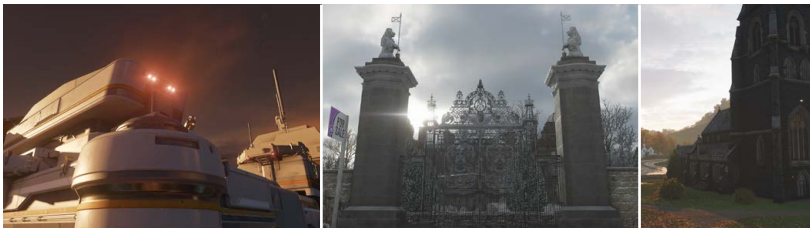
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## Introduction

You feel it as you leave the plane. You feel it when you wake the next morning and throw open the bedroom window. You feel it the moment you step out into the hubbub of an unfamiliar city's dusk for the first time. When you go somewhere new, its newness seeps into you in an all-consuming way. It's not about the individual sights or anything you can very easily pinpoint. It's more than that, more than the sum of its parts – it's why we travel. It's why Rough Guides exists.

For a long time, video games could not come close to giving us this feeling. They just weren't that immersive. Sure, you were having fun playing, but the distinction between you and the character you were controlling was clear-cut.

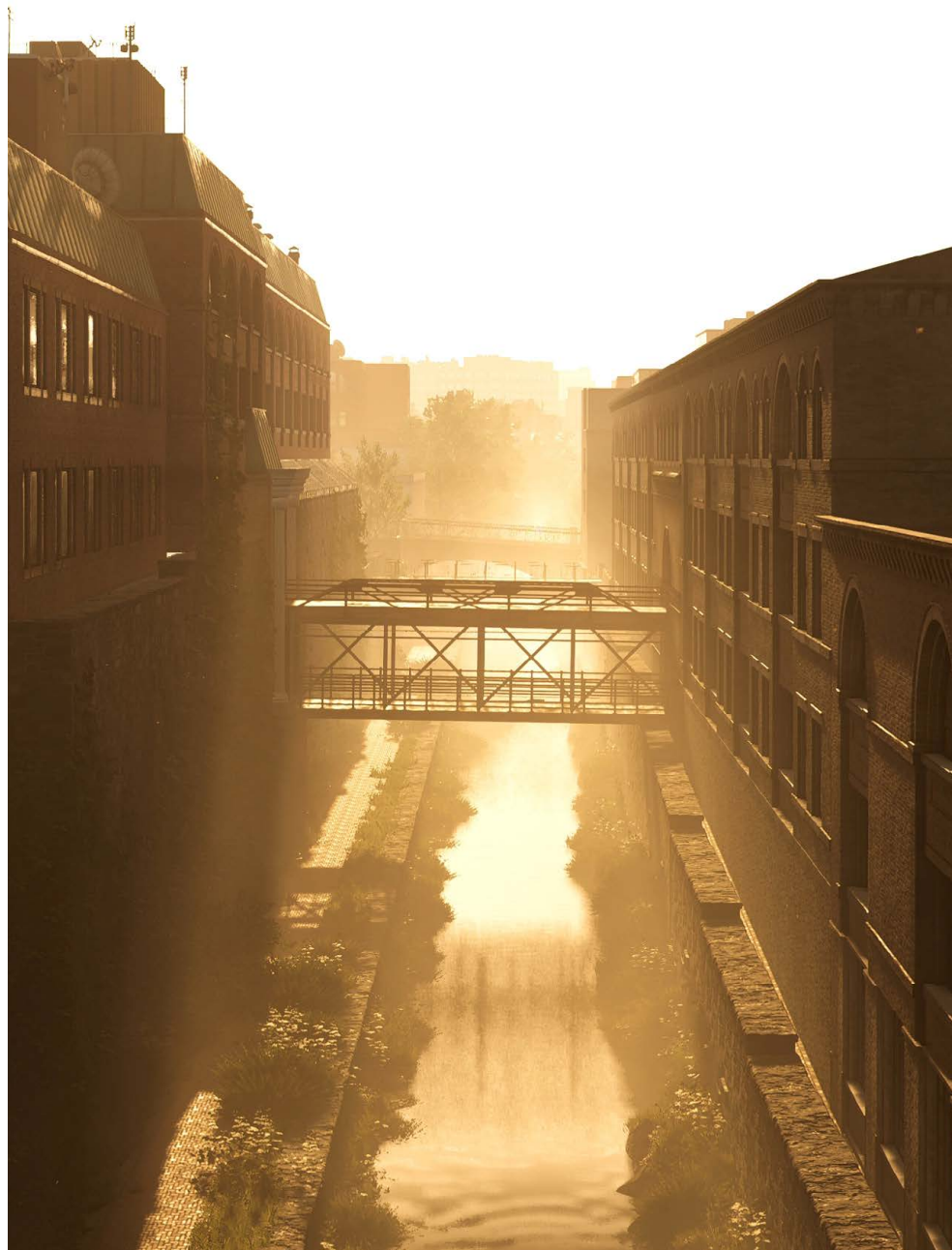
That distinction has now been eroded. Game graphics are so immersive and all-consuming, you don't just experience the gameplay – you experience the very world in which the gameplay unfolds. That thrilling feeling of being somewhere new is no longer the exclusive domain of real-world travel.

Can this really be so? If the proliferation of in-game photography is anything to go by, then it most certainly is. More and more virtual travellers are snapping away as they play, recording their experiences, sharing them on dedicated Instagram accounts and putting a new spin on the age-old debate of whether photography is art: this time, the debate rages around whether in-game photography is truly photography.

That's not a question for Rough Guides to answer. After all, we're most interested in travel. For us, the explosion of in-game photography suggests that we're entering the age of the gaming tourist. That's why we've produced our first guide to the phenomenon, bringing our signature "tell it like it is" approach to the worlds – the inspiring, intense, moving, unforgettable worlds – of eight Xbox One X Enhanced games, with their 4K resolution, astonishing detail and play of light and colour so vivid as to be visceral.

So from the desert islands of Sea of Thieves, lost cities of Tomb Raider, classical splendour of Assassin's Creed Odyssey and eerie wastes of Metro Exodus to the mind-boggling dimensions of Halo 5 and Anthem, get ready to travel in a whole new way. You might even visit some familiar spots when jumping into the worlds of Forza Horizon 4 and The Division 2.

As ever, just don't forget your Rough Guide.









# Forza Horizon 4

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SCOTT MONUMENT

## Introduction

With everything from rolling hills, valleys and craggy mountain passes to sodden heath, windswept moor and sparkling lakes, Great Britain sure packs a lot in. At Rough Guides, we usually advise against trying to see everything a location has to offer in one trip. Not this time.

But if you *are* going to see it all, you have to go about it the right way – and that means a good old-fashioned road trip. After all, Great Britain has a rich heritage in this respect – from England's Snake Pass to Scotland's North Coast 500 and Wales' Black Mountain Pass. Here's a new one for that venerable list.

### MIND-BENDING REALITY

No, it's not you. You might be a great driver, but you're not that great: the meadows of England's Midlands really are just a short Bugatti blast from eastern Scotland. And, no, you're not driving so fast that time is warping: the seasons change a little more quickly here, that's all. Seasons come in their god-given order (if it ain't broke, don't fix it); they just roll around on a more regular basis than you might be familiar with, with each one playing out over the course of a week. The change itself always occurs on a Thursday, at different times depending on the time zone you're in. In the UK, it's at 3.30pm. You'll know the season's about to change thanks to the countdown clock, and the big event itself is accompanied by a distinctly cinematic flourish (just you wait...). So keep your wits about you: blue-skied autumnal sunshine can quickly become icy fog and snow!

And road trips don't come better than this. Forza's gorgeous open-world landscape knows no bounds, and you can explore every last inch of it in some of the finest vehicles ever designed. Summer's day in the Cotswolds? It has to be an Aston Martin. Deepest winter in the Lake District? Hop in your Land Rover and take a spin (literally) on Derwent Water. Inviting springtime meadow abuzz with life? Put your foot down, rip up that hill and soar through the air in your supercar.

There's no need to keep your cruising to the countryside, either: bringing high speed to the high street is the name of the game. Do this thing properly and you'll soon be careering around the jinking, centuries-old streets of Edinburgh. But driving fast is no excuse for not soaking up the sights. Even as you smash out a handbrake turn to slide around that tractor, keep your eyes peeled for some of Great Britain's most iconic landmarks. You may not have time to visit the gift shop or read the account in your Rough Guide of, say, Bamburgh Castle. But at least you can say you were there (for a second or two)!

So whack the radio on, kick back and get exploring with absolute, blissful freedom.

### When to go

Pack appropriately: it's fair to say the climate is a little more dynamic than you might be used to (see box, above). And it doesn't just happen up in the sky above you – you'll find your experience as motor tourist really changes with the shifts in the weather. Even the temperature will affect the way your car handles.

Of course, the seasons are almost preternaturally beautiful – it's hard to believe they're real, actually. From the dazzling, balmy sunshine of high summer to the orchestra of reds and browns come autumn, you'll feel so at one with nature, it can be hard to keep your eyes on the road.

When you last passed that lake, it might have been alive with summertime activity; now that it's frozen over, you can go for a spin. And if you don't spin for real, you might just access hitherto unexplored corners.

Fret not that other drivers are enjoying more favourable conditions. We can guarantee that they're the same for everyone.

And remember those golden autumnal days of yore, when you'd kick up piles of

### THE LAW OF THE LAND

The number one law here is that there is no law. You can ride where you want. And we mean where you want. But that doesn't mean being selfish (at least not all the time). If you find a cool path, don't keep it to yourself – tell your fellow drivers about it ([see box, p.28](#)). Spread the love! And not only can you run roughshod over farmers' fields, you can even rub bumpers with their baa baas – for some reason, they breed a very particular kind of sheep in these parts. Chase 'em all you like: the Law won't chase you back.





leaves on your way home from school? Well you can do that here, too, just in a Subaru rather than a pair of sensible shoes.

All in all, though, there's no better or worse time to visit this Great Britain – you're going to love every second.

## Things not to miss

### 1 AMBLESIDE

This quaint little Lake District village is best appreciated by driving up into the surrounding fells and gazing upon it from on high – particularly in winter, when snow covers the rooftops down below. [See p.28.](#)

### 2 BAMBURGH CASTLE

Perhaps the most beautifully situated landmark around, historic Bamburgh Castle's beachside location means you can go speeding across the sands after soaking up the medieval atmosphere of the site. [See p.28.](#)

### 3 BROADWAY MILL

Strange as it sounds, sheep-bothering is one of Forza's greatest pleasures, and the environs of Broadway Mill offers arguably the finest place to do it. Don't worry about hurting the animals – just enjoy the thrill of the chase. [See p.32.](#)

### 4 DERWENT WATER

Beautiful year-round, Derwent Water really comes into its own during the winter – specifically when it's frozen solid, and you can donut your way merrily across its entire three-mile length as deer sprint gaily by. Keep your eyes peeled, too, for the hidden island. [See p.32.](#)

### 5 DERWENT RESERVOIR

Do you dare take the plunge? The leap from the neo-Gothic dam that stretches across the reservoir is quite simply the most epic you'll ever experience. [See p.32.](#)

### 6 WHITEWATER FALLS

The falls themselves may not be terribly spectacular but that's not to say you can't be: discover the danger sign and jump right over the waterfall for an epic stunt. Launch yourself high enough and you might get more than you bargained for... [See p.34.](#)

### 7 EDINBURGH CASTLE

Stop press: the most besieged place in all of Great Britain – and one of the most attacked in the world – is for sale! It doesn't come cheap, but you will get arguably the most elegant racing car ever built thrown into the bargain: the Alfa Romeo P3, a 1934 Grand Prix beauty designed by none other than Vittorio Jano. [See p.34.](#)

### 8 GLENFINNAN VIADUCT

This thing is simply immense – as you get closer, you just feel smaller and smaller and smaller. The mountainous area around the viaduct offers some down-and-dirty off-roading, daredevil cliff-jumping and the chance to pit yourself against none other than the legendary Flying Scotsman train! [See p.35.](#)

### 9 SCOTT MONUMENT

Incredibly enough – road safety be damned – the area around the Scott Monument is super popular for twisting-and-turning street and drag races. In fact, you'll find some of the most challenging driving imaginable right here. But keep it quiet – it's a bit of a secret. [See p.35.](#)

### 10 UFFINGTON WHITE HORSE

Whisper it, but sign up for the Windmill Cross Country race and you can do donuts on this prehistoric monument – morally questionable but very, very fun. If you're feeling a little more chill, head up the hill opposite the White Horse for classic views of the English landscape. [See p.35.](#)

## GETTING IN TOUCH WITH NATURE

And no, this doesn't mean chasing the sheep ([see box, p.11](#)). The surroundings are so beautiful, you'll really want to savour your time here. In fact, when you pull up at one of the many **beauty spots** – from Whitewater Falls to Bamburgh Castle (look out for the purple icons on the map) – you're bound to be bowled over by the breathtaking views unfolding before you. Even your ears are in for a treat. Everything from the subtle twitch of a bird to the baa of a sheep, all the way through to that sweet guttural roar of a finely tuned engine (and the occasional clatter of tumbling walls) awaits you. You'll never have felt so alive!

# 1 Showcase events

These are five **special races** where you can take part in different vehicles, on different types of terrain. You can only enter these showcase events once you have the required level of popularity ranking – if you win, you'll be rewarded with credit as well as the car that's driven in the race.

## THE BEHEMOTH SHOWCASE (AUTUMN)

In this showcase event, you're behind the wheel of a 1993 Toyota No.1 Baha Truck, racing against a large hovercraft. Taking place in the northwest, this is a pretty epic race through the off-road mountainous region of Glen Rannoch, including huge jumps, lots of

greenery and a track that runs through shallow water.

## THE FLYING SCOTSMAN (WINTER)

Ariel Nomad meets Flying Scotsman. Buggy versus legendary stream train. You'll race through snow by the Glenfinnan Viaduct en route to a final showdown in the heart of Edinburgh, your locomotive opponent whistling beside you. At one point you can expect to race inches from the train as you both pass through a tunnel within the mountain, while at another moment, you'll jump over the train in slow-mo with it passing beneath.

## THE HORIZON MOTOCROSS (SPRING)

The car – a 2017 Ford Fiesta #14 Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing GRC – is a mouthful. Your opponents – three motocross bikes, with trailing exhaust fumes of different colours – are a handful. This relatively short but tortuously tough race streaks along dirt tracks through a mountainous area east of Derwent Water, the motocross bikes weaving across you (and over you on some jumps).

## THE HALO EXPERIENCE (SUMMER)

Nothing says 'Great British summer' quite like rocketing a civilian transport M125 Warthog CST along the beach, does it? Expect a full-on Halo experience here: Cortana takes on commentary duties for the

race, while Banshees (support aircraft from the Halo universe) scream across the skies above you. Oh and for one race only, you're the Master Chief – the protagonist from the Halo franchise (and a videogame icon).

## THE DELTA WING SHOWCASE (AUTUMN)

If you're trying to outrun an RAF aircraft on the ground, it has to be an Aston Martin. The Aston Martin Vulcan, to be precise, pushed to its (very far) limits along a tarmac track. Overhead, the competition – a Delta Wing plane, the Avro Vulcan – roars and swoops, so that your steering wheel shakes and your ears are bombarded with noise. This race, which starts and ends at the Horizon festival in the southwest part of the map, is arguably the most cinematic you'll experience.

# Basics

## Getting around

Public transport in this Great Britain is appalling (even worse than you might have encountered in other versions of Great Britain, and that's saying something). Being a pedestrian, meanwhile, is frankly perilous. So having your own wheels is an absolute must. Forza Horizon 4 offers four hundred and fifty vehicles to choose from, the range including everything from trucks and buggies to sports cars. For how to get hold of your dream motor, [see Shopping \(p.26\)](#).

## Accommodation

In Forza Horizon 4, sleeping's cheating. But that's not to say you should ignore the accommodation on offer, for the twelve properties you'll encounter – from the bijou to the palatial – mean far more than simply a place to rest your sleepy head.

First of all, they offer you that all-important garage space (this isn't about you, after all: it's about the cars!). Without that, you won't be able to undertake those crucial customizations that could give you the edge – even if purely sartorially – once you're back out on the open road.

There are some eye-wateringly expensive properties on Forza Horizon 4's market – not least Edinburgh Castle! Just as the law can safely be ignored in terms of speed limits and sheep-bothering ([see box, p.11](#)), so too can the Scottish Government's claims to ownership of its nation's foremost edifice.

But it's not all about the ostentation. The Gables, which comes to you free of charge, is a charming stone-built, mullion-windowed countryside des res, while the likes of Thatch Corner (the fourth house in Forza Horizon 4) is hardly showy, yet is exquisitely sited on the edge of the beach east of Astmoor.

Some of the properties have a surprise or two in store. It's best to discover these for yourself but two unmissable highlights include the Huntsman's Lodge (the ninth house in Forza Horizon 4; see box, opposite), situated in Lakehurst Forest, which offers a perk called Skill Song, which lets radio hosts play skill songs; and Fairlawn Manor (the

second house; see box, below), northeast of Great Ridge and north of Moorhead Wind Farm, where you'll be treated to a perk called Fast Travel Anywhere, which grants the ability to instantly travel to any road on the map.

## Food and drink

Bring snacks with you: getting out of the car is a no-no in Forza Horizon 4. That said, you can certainly get a feel for the flavours on offer as you pass through Great Britain's regions. In Edinburgh, for instance, you'll spot shops selling everything from fish 'n'

### A HOUSE FOR EVERY BUDGET

Whether you're a prince or a pauper or something in between, there's a property out there with your name on it.

#### LAKE LODGE (5,000,000 CR)

Overlooking Derwent Water and particularly beautiful in autumn, the traditional stone-built Lake Lodge offers a humble and cosy – yet undoubtedly classy – escape from the city.

#### FAIRLAWN MANOR (2,000,000 CR)

Want to live the idyllic Downton Abbey-esque life of an English aristocrat? Then this manor is for you. Fairlawn Manor is a bold stately home surrounded by other homes of a similarly upper-crust ilk.

#### THE HUNTSMAN'S LODGE (750,000 CR)

This house is perfect if you just want to escape civilization. Hidden deep in Lakehurst Forest, the Huntsman's Lodge keeps you tucked far away from the cut and thrust of the open road.

#### SUNFLOWER MEADOWS (200,000 CR)

This white semi-detached cottage in Ambleside is an excellent option for first-time buyers. The estate agent has generously thrown in a pair of green wellington boots.

#### CASTLEVIEW ROAD (750,000 CR)

Found in the southern suburbs of Edinburgh, Castleview Road is a mere stone's throw from the city centre. It comes complete with a red velvet blazer. If you can't afford the iconic castle ([see p.34](#)), this is a fantastic option enjoying a great location.









**JUNE'S**  
WATCHES & JEWELLERY











1 chips and freshly baked bread to sophisticated chocolatier L'Effet.

## Shopping

You can browse for new wheels at the Autoshow, Forzathon Shop and Auction House. If you want to actually buy, you'll be needing cash – which comes in the form of cold, hard 'Credits'. It's not hard to work out how to earn credits: better start performing behind the wheel.

Credits will also do nicely when purchasing houses and other items.

Certain vehicles, however, cannot be obtained in this traditional manner. You'll need to earn these very special vehicles in a variety of ways, whether via Barn Finds (see box, below), Horizon Life or Player House rewards. There are also Forza Edition cars with upgrade presets and bespoke appearances.

Once you're making some progress in the race, you'll get the opportunity to pimp your own wardrobe a little. Throw out those old jackets, hats, glasses and gloves and replace them with new ones – you need to look the part! Note that these things can

## TOP 8 MOST EXPENSIVE HOUSES

Edinburgh Castle – 15,000,000 CR  
Bamburgh Castle – 10,000,000 CR  
Lake Lodge – 5,000,000 CR  
Fairlawn Manor – 2,000,000 CR  
Derwent Mansion – 1,500,000 CR  
Castlevue Road – 750,000 CR  
The Huntsman Lodge – 750,000 CR  
Lake Lodge – 500,000 CR

## MECHANICAL MASTERY

Depending on the terrain, weather and race, you need to choose the right car. The handling on the vehicles is incredibly detailed in Forza Horizon 4 – the terrain, weather and of course the car itself will have an effect. Race not going how you wanted? Don't panic: you are a mechanic (didn't you know?). You can tune your engine until it's purring around that course. Just about everything can be tweaked, with the changes affecting every last aspect of performance. Here are some factors you're going to need to get acquainted with.

- Tyre pressure
- Transmission
- Alignment
- Anti-roll bars
- Springs
- Ride height
- Aerodynamics
- Brakes

also be won, whether via lucky draws or by pulling off super wheel spins (these might well earn you anything from some D&G threads to a sparkling new Ferrari!).

## Etiquette

Brits are famously polite – so it naturally follows that, when racing around Britain, you should endeavour to be nice to people and to follow a few etiquette rules when

# Barn finds

It's official: Forza Horizon 4 has the greatest barns in the world. As all car fanatics know, a barn find is a classic vehicle that's been kept (often derelict) in storage. So forget your horses and mules and cows, your hay and grain – the fifteen barns you'll encounter in Forza hold riches that would stun Aladdin.

Ten of the barn finds trigger randomly over time; one requires the purchase of a house to unlock; and four are strictly seasonal. So what's all the fuss about? Why should a tourist spend time looking for these rare barn finds? Well, everything in Great Britain is enhanced by driving the right kind of car. If you're cruising along the winding roads of the Cotswolds, you want to do it in the elegant 1966 MG MGB GT. But if you're smashing through stone walls and racing across fields, you'll want the hardy 1973 Land Rover Range Rover.

So how to find them? Now that's the real skill: keeping your ear to the ground, using your drone and thinking laterally with the changing seasons are all tactics you should employ. Here are some of the classic cars out there waiting for you.

## BAMBURGH CASTLE

Spurge on buying Bamburgh Castle ([see p.28](#)) and get a barn find just south of your

new pad into the bargain: an antique, wonderfully elegant Bentley Blower 1931. The barn is hidden in a forest, about midway between the castle and Thatch Corner house.

## GLEN RANNOCH

Perched in (more or less) plain view at the top of a mountain in the Scottish Highlands, west of Glen Rannoch, this barn will cough up a C-Class vehicle: the 1986 Ford Escort RS Turbo.

## AMBLESIDE

Just west of Ambleside, near the Derwent Valley Dash, there's a barn housing a gorgeous 1993 Jaguar XJ220. There are a few small buildings in that area so you'll have to search around a bit – it's hidden in some trees and bushes.

## TARN HOWS

Southwest of Horizon Festival, near Tarn Hows Scramble, there is a barn hidden among some trees. Find it and your endeavour will be handsomely rewarded with a 1961 Jaguar E-Type S1.

## LAKEHURST FOREST

Tucked away in Lakehurst Forest, a 1998 Subaru Impreza 22B STI with your name on it. It's just south of the name on the map, by the side of a dirt road.

## DERWENT RESERVOIR

Just southeast of the slate quarry, in a small forest beside the Derwent Reservoir, keep your eyes peeled for a barn bearing that icon of German engineering, the 1983 Audi Sport Quattro.

## ASTMOOR

A British classic 1966 MG MGB GT D-Class car awaits you on a small hill on the edge of some trees in Astmoor. Still can't find it? It's also east of the Mudkickers Adventure Park.

## EXPRESS RAILYARD

This hard-to-find barn lurks in a patch of trees and bushes just outside the Express Railyard. Keep on searching: a 1962 Triumph Spitfire will be your prize.

## GREENDALE AIRSTRIP

You can find all sorts in barns these days, including this 1998 TVR Cerbera Speed 12, a car that never actually went into production. Look for it east of the Greendale Airstrip, near the beach.

## UFFINGTON WHITE HORSE

The three-wheeled Peel P50, a D-class microcar manufactured from 1962 to 1965 by the Peel Engineering Company, is hidden in forest between Ashbrook and Broadway, and only available in the summer season.

## SOUTH OF HORIZON FESTIVAL SITE

Roll on autumn! Only in the golden months will you be able to access the mouthwatering 1960 Aston Martin DB4 GT Zagato hidden in a barn in an open field south of the Horizon Festival site.

## DERWENT WATER

Directly above the name 'Derwent Water' on the map, you'll come across this wintertime-only barn find. The 1973 Land Rover Range Rover within is perfect for the ice and snow – and let's just say you'll need ice to find it (you'll see what we mean).

## MOORHEAD WIND FARM

Only available in springtime is this Ford GT40 MK1, which you can find near the wind farm.

## FOREST NORTHWEST OF DERWENT RESERVOIR

Hidden just west of Slate Quarry, on hilly ground, this 1997 Lotus Elise GT1 is quite hard to find.

## SOUTHERN TIP OF DERWENT RESERVOIR

North of Ambleside, at the southern tip of Derwent Reservoir, you can unearth the D-class car 1965 Mini Cooper S, just itching to be freed from the small valley it is hidden in.



## GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO INFLUENCE

If your name's not down, you're not coming in... The old adage applies in Forza Horizon 4, too. But the more successful you are, the higher your influencer rating will hike – and the more events you'll gain access to. Gaining influence is a piece of cake: all you need to do is drive at high speed, perform spectacular drifts, jumps and other stunts, and generally show off like you've never shown off before.

competing. Remember, this is a shared open world, so it's important to be civil with other racers: when chatting, don't be afraid to compliment drivers with amazing cars, and be sure to mind your Ps and Qs in the heat of a race. This being Britain, you can never apologize too much, of course.

There are also a few basic rules when it comes to racing etiquette. Of course, racing can become incredibly competitive, and it's easy to lose yourself in the moment. But you should always try to avoid bumping into another car from behind or the side. Also, you should ideally avoid delaying other racers (especially more skilled racers) by blocking their line. This constitutes unsportsmanlike behaviour.

## Locations

### Ambleside

Quaint little **AMBLESIDE** is certainly not a place you want to race past at 100mph, at least not until you've had the chance to cruise along its winding roads and had a real look at the postcard-worthy sights: don't leave without checking out the water wheel, slate roofs, oh-so-well-maintained gardens, and sleepy pubs with log fires. When you do hit the road, head up into the surrounding fells for superb views of the town from above.

Then there's **St Mary's Church** in the middle of town. This Gothic Revival-style landmark was built in the 1850s. Like most buildings in the locality, it's constructed of slate. But one unusual feature makes it stand out from most other Lake District churches: its stone spire. Keep an eye out for the twinkling little brook on the outskirts, and smoke rising from chimneys in the colder seasons.

### Bamburgh Castle

Solid and chunky, **Bamburgh Castle** is a spectacular sight, its elongated battlements crowning a formidable basalt crag high above the beach. Its origins lie in Anglo-Saxon times, but it suffered a centuries-long decline: rotted by sea spray and buffeted by winter storms, the castle was bought by Lord Armstrong (of Rothbury's Craggside) in 1894, who demolished most of the structure to replace it with a hybrid castle-mansion. While it used to serve as a fortress, today you can simply drive through the main gate all the way to the courtyard. Be sure to admire the castle's countless impressive features: cruise through its archways and check out the cannon and overbearing walls, while the big square building that sits at the heart of the castle grounds is the mighty Keep – its

## GO YOUR OWN WAY

Your car's sat nav is wonderful, but Rough Guides has always encouraged getting off the beaten track. If you stumble upon a less-trodden path or route in Forza Horizon 4, embrace it! And if you're feeling generous, why not let your fellow drivers in on the secret? You scratch their back, they might just scratch yours.







## NOISY CARTOGRAPHER

London taxi drivers have to learn 'The Knowledge' – that is, a mental map of every single street in the English capital. In Forza, there's a similar badge of honour: 'The Noisy Cartographer', which requires you to drive every city street, country road and highway – all five hundred or so of them. Choice of car is crucial. You need one that can handle both city streets and dirt roads. But really, don't sweat it: you should regard pursuing this achievement as an excuse to relish the sights all around you. Take it easy, soak up the beauty of the Forza world, and enjoy every last second.

walls are 11ft thick, so don't try ram-raiding it.

With waves crashing and seagulls squawking, the Northumberland beach is golden and beautiful – perhaps not what you would imagine for this northeastern region of Britain.

## Broadway Mill

Situated next to **BROADWAY** village, **Broadway Mill** is a seventeenth-century cylindrical tower mill of local limestone, featuring unusual arches. The arches, which support the top of the windmill, give it a particularly striking appearance. The mill sits atop a green, wildflower-dotted hill, which affords breathtaking panoramic views of the rolling hills and fields all around. On a fine day, you can see the wind turbines of Moorhead Wind Farm in the far distance. And once you've driven underneath the windmill structure itself, why not try performing a daredevil long jump from the hill? All you'll need to do is bag yourself a supercar (the faster the better) and drive the road eastward towards the windmill; put the pedal to the metal – and promptly soar like an eagle into the fields some 1900ft away.

## Derwent Water

Forested and lush, the deer-populated area around the three-mile-long **Derwent Water** lake is beautifully peaceful. That said, you should bear in mind that the bumpy roads are not the best – though bumpiness won't be an issue if you're driving on the frozen lake in winter (which you certainly should – not least to access the island).

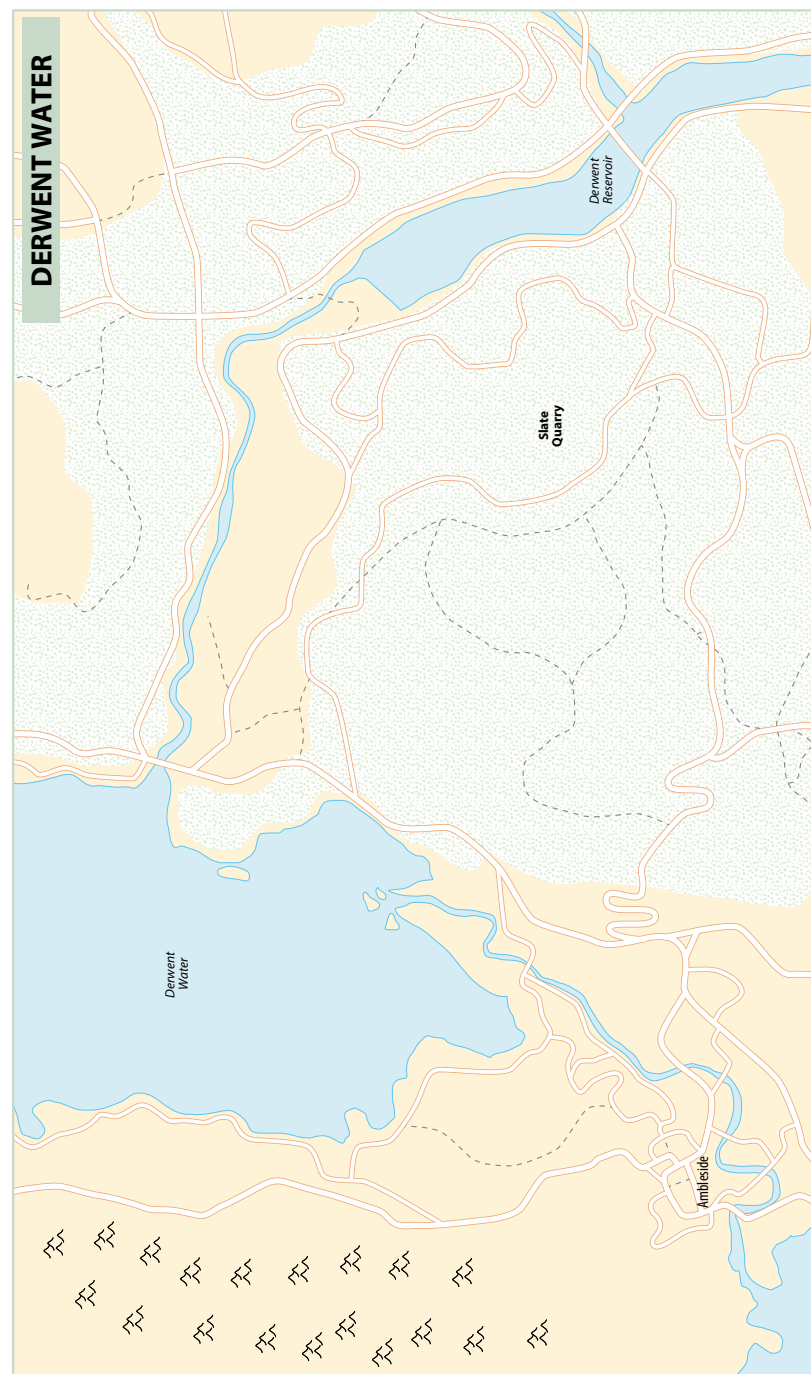
You're in good company, being a tourist around here. Old Brown from Squirrel Nutkin in the Beatrix Potter tale was supposed to have sailed to the island (known as Owl Island in the book). Indeed, Lingholm Woods on the opposite side of Derwent Water were used as a background for many of Beatrix Potter's woodland and nature sketches.

## Derwent Reservoir

The grand **dam** that spans **Derwent Reservoir** is a Neo-Gothic landmark, construction of which began in 1902, with the reservoir filled in 1914. During WW2, the reservoir was used by pilots of the 617 Squadron for practising the low-level flights needed for Operation Chastise (commonly known as the "Dam Busters" raids), due to its similarity to the German dams. Today, you can drive across the dam – it's a nice shortcut – but do beware: if you stop, the water will push you into the river. A more peaceful experience can be had by driving along the riverbed that leads to the dam. To take the chill levels up another notch, simply park your car at the foot of the dam and listen to the water falling from above.

## Mortimer Gardens

In the shallows of Derwent Water lake lies **Mortimer Gardens**, claimed by some to be a





vestige of Roman Britain. The site consists of ancient pillars, the ruins of what appears to have been a large Roman structure, possibly a temple. Like Virginia Water Ruins in Surrey, whose pillars were actually transported from Libya, Mortimer Gardens may not originally have been constructed by Roman Britons. So you shouldn't feel too concerned about careening off the conveniently positioned ramp smack bang in the middle of the site.

## Whitewater Falls

**Whitewater Falls** is not the biggest waterfall in the world, but it's certainly pretty. It gushes into a river that links the large lake of Derwent Water and Derwent Reservoir. The river is very shallow, so you can drive right up to the waterfall to have a close look at it (and get a free car wash). Stunt drivers have been spotted conducting foolhardy leaps in the area – beware.

## Edinburgh Castle

**Edinburgh Castle**, which dominates the skyline from a lofty seat atop an extinct volcanic peak, is inextricably linked with the city's history. It requires no great imaginative feat to comprehend the strategic importance that underpinned the castle's – and hence Edinburgh's – pre-eminence in Scotland. From Princes Street, the north side rears high above an almost sheer rock face; the southern side is equally formidable, and the western, where the rock rises in terraces, only marginally less so. Would-be attackers, like modern tourists, were forced to approach the Castle from the narrow ridge to the east – today's **Royal Mile**. The disparate styles of the fortifications reflect the change in its role from defensive citadel to national monument, and today, as well as attracting more paying visitors than anywhere in the country, the castle is still a military barracks and home to Scotland's Crown Jewels.

Start your visit to the Castle by slowly driving up the iconic Royal Mile. This succession of historic streets running through Edinburgh's Old Town is a very picturesque part of the city, with cobbles, old sandstone buildings and little shops. The Gatehouse is the castle's only entrance. Built 1886–1888, it has a beautiful wooden door flanked by two statues. Other than this touch of decoration, the Castle is clearly a building designed to be defended from every angle, bristling with towers, cannons and impregnable walls.

The fourteenth-century Wars of Scottish Independence and the 1745 Jacobite rising are just two of the conflicts that have involved Edinburgh Castle. Yet the castle's history stretches even further back than that – we know that Castle Rock has been the location for a royal castle since at least the twelfth-century rule of David I. Of course, the castle has not always looked like it does today; it has been altered, destroyed and restored at various times. Even so, some of the current buildings actually predate the Lang Siege of the 1500s, when one thousand English troops supported by 27 cannons destroyed large parts of the medieval defences.

Once you've torn your eyes away from the Castle's military magnificence, don't leave

### WITH THE RADIO ON...

No road trip is complete without the right tunes. Fortunately Forza offers six radio stations to choose from. If you feel like indie, synthpop and electronica, tune in to Horizon Pulse. For those thrilling street races, why not crank up the energy with Horizon Bass Arena, which pumps out house and EDM? Block Party has all the hip-hop and R&B hits, the best rock tunes can be heard on Horizon XS, and drum & bass heads should opt for Hospital Records. Timeless FM, meanwhile, is for those sophisticated moments, offering classical class for your country jaunts.

without taking in the breathtaking views from **Castle Rock**.

## Glenfinnan Viaduct

**GLENFINNAN** played a huge role in Scottish history, yet nowadays many visitors are most interested in seeing the imposing arched viaduct nearby, crossed by the *Hogwarts Express* in the *Harry Potter* films. The 21-arch, 1000ft viaduct is one of Scotland's most famous sightseeing locations – it's worth lingering a while until the train goes across it. For it's not just any train – it's the legendary *Flying Scotsman* (see p.14).

## Scott Monument

Standing proudly by the side of Princes Street, Edinburgh's main thoroughfare, is the **Scott Monument**. Erected in memory of the prolific author and patriot Sir Walter Scott within a few years of his death, the 200ft sandstone monument is closely modelled on the writer's beloved Melrose Abbey, while the rich sculptural decoration shows sixteen Scottish writers and 64 characters from his famous *Waverley* novels. On the central plinth at the base of the monument is a marble statue of Scott with his deerhound Maida, carved by John Steell from a thirty-tonne block of Carrara marble.

The monument is the result of an 1836 architectural competition that invited people to design a memorial for Sir Walter Scott. The winning design was submitted by George Meikle Kemp, who was completely unknown and had never designed anything on that scale. Construction began in 1840 and was completed in 1844, with official inauguration in 1846.

## Uffington White Horse


In the southwestern corner of Oxfordshire lies the pretty **Vale of White Horse**, a shallow valley whose fertile farmland is studded with tiny villages and a striking collection of prehistoric remains.

**White Horse Hill** follows close behind Stonehenge and Avebury in the hierarchy of Britain's ancient sites, though it attracts nothing like the same number of visitors. Carved into the north-facing slope of the downs, the 374ft-long **Uffington White Horse** looks like something created with a few swift strokes of an immense brush. The first written record of the horse's existence dates from the time of Henry II, but it was cut much earlier, probably in the first century BC, making it one of the oldest chalk figures in Britain. There's no lack of weird and wonderful theories concerning its origins, but burial sites excavated in the surrounding area point to the horse having some kind of sacred function, though no one knows quite what.

Spring and summer are wonderful times to visit, with the White Horse blazing white against the green grass. Going off-road in the area with a sports car is great fun but for the quintessentially English countryside experience, driving around these little country roads with a Land Rover is ideal. Note that we have received unfortunate sightings of drivers doing donuts on the chalk figure.

### TOP FIVE THINGS TO SEE IN EDINBURGH

National Gallery  
Princes Street Gardens  
Cockburn Street  
Royal Mile  
Arthur's Seat



# Sea of Thieves

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GOLDEN SANDS OUTPOST

## Introduction

And they say the golden age of travel is over...

Marco Polo, Christopher Columbus and Captain Cook weren't bad at this game – but they missed a bit. A big bit, filled with treasure-crammed islands, ancient monuments, volcanoes and legendary creatures. That's where you come in.

We're all for looking after the environment at Rough Guides. And travelling under sail is about as green as it gets. Yet while it has its benefits, this way of seeing the world is not without its perils. And we're not just talking about turning green yourself – no, it's downright hazardous out there on the high seas, with ruthless pirates after your loot and sabre-rattling skeletons after your soul.

At Rough Guides, we've also always been big proponents of solo travel. Not *so* much this time. Get some shipmates on board with you: it's so much easier when you work as a team, with different people in charge of different things. After all, there's a lot to do: you need to manually raise the anchor, set the sail, steer the ship, check your map and compass, and fire cannons.

That said, the sense of achievement and independence if you do go it alone is quite something. Simply managing to sail from one island to another can make you feel really rather pleased with yourself. This is island-hopping taken to the nth degree.

But don't get carried away with the self-congratulation – one lapse in concentration and you could be done for. You share this open world with friend and foe alike – and a treasure-filled island tends to bring out the worst in people. Whenever you spot a ship on the horizon, you just don't know if it'll be filled with smiling chums or blood-thirsty enemies. Beware.

A confrontational attitude is not usually something we encourage when travelling abroad. But let's be honest: when you're facing legendary creatures and epic cannon battles against other pirates, you'd better be ready to test your mettle.

### OH MY GROG: TOP FIVE TAVERNS

You'll find some of the world's finest taverns in *Sea of Thieves*. Get acquainted with them all – it'd be rude not to.

#### THE SNAKE PIT

Up in The Wilds ([see p.41](#)), life can really get you down. Praise be, then, for The Snake Pit tavern on Dagger Tooth Outpost. Teri, the tavern keeper, does some really drinkable grog – so drinkable she puts a lot of it away herself. So her talk of there being treasure at Devil's Ridge may or may not be worth listening to. Around the back of the tavern you'll find a short cave system leading to the east side of the island.

#### DROWNED RAT

Thirsty seadogs rejoice! The Drowned Rat, Plunder Outpost's tavern, is easy for even those with barnacles for braincells to find: it's the tallest building in town. Ask the tavern keeper Tanya for a few jars of her finest: "Chapman's Old Bilge Sniffer" (she won't serve you anything else, anyway).

#### THE GEORGE & KRAKEN

Naming a purveyor of the demon drink after a legendary sea monster that devours pirates on a daily basis is cute (we have no idea who George is). The George & Kraken – a great addition to lovely Sanctuary Outpost – is tended by Tracy, who has worked in the business since she could see over the top of a barrel of grog. Ask her about William One Arm (and his shark).

#### THE CHARRED PARROT

If you're asking why The Charred Parrot, then you've obviously not visited The Devil's Roar yet, where most things are charred (including, most probably, your good self). The Charred Parrot, in the northwest of Morrow's Peak Outpost, is kept shipshape by the formidable Tallulah. Be warned, though: you can get sodden with grog but you still won't be volcano-proof.

#### THE TAVERN OF LEGENDS

The Tavern of Legends (aka Athena's Fortune or The Pirate Legend Hideout) is more of a private members' club than an 'umble tavern. You're going to have to be regarded as a bit of a legend by the trading companies to be invited in. It's some place: you'll encounter the ghosts of notorious pirates who have passed on and a Pirate Lord who assigns legendary voyages, which are the most difficult of all to complete.

That said, this world is just *so* gorgeous, full of tropical colours and crystal-clear waters, that even the most gung-ho battles have a certain appeal. Fearsome sea monsters never seemed so, well, *stylish*.

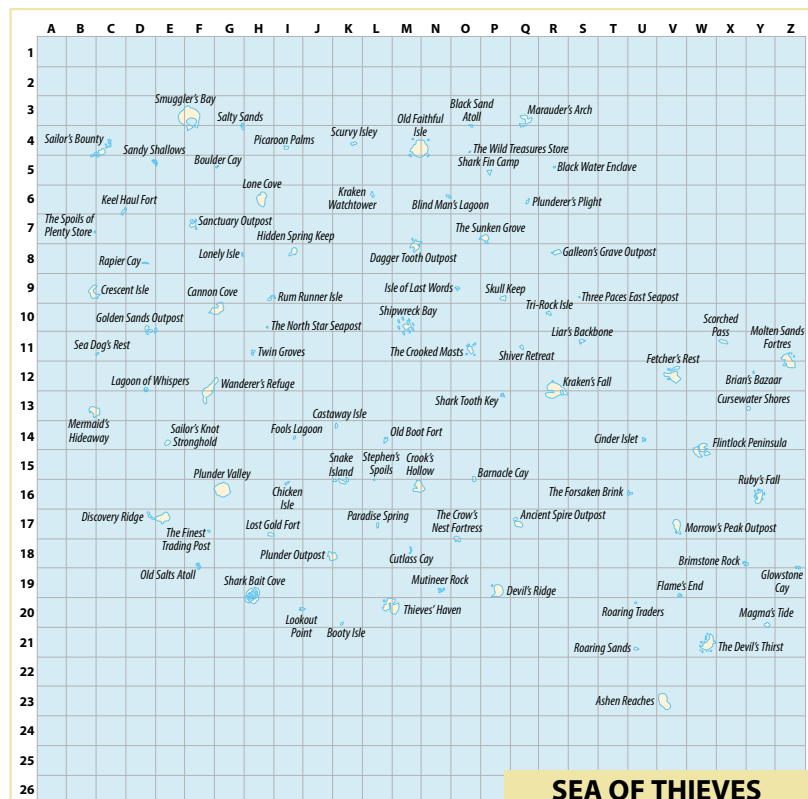
Yet fearsome they are, so you should know how to enjoy the simple pleasures while you can – by embracing beauty and becoming a connoisseur of the high seas. Savour its tranquil moments and highest tempests alike. The sunsets, for instance, are simply scandalous (see box, opposite, top) – warn your Instagram followers now – while sailing at night will bring out the philosopher in you (see box, opposite, bottom). And when you get the opportunity to pop in to a tavern for a refreshing grog, grasp it. There's always time to get three sheets to the wind on some delicious grog (see box, p.39).

All in all, prepare to feel strangely at home. There's something wonderfully "lived in" about this world, with its exquisitely imperfect details, its patches and repairs. But don't relax too much: there's loot to be had and there are adventures on the horizon!

## Where to go

On paper, exploring the Sea of Thieves world should be easy enough, divided as it is into four relatively neat regions, each with its own distinct characteristics. In practice, however...

In the northwest, **The Shores of Plenty** is composed mainly of small desert islands with white sandy beaches and lush palm trees. Think Golden Age of Piracy-era



## LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON YOU

There are treasures aplenty in Sea of Thieves, but some of the richest ones come absolutely free.

### CROOK'S HOLLOW

Craggy, sloping Crook's Hollow is one of the Ancient Isles' Instagram hotspots. Head for the high rise on the southeast side and the accessible beaches to the north and west.

### SMUGGLERS' BAY

Sunset aficionados should make a beeline for the plank bridge that overlooks the entrance to the bay at this crescent-shaped Shores of Plenty island (see map, opposite). If you're departing or approaching at the right time, don't miss the sight of the sun going down behind the rock formation.

### SECRET REEF

Located between Shark Tooth Key and Old Boot Fort, this reef offers delectable sunset viewing.

### SHARK BAIT COVE

This beautifully intricate arrangement of crescent-shaped Ancient Isles beaches only gets more irresistible in the golden hour.

Caribbean – now, has the world known a finer era?

Down in the south, **The Ancient Isles** is a region of large, mysterious islands where you'll stumble upon the abandoned hideaways of long-forgotten pirate crews. Grab your fedora and your whip: with its riddle-laden ancient ruins, this neck of the woods is about as Indiana Jones in vibe as it gets.

Things start going bump in the night when you venture up to the northeast, where **The Wilds** await. In this doom-laden region of near-permanent cloud cover and ever-withering flora, you'll encounter haunted and deserted islands (deserted for very good reasons), containing the restless remains of deceased pirates.

It's not just cannon fire you need to beware in the southeastern **The Devil's Roar** region. The volcanoes in these parts will give you more than a shot across the bows: they'll burn you to a crisp given half the chance, while the waters themselves will boil a swimmer alive, and don't get us started on the deadly geysers (that's geysers as in skin-threshing steam, not geezers, though there are plenty of dangerous men around here, too). Even in a sturdy ship, these are truly deadly waters, with the islands hereabouts covered in partly incinerated plant life and strange red crystal growths. There are caves dotted around the area that offer a little protection, but with steam vents and falling rocks, nowhere is truly safe. In this strange, treacherous place, the world itself is your enemy. Battening down the hatches won't save you here.

Don't even think about entering **The Devil's Shroud**, an area outside the main regions. That is, unless you *like* blood-red seas, dark skies and your ship breaking into little pieces?

## STARGAZING SEADOGS

The seas don't sleep. You'll be missing an awful lot if you don't sail at night, especially with the aurora borealis glowing eerily all around you (granted, you may have had your fill of "eerie" if you've spent much time in The Wilds). Sailing at night has a practical benefit, too: if you're voyaging alone, one way to avoid enemy pirate ships is to sail under cover of darkness. Before you raise anchor and set out into the night, though, it's a good idea to climb up to the crow's nest and have a look around first. The high vantage point will allow you to spot potential enemies in the distance and help you determine the best route.

















## HERE BE DRAGONS! – KNOW YOUR ISLANDS

There are three main types of island: **outposts**, where you sell goods and tout for voyage commissions from the trading companies; **forts**, which can be a bastion for the legendary Skeleton Forts, full of danger and reward (and bloodthirsty skeletons); and **treasure islands**, where you go on voyages in search of treasure, valuable skeleton bounties or animals.

There are also a few uncharted locations that will not appear on your map. **I-12** and **J-12** are small, empty islands with no items or resources, just a few remains left by castaways, some underwater ruins, a cave system, coral reef and oceanic trench (the kind of oceanic trench you'd expect a monster to take up residence in). That said, bear in mind that the terrain is unpredictable – what was once a safe haven might have become altogether more perilous by the next time you visit. **K-9**, a crescent formation of land with an old shipwreck in the centre pool overgrown by coral, has evidence of people having survived there for some time – check out the hammock, pots and chains. Look out, too, for seeming evidence of a duel in the form of two slumped skeletons, and seek out the candlelit cavern for some barrels.

## Things not to miss

### 1 GOLDEN SANDS OUTPOST

The good life! Palm trees, tropical fish, clear blue waters and arguably the finest tavern on the seven seas. [See p.55.](#)

### 2 ANCIENT SPIRE OUTPOST

Shop and drink. Drink and shop. Repeat. Ancient Spire Outpost is just a lot of good old-fashioned seadog fun. [See p.55.](#)

### 3 GALLEON'S GRAVE OUTPOST

One of the major tourist hotspots on the high seas, be sure to sink a few grogs and marvel at the bizarrely elevated shipwreck. [See p.55.](#)

### 4 KRAKEN WATCHTOWER

An unforgettably forbidding wooden fortress, the Kraken Watchtower's sheer terribleness is hypnotic. [See p.56.](#)

### 5 SHARK BAIT COVE

Evocative and unforgettable reminders of a long-lost civilization abound at Shark Bait Cove. As do sharks... [See p.56.](#)

### 6 SHIPWRECK BAY

By name and by nature... But if you're equal to the challenge, this island is awash with plentiful supplies. [See p.56.](#)

### 7 SMUGGLERS' BAY

Sometimes nature does the darndest things – Smugglers' Bay features hands down the most monumental natural entrance you'll ever see. [See p.57.](#)

### 8 THE SUNKEN GROVE

If you can avoid the snakes, you might just find yourself leaving this particular sunken grove a whole lot richer. [See p.58.](#)

### 9 THE DEVIL'S THIRST

Volcanically spectacular, shall we say? Don't miss hitching a ride on the hair-raising geysers. Mind your eyebrows! [See p.58.](#)

### 10 THIEVES' HAVEN

The big city – relatively speaking – and just perfect for kicking back and enjoying the simple pleasures of life lived by the ocean. [See p.58.](#)

## Basics

### Getting around

It's a sailor's life for you! Your main form of transport will be, naturally, the **ship**. There are three main types in Sea of Thieves: the smallish Sloop; the medium-sized Brigantine; and the mighty Galleon. Of course, you can **swim**, if you want. There's nothing stopping you, but there's also nothing stopping the sharks from nibbling your fragile flesh (top tip: don't stay in the water too long), nor the preternaturally warmed seas of The Devil's Roar from boiling you alive (top tip: don't get in the water at all here).

### Food and drink

You'd better like **bananas**. And if you don't, you'd better start liking them. They're a big source of energy in Sea of Thieves. The taverns in these parts serve up some truly excellent **grog**. Drink too much (or just enough, according to your take on things)

### KEEPING THE RIGHT COMPANY

Trading companies are your ticket to ride in Sea of Thieves – completing their contracts will earn both rewards and reputation. But be wary in your dealings with them for, believe it or not, not all of their intentions are noble!

#### GOLD HOARDERS

The Gold Hoarders are a greedy, gold-loving, piratical trading company. All they're interested in is amassing wealth in all its forms. Get in with them and you'll be richly rewarded. They are the only trading company to possess skeleton keys.

#### ORDER OF SOULS

The Order of Souls have their sights set on a higher plane. This mystical company was founded as an organization dedicated to the study of evil, reading the minds of the dead in the hope of learning their secrets. The Order now desires control over the world's magical forces. How do they do that? By trading in valuable skulls, of course. But beware – there are some skeletons so feared even the Order won't pay pirates to tangle with them.

#### MERCHANT ALLIANCE

The Merchant Alliance is a benign offshoot of the Grand Maritime Union, who control trade in the wider world with an iron fist, but lack the means to seize control of the Sea of Thieves through brute force – even if they knew how to find it... Gain their favour by fulfilling voyage commissions in the allotted time and you will undoubtedly go up in the world. It's kept on the downlow, but some of the Alliance merchants also take orders of hush-hush "Special" wares.

#### ATHENA'S FORTUNE

Athena's Fortune is a secret company whose operations are cloaked in secrecy. Gain their trust and your reputation among some of history's greatest pirate legends will be boosted.

#### BILGE RATS

The wild-hearted Bilge Rats trading company are real wheeler-dealers. They follow the wildest of rumours in search of the next big adventure, however dangerous, and offer mercenary voyages that encourage pirates to get their hands dirty (well, dirtier...). Try looking for someone by the name of Duke at your nearest tavern.



## CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

Your ship bristles with mighty **cannons**, but what about your personal armoury? You need something to defend yourself with in these parts. Even the scurviest young scallywag starts out with a **cutlass**, **pistol**, **blunderbuss** and **“eye of reach” rifle**. Finer versions of them all can be purchased from the weaponsmith's shop.

### CUTLASS

The cutlass is a type of short, curved sword, just the ticket for rearranging someone's innards during a spirited melee. You'll need to practise your slashing and lunging techniques with dedication. Perfect your handling and no son of a biscuit-eater'll dare mess with you.

### PISTOL

The pistol fires a single shot – you'd better make it count.

### BLUNDERBUSS

The wonderfully named blunderbuss fires a wide blast of shot; it doubles as a handy flare (if shot vertically, dumbo).

### EYE OF REACH

The “eye of reach” is a sort of sniper firearm that allows you to zoom right in on that backstabbing rat up there in the crow's nest and take him out with a single shot. Bear in mind that the weapon's scope glints in the sun making you visible from a long distance – the hunter can easily become the hunted.

and your visuals and movements will become a little squiffy. Drink even more and nature will take its course: you'll blow spectacular chunks (note that this can be used as a weapon). You can fill up your ship's grog barrel by speaking to a tavern owner.

## Shopping

You'll be needing the tools of your trade, now won't you? Don't set sail without your compass (there are 24 different types available), pocket watch, lantern, shovel (treasure doesn't unbury itself) and merrymaking musical instruments ([see p.59](#)). And of course then there are the *real* tools... (see box, above).

## Festivals and events

The Bilge Rats are the party animals and events planners supreme in Sea of Thieves, and their Bilge Rat Adventures are not to be missed. The Bilge Rats have a particular fondness for events centred on skeletons, so put your squeamishness to one side, but they also organize high japes involving the destruction of underwater cursed mermaid statues as well as cursed cannonball fun and your common or garden sea battles against galleons crawling with the undead.

## Money

They're not the most convenient forms of currency in the world, but **gold** and **treasure** sure are seductive – and boy do they talk. That said, **doubloons** have gained some traction (you might call them the cryptocurrency of Sea of Thieves), especially with Duke the Bilge Rat ([see p.53](#)). Almost as important as huge chunks of treasure for doing business is your personal **reputation** – build that up and you might well find treasures easier to come by.

# Locations

## Golden Sands Outpost

A wonderful place to lift the spirits and rejuvenate the flesh of a voyage-weary seadog, **Golden Sands Outpost** is a tropical paradise of palm trees, eye-poppingly colourful fish and clear blue waters.

There are four islands to enjoy here but we recommend the one with the legendary Captain's Head tavern on it. Why? Because it's the one with the legendary Captain's Head tavern on it. With its roaring fire and lively clientele, there's no finer place to seek shelter during a storm than humble Tina's fine establishment, nor indeed to wait patiently until a storm arrives necessitating an even more patient stay. In good weather, enjoy your grog alfresco at one of the tables outside.

## Ancient Spire Outpost

Shopping and drinking at the Unicorn tavern is the name of the game at **Ancient Spire Outpost**, a small village in The Ancient Isles that is a veritable hub of merchants, shops and trading companies. The settlement is spread across two spire-shaped islands that are separated by a narrow channel, with a hanging bridge connecting them.

To clear the head after a good session at the Unicorn, a nice climb up the rocky “spires” is just the ticket – the views are simply gorgeous (don't admit that to your shipmates – they'll think you've gone soft). If that doesn't do the trick, you might consider a dare-devil dive from the bridge.

Other than boozing, splashing the cash and chucking yourself headlong into the deep, Ancient Spire Outpost offers irresistible opportunities for exploration. There's a smaller hidden dock you could seek out, which leads to a network of crisscrossing tunnels. For those wishing to make a discreet arrival at the outpost, land at the south side. There are no merchants or docks here, so you can drop anchor unnoticed – note, though, that the trek into town from this point is arduous.

The tavern is set apart from the rest of the community (for good reason, some might say), high up near the tip of the spire; several paths and ladders lead down from it to the rest of the settlement. Rumours abound that a pirate by the name of “Filthy Rich Semmens” ordered his crew to bury their treasure somewhere on the island. That said, as any pirate knows: talk is cheap.

## Galleon's Grave Outpost

*How did that thing get here?* People may well have said the same about you over the years, but in this instance you're well within your rights to ask the question. For truly it is a marvel that a ruined galleon has found its way to the top of two precipitously tall rock formations. This bizarre, spectacular phenomenon is what makes **Galleon's Grave Outpost** what it is.

But it's not only the unusual appearance by a ruin on this island that will have you scratching your chin. The place is stuffed full of skeletons – and even tusks – used architecturally.

Not that you need any excuse to visit the tavern, but if you do, you might say you want to view the huge skull above its entrance. The docks in the southeastern part of the island, meanwhile, are decorated with giant tusks, possibly from an ancient sea creature.

Sink a few grogs, then go check out the galleon up close. It's something of a tourist attraction (someone has kindly left behind three stools there so you can rest your own weary bones). Not that the approach isn't a little bit precarious – all planks and wooden

bridges – but it's worth it. Make your way along the ship's bowsprit for a giddy view of the island with the galleon's planks creaking all around you – not recommended after one grog too many.

A strange sort of graveyard, then – both of ship and beast. Try to make sure it doesn't end up being yours, too.

2

## Kraken Watchtower

Imagine: you're sailing in The Wilds. You're already a little edgy – this is the Wilds, after all – when in the distance, a shape begins to form on the horizon. You get a little closer. A sort of realization begins to descend on you. With it, a chill as you finally understand what you're looking at: an enormous, grotesque skull leering at you, hovering over the surface of the ocean.

But what's this? A few seconds later and the feeling is gone – what you see now is a rickety, jagged fortress. Then another. And they're part of a sprawling wooden defence system protecting a rocky, uninviting island surrounded by a wooden wall, from which project sharp spikes. That's the thing with the **Kraken Watchtower** – its bark is worse than its bite, and only from certain angles do the forts resemble skulls.

So don't let yourself be rattled or bewitched by the skull-like forts – keep your eyes peeled for the large torch lit with a flame. This can be seen from afar. As you draw nearer, you'll see skulls with flames burning inside them and bats circling the island.

Of course, it's not an island you want to crash into, but it's still worth a visit. Why on earth is that? Many answers. *Why not?* is one. You're an adventurer: go adventure. But there's also great architectural appeal here. Just walking around and looking at all the different details of the place is entertaining. The watchtower is also a great place to watch the sun set, if you're feeling goopy (which many don't, in The Wilds). You might also take the opportunity for some cannon-firing practice – just remember to bring some extra cannonballs.

Not the most inviting of places, then, but not something to blubber about. In fact, embrace the vibe and visit at night for a thoroughly atmospheric, pleasingly menacing experience. It's like Halloween for pirates.

## Shark Bait Cove

You don't have to be Sherlock Holmes to surmise that sharks were of great significance to the original settlers of **Shark Bait Cove**, a pretty puzzle of seven interlocking crescent-shaped islands. Did they worship them? It's hard to say, but you can reach your own conclusions after visiting the islands' most notable landmarks: a stone sculpture of a shark, jagged with stone teeth; and a large stone "Shark Bait Altar" on the north side of the islands, complete with murals and skeletons in a shallow watery pit. There are murals galore here (aquatic beasts were obviously the mural artists' favourite subjects) plus plenty of wildlife, including chickens, pigs and, naturally, sharks.

Sailing into the cove is ill-advised as the waters around it are very shallow and riddled with rocks, which means your ship will likely stick out like a sore thumb with the low elevation of the island rings.

If you get tired of mural-spotting, go for a dive. There is a fairly deep coral basin in the middle of the island worth checking out. It's especially beautiful on a sunny day, when all its vivid colours come to the fore. If you sail away at sunset, the red colours on the crystal blue water really make it feel like a tropical paradise.

## Shipwreck Bay

Is it foolhardy to willingly visit an island named **Shipwreck Bay**? Quite probably, given your means of transport. And most decidedly, when you consider that skeletons will

welcome any approaching ship with a barrage of cannon fire.

This large, rocky, palm-strewn island, surrounded by smaller rock formations, has brought many a fine vessel to her knees: there are shipwrecks simply littered all around, and the skulls of sailors in unnerving piles. The most intact of the shipwrecks is called Blackwyche, while clambering up the largest wreck will afford fine views of your surroundings.

Look for loot and treasures among the shipwrecks and keep an eye out, too, for the gunpowder barrels – they might just come in handy (wink, wink).

Grogsoaked Ed is not, unfortunately, the island's only local. There are also the somewhat less affable Shadow Skeletons (aka Black Skeletons); during the day they look like your common or garden skeletons but, come nightfall, they present a whole different proposition. Mark it well: light is their weakness. That's not to say you shouldn't visit when darkness falls. At nighttime, the torchlight makes the shipwrecks look really rather romantic.

2

## Smugglers' Bay

Croissant-shaped **Smugglers' Bay**, in The Shores of Plenty, practically begs you to sail in: it features arguably the most monumental natural entrance you'll ever encounter, with two large rock formations rearing up to create a stunning archway. There's a small gap between their tips, which is crossed by a wooden bridge. Otherwise, the island is mostly gorgeous golden sand and palm trees.

BELOW THE DROWNED RAT





The island's far northern location perhaps contributes to its pretty chill atmosphere. The pace of life here is very relaxed – you can swim, do a little target practice, admire the views from the bridge or ogle the luminous blue mushrooms and lichen in the cave on the north side.

Still, you'll be able to tell you're not the first to visit. There's a single cannon overlooking the bay and its entrance (feel free to take pot shots at other ships); the grave of a drunken sailor (at least they died happy); and a bona fide 'walk the plank' plank.

2

## The Sunken Grove

Grim, rocky and inhospitable, **The Sunken Grove**, in The Wilds, is not somewhere you'll be wanting to send postcards home from. It's tricky to access from the water and its terrain does not exactly lend itself to butterfly-spotting nature rambles. In fact, its most prominent wildlife comes in the form of snakes – beware their purple venom!

The terrain itself has something of the serpentine and the slippery about it, with cave systems crisscrossing its entirety. The 'Hangman's Tree' seals the rather unappetizing deal.

But it's not *all* bad. There's an impressive stone arch that's fun to swim beneath; the cave is worth poking around in; gunpowder barrels are in abundance; there's a pretty grove with a waterfall; and the three small islands just offshore have "treasure" written all over them.

## The Devil's Thirst

Hell on earth. There are no two ways about it: **The Devil's Thirst** in The Devil's Roar is a godforsaken, volcano-ravaged lava pit and you'd have to be mad to visit. What's that you say? Ah, then we'll continue.

It's best to visit when the volcano is not active. If you want to watch the eruption, do it from a safe distance, the flying balls of fire producing a spectacular pyrotechnics display. While visiting in the day makes it easier to see where you're going, at night the perilous lava and burning plants are more obvious. Incredibly, there *is* a little vegetation on the island, mostly where rocks have protected patches of the ground from flying debris and lava.

So what can you do for fun in these parts? Why, stand on the geysers of course! They will shoot you into the air. Be sure to land in the water...

## Thieves' Haven

As islands go, **Thieves' Haven**, in The Ancient Isles, is the big city. It features three inlets into an inner bay, with two stone arches so enormous that you can sail a galleon beneath. You should know that Thieves' Haven doesn't give up its shelter cheaply: you'll have to fight strong winds in order to moor your ship in the cove, so do not attempt to get there on your own – you'll need at least one other crewmate to man the sails and plug the holes in the hull.

Once you make it in, Thieves' Haven is – as its name suggests – a place to really kick back and explore at leisure, with countless nooks and crannies to dig around in. You'll undoubtedly get the uncanny feeling that your pirate predecessors have used this place for just that since time immemorial. So take a hike into the mountains to check out the cave paintings, have a dip in the water, search for treasure, gaze upon the tropical flowers and think of your loved ones back home...

Climbing up inside the shipwreck (there's always a shipwreck, isn't there?) will afford gorgeous views of the bay, while on the eastern mountain awaits a pretty little waterfall. Go higher and you might be able to find the two stone Easter Island-esque heads.

# Contexts

## History

From the Golden Age of Piracy to mermaids, krakens and megalodon sharks, story and legend abound in Sea of Thieves. You'll become a part of this history – this legend, this lore – the moment you set sail. But will it be a bit part or a starring role?

## Wildlife

There's a lot of swine around. And some of them are animals. You'll encounter four breeds of **pig** which, once captured, can be sold for gold. They're found on islands and have to be captured in pig crates, which you can get from the Merchant Alliance or sometimes find washed up on islands. Note that it's *very* important to keep your pigs well fed – they'll certainly let you know about it if they're not.

**Chickens** also come in four varieties, as do **snakes**, both of which can be sold for gold. Note that snakes need to be charmed before you can capture them and – surprise, surprise – they're invariably hostile and can hiss and spit venom. Not so different from many of the humans you'll encounter, then.


The **kraken** is a large tentacled sea creature that can randomly appear and attack innocent ships. But what are you worrying about? Before it appears, the kraken conveniently announces your impending doom with a deep noise that can be heard both above and below water. Should your ears prick up to this, get your cannons charged and give the blighter a peppering of lead. If you miss, you can expect a broadside slap or suffocating squeeze from one of the kraken's mighty tentacles. And watch out for squirting ink should you manage to make an incision in the beast's flesh – it's hard to aim with kraken ink in your eyes. Smart pirates might consider simply running away from krakens – easy enough, if you have sufficient planks to patch up your tentacle-damaged ship.

**Sharks** are commonly found in open water. The good news is that they're fairly easy to kill; the bad news is that they'd say the same about you. An entirely different kettle of piranhas is the **Hungering One** aka the **Megalodon Shark** – let's just say this foe is persistent.

## Music

There's nothing like a good old **sea shanty** session with your hearties, is there? Of course, if your hearties have drunk too much grog, it really will be nothing like a good old sea shanty session. But either way there are plenty of opportunities to join in and play sweet music together. One of the most popular instruments on the high seas is the **concertina** – you'll already have one of these among your equipment, no doubt, but fancier ones can be bought from any shop ([see p.54](#)). No high-seas sailor worth their salt goes anywhere without a **hurdy-gurdy**. As with the concertina, you can upgrade your tatty specimen in the shop. While all the **drums** you'll encounter have a similar sound, not all are created equal in terms of looks. Indeed, the drum you choose to play is something of a statement of individuality, perhaps saying something about your character and standing. So will you be making a racket with a "rogue sea dog" drum, setting the rhythm with a "ceremonial admiral" or battering out some beats with a "bone crusher"?

2



# Tom Clancy's The Division 2

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EAST MALL

## Introduction

At Rough Guides, we've always applauded travellers who incorporate a bit of volunteering into their round-the-world trips when feasible. After all, lending a hand at an animal sanctuary or teaching local kids can be a wonderful way to give something back – and enrich your travel experience while you're at it. Helping out on infrastructural projects is another common type of travel volunteering – and that's precisely what you'll be doing on this visit to Washington D.C.

Except... There are infrastructural projects and then there are infrastructural projects. This one is about intense as it gets, and you should not sign up lightly. You see, this is not the Washington D.C. you might know and love. This current incarnation of the US capital is slightly – how to put this? – transformed... And you're here to fix it.

In most cases, our first visit somewhere is the most precious/memorable. Not so here – if you're familiar with D.C. already, you'll be able to appreciate just how spectacularly the place has changed. And yet, deep down, the older, happier version of the city is unmistakably there – the city even *sounds* like the D.C. you know and love. You can roam far and wide, seeking out nooks and crannies you might have visited on previous trips (or, if you're D.C. native, that you pass by every day). We just hope the changes wreaked on the place don't upset you *too* much. For this really is a local's vision of the city – down to the finest details.

Unfortunately, this D.C. is malfunctioning in every possible way and subject to the most appalling lawlessness. That's where you and your volunteering skills come in – in return for this very rich travel experience, you're tasked with helping D.C. out of this tight spot. When you see the plight of such world-famous landmarks as the White House Washington Monument, Smithsonian museum, Lincoln Memorial and Union Station, we're sure your heart strings will be suitably plucked and you won't have any trouble motivating yourself.

One last point – hook up with other travellers if you can. That way, you'll get the job done more swiftly and have time to just soak up this unique version of one of the world's greatest cities.

## Things not to miss

### 1 WHITE HOUSE

Make yourself at home! For one visit only, you have the run of the president's official residence. [See p.65.](#)

### 2 JUDICIARY SQUARE

Once a byword for grandness and order, Judiciary Square is somewhat altered, yet its roll call of major landmarks is as unmissable as ever. [See p.74.](#)

### 3 CAPITOL BUILDING

Not quite the vision of Neoclassical splendour it once was, but still a fascinating structure to get acquainted with. [See p.74.](#)

### 4 ROOSEVELT ISLAND

Don't be put off by the unpromising approach – this island has verdant charms in abundance. [See p.78.](#)

### 5 FEDERAL TRIANGLE

About as safe as the Bermuda Triangle, yet just as intriguing. Come and enjoy exclusive access to some of America's greatest buildings. [See p.78.](#)

### 6 WEST POTOMAC PARK

Gone are the days that recreation and relaxation ruled supreme here, yet the park still rewards an afternoon's exploration. [See p.79.](#)

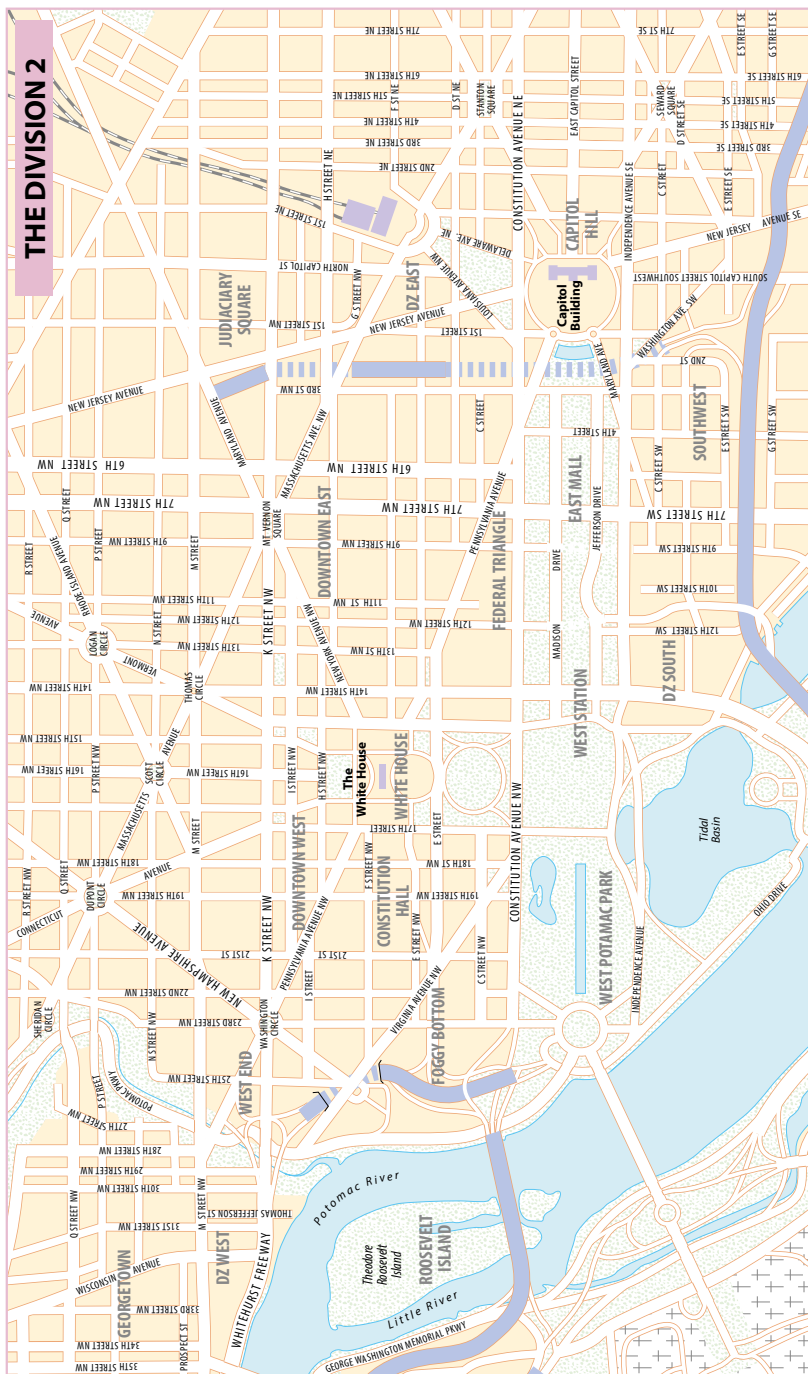
## Basics

### Getting around

Get your walking boots on – the only way to get around is **by foot**. Rumours abound of shortcuts that run between safe houses, but they were unsubstantiated at the time of writing.

### Accommodation

Your accommodation options are varied to say the least. You'll rely on the shelter afforded by the plentiful **safe houses** you'll encounter. There are also, however, **civilian**



## THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO SHOOT A CAT

Shooting doesn't have to involve bullets. Why not turn wildlife photographer while you're on your travels? Washington D.C. has a surprisingly rich array of creatures and you're in with a chance of getting great shots of all of the following: raccoons, foxes, bald eagles, vultures, frogs, fish, goats, chickens, rats, bees, dragonflies, cats, pigeons and ducks. Collect 'em all!

**settlements** along the way, with their own leaders and rudimentary shopping opportunities. The grandest accommodation of the lot is, of course, the **White House** (see below), which doubles as your base of operations.

## Weather

We don't recall D.C.'s weather being this dramatic on previous visits. Get ready for everything Mother Nature can throw at you, including spectacularly gorgeous storms and heart-melting sunsets.

## Money

For once on a trip to the big city, you don't need to worry much about spends, as much of what you need can simply be found (or looted). It is, however, possible to buy so-called Premium Credits, which can be spent on all manner of fancy stuff from outfits to weapon skins.

# Locations

## White House

If you have paid a visit to the **White House** at some point in the past, be prepared for a shock. The iconic official residence of US presidents is not the grand sight it once was, with weeds and wildflowers where once lay manicured lawns and its toothpaste-pristine external walls scorched and dirty. And yet, somehow, the building's intrinsic nobility shines through – from a distance, its form is still very striking and the US flag takes pride of place to this day. Another major difference is the question of access. While getting into the White House would once have involved interminable layers of security screening, now you

## GOING UNDERGROUND

Sometimes sightseeing in a big city all just gets a bit much and you need to take a break from the crowds (especially the outright hostile ones). When the urge to escape comes over you, keep an eye out for a **yellow circle with a black arrow** pointing down. You'll often see the symbol on a manhole cover, but not always – we've encountered them on subway entrances and parking garages. Now, before you get too excited, these are not the hyper-hipster hidden entrances to some exclusive day spa, but they will offer a sanctuary of sorts all the same – in the form of a trip deep into the bowels of the city.

Dropping down beneath street level, everything changes: from the lighting to the relative hush, the whole mood just becomes a little quieter – bliss. Tripod-mounted halogen lamps are dotted all over, fluorescent fixtures have toppled from the ceilings, and blue and purple emergency lighting casts weird shadows on the walls. However, these underground adventures are not for the faint-hearted. This underground environment doesn't just attract those in need of solace, but also its fair share of ill-meaning explorers. Enjoy this underground tourism, but keep your wits about you while you're at it.











IN THIS TEMPLE  
AS IN THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE  
FOR WHOM HE SAVED THE UNION  
THE MEMORY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN  
IS ENSHRINED FOREVER









## YOU ARE THE PRESIDENT

If you want to play president, you gotta know your way around your own house. Here are the top places to familiarize yourself with in the White House, so you can talk the talk and walk the walk.

### JAMES S. BRADY PRESS BRIEFING ROOM

Where the press would gather to get the latest news from the White House. Why not stand behind the podium and pronounce on world affairs?

### THE WHITE HOUSE NORTH LAWN

It could do with a good mow, but the White House lawn is still the White House lawn. And having wildflower patches in your garden is all the rage now, anyway.

### CROSS HALL

This broad east–west hallway was used for photo opportunities with visiting dignitaries. You could try a selfie.

### GREEN, EAST AND RED ROOMS

Before state dinners, important folk would hobnob in the Green Room over cocktails. It's looking a little shabby now, but you can still hear those clinking glasses with a little imagination. The East Room could serve for dances, concerts and ceremonies; the Red Room was employed for musical purposes too, while also holding the occasional dinner party.

### ARTWORKS

The White House doubles as an art gallery of sorts. Get ready to stroke your chin in appreciation of some lovely paintings, including George Bingham's 1847 work, *Lighter Relieving a Steamboat Aground*, and George Peter Alexander Healy's 1858 portrait of 11th US President James Knox Polk.

can just wander right on in. Indeed, far from a place to tiptoe around in awe, the White House should be regarded on this very trying trip as something of a safe haven, somewhere you can take refuge and recharge your batteries. You can even get some practice in on the firing range and – bizarre as it sounds – have a haircut while you're here.

## Judiciary Square

What a mess. **Judiciary Square**, once a byword for grandness and order, is now in a state of utter chaos. Debris and abandoned vehicles litter the ground everywhere you care to look, so that the place feels like it's under siege, cowering in a state of paralysis, waiting for the storm to pass. Still, there are flashes of life in places, with foliage here and there brightening the mood, and the noble landmarks are still (mostly) intact, from the Abraham Lincoln memorial and Grand Washington Hotel to the equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson by Clark Mills. While the overall condition of Judiciary Square today is hardly something to celebrate, one upside is that you can explore at will – those buildings that were once strictly off limits are now your playground. Be sure to make the most of this unparalleled freedom and seek out every last hidden corner of Judiciary Square – you never know what's beneath that manhole cover ([see box, p.65](#))!

## Capitol Building

Once a vision of Neoclassical splendour, central Washington's palatial **Capitol Building** has certainly seen better days. As home to the United States Congress, the Capitol is a symbol of calm deliberation and of order over chaos – today's Capitol, ravaged and overrun, could not be further from that vision. The only place you might find a little

RIGHT POTOMAC PARK; NEXT PAGE CAPITOL BUILDING





perspective here now is on the building's rooftop, but even there anarchy reigns supreme. The Capitol's expansive 274-acre grounds are also in a sorry state, a graveyard for ugly military equipment and rusting vehicles. At the time of research, there was evidence that the site has been employed as a field hospital of sorts. Inside the Capitol, the story does not improve, with much of the interior in a state of disorientating chaos, the once-splendid decor ripped and ravaged. Still, this is an incredible opportunity to gain unprecedented access to one of the world's most historically significant buildings – and when we say unprecedented, we mean *rappel-through-the-rotunda* unprecedented.

## Roosevelt Island

**Roosevelt Island** (officially Theodore Roosevelt Island) is a former quarantine area – and even today it feels like somewhere out of bounds, apart from the normal run of things. The very approach to the island is hardly promising, a ruined road bridge whose concrete-and-steel foundations have been grotesquely ripped in two by an explosion, a wrecked school bus still clinging onto the torn edge. Once on the island itself, you'll find it is really quite verdant (you might even spot a prancing deer or two) – it's just unfortunate that the natural elements are outnumbered by the man-made military ones.

That said, the views of the city from the dock are quite something, as are those from the ruined bridge, and you could do worse than seek out the Basilisk, where a hard-to-spot hole will lead you to a rarely explored area. Climbing up the various ropes slung about the island can achieve the same. Be sure, too, to hang around for sunset, when there's a certain eerie beauty to the island, its silhouette forming a strange, Halloween-worthy sight against the purple skies that are often seen in this area. Oh and a word on the locals – the residents of Roosevelt Islands have something of an attitude, to say the least.

## Federal Triangle

Yet another vision of stately sobriety gone to rack and ruin, the **Federal Triangle** is a neighbourhood of spectacular architectural riches – plus a whole lot of architectural riches turned to rubble. Particular highlights include the gracefully curved **Jefferson Trade Center**, whose interior is a lot more modern and corporate-feeling than its

### THREE MUST-VISIT WASHINGTON MUSEUMS

Your visit to D.C. comes complete with an (unofficial) access-all-areas pass to, well, just about everywhere in the city. It really comes into its own with the following three museums.

#### AMERICAN HISTORY MUSEUM

Reminiscent of D.C.'s National Museum of American History, this museum offers an immersive, endlessly varied educational experience that should make for a welcome distraction from the hellishness outside. Be sure to check out the Vietnam exhibition.

#### AIR & SPACE MUSEUM

Which kid doesn't love a Planetarium? Even adults with D.C. fatigue will appreciate the soothing feeling of gazing up at the planets and stars revolving around them. Other than that, there are all manner of old planes, drones, space rockets and even a recreation of Mars.

#### VIEWPOINT MUSEUM

An homage to D.C.'s Newseum, the ViewPoint Museum takes a deep dive into the history of media and news. When you tire of learning, go gawp at the big revolving globe that fills the central hall.

### TOP SIX WASHINGTON LANDMARKS

#### WASHINGTON MONUMENT

This mighty obelisk was erected in honour of George Washington, first President of the United States.

#### US DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

You've seen it on the back of the ten-dollar note – now see it for real.

#### FREEDOM PLAZA

Freedom Plaza was long a rallying point for political protests, a mild echo of its current status as a battleground.

#### OLD POST OFFICE MUSEUM

This spectacular example of Romanesque Revival offers superb views from its upper levels.

#### NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

The National Gallery is undoubtedly a work of art in itself, even if its debris-strewn surroundings today could do with a bit of a spruce up.

#### NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY


Part of the Smithsonian Institution, the gallery is full of images of celebrated Americans. What they would make of the goings-on outside the gallery's walls is anyone's guess.

Classical exterior might have you believe. That's not to say you should not venture inside – the shape of the building makes for a pleasingly disorienting and atmospheric exploration. **The National Archives**, meanwhile, are home to the US nation's founding documents: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. When laying the building's cornerstone in 1933, President Herbert Hoover proclaimed it "one of the most beautiful buildings in America, an expression of the American soul". Doubtless he would be turning in his grave to see the National Archives today. Be sure to pay a visit, too, to the Bureau Headquarters, which has a laboratory on site that's worth rummaging around in. Art buffs should seek out the exquisite Judith Leyster self-portrait at the 1040 Safe House.

## West Potomac Park

The days when **West Potomac Park** was a place of recreation and relaxation ablaze with cherry blossom are long gone. Now more akin to a refugee camp, the park does little to lift the spirits. All the same, the park's celebrated adornments generally endure, including the memorials to Jefferson, Roosevelt, George Mason, Martin Luther King Jr. and Korean War veterans. If you can look beyond the sorry state of much of the area, the park is still worth an afternoon's exploration – at the very least, there are way more unusual corners and hidden pockets than there once were, which might well appeal to some travellers.





# Shadow of the Tomb Raider

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PAITITI

## Introduction

Rough Guides authors and editors have made some pretty unconventional journeys over the years, but crash-landing in the steamy Peruvian jungle is a new one on us. That said, for an adventure as epic as the one you're about to take, it's an entirely appropriate beginning. For from the moment you set off from the crash site, your senses tingling and on high alert, you'll be moving from one increasingly eventful encounter to another. To put it another way, you're not going to be short of things to write about on the postcards you send home...

### 5 CHALLENGE TOMBS YOU SHOULDN'T MISS

#### PERUVIAN JUNGLE – JUDGE'S GAZE

Situated near the Plane Wreckage base camp, Judge's Gaze doesn't give up its secrets easily. From a lily pad-strewn underground pool to a nerve-testing swing bridge, just getting to the heart of the tomb takes some doing. And that's where the work really begins – you need to have eaten your spinach for this one.

#### KUWAQ YAKU – HOWLING CAVES

You can take Kuwaq Yaku Ruins as your base camp for this tomb. The deeper you go, the hotter and more ruinous the flame-ravaged terrain. But that's the least of your worries – other travellers have reported some seriously ferocious beasts down in the depths here.

#### THE HIDDEN CITY – PATH OF BATTLE

Take a deep breath. A very, very deep breath – you're going to need every last bit of your lungs' prowess to make the most of this little excursion. It's hard to convey the oddity that awaits inside – imagine a devilish clockmaker god with a thing for fire pits and you're getting there...

#### CENOTE – SAN CORDOBA

Your unlikely tour guides for San Cordoba are a couple of eels – once you've spotted them, you'll know you're on the right path, if a slippery tunnel of mud can be said to be the right path, that is. Navigate that obstacle and you'll be rewarded with nothing less than an epically enormous derelict and stranded ship. If you've ever fancied yourself as a troglodyte ghost pirate, this would be the place to express that ambition.

#### MISSION OF SAN JUAN – TREE OF LIFE

A set of directions you'll probably never hear the likes of again: make your way from the Ruined Tower base camp to the Empress Jaguar's jungle habitat, before heading through the gate littered with yellow skulls, into the church (tearing down the rope wall as you go), before climbing down and rappelling your merry way to the challenge tomb. Easy. Oh and make sure you have the means to produce plenty of fire arrows. You're going to need them.

So what exactly will you be doing on this trip of a lifetime? Well, there'll be everything from rum-soaked Day of the Dead festivities and excursions to remote outposts rarely visited by outsiders to poignant explorations of Croft Manor and an unforgettable trip to the legendary lost city of Paititi. Oh and don't forget the raids on some particularly choice doom-laden tombs along the way.

But it's a jungle out there in more ways than one. So keep your head down (like, become-one-with-the-forest keeping your head down) and enjoy the ride. This is new territory for us, too. We have a book, *The Rough Guide to South America on a Budget*, which is invaluable to those who want to get about the continent on a relative shoestring. Well, here we go with *The Rough Guide to South America on an Absolute Mission*.

## Things not to miss

### 1 CHURCH OF SAN JUAN

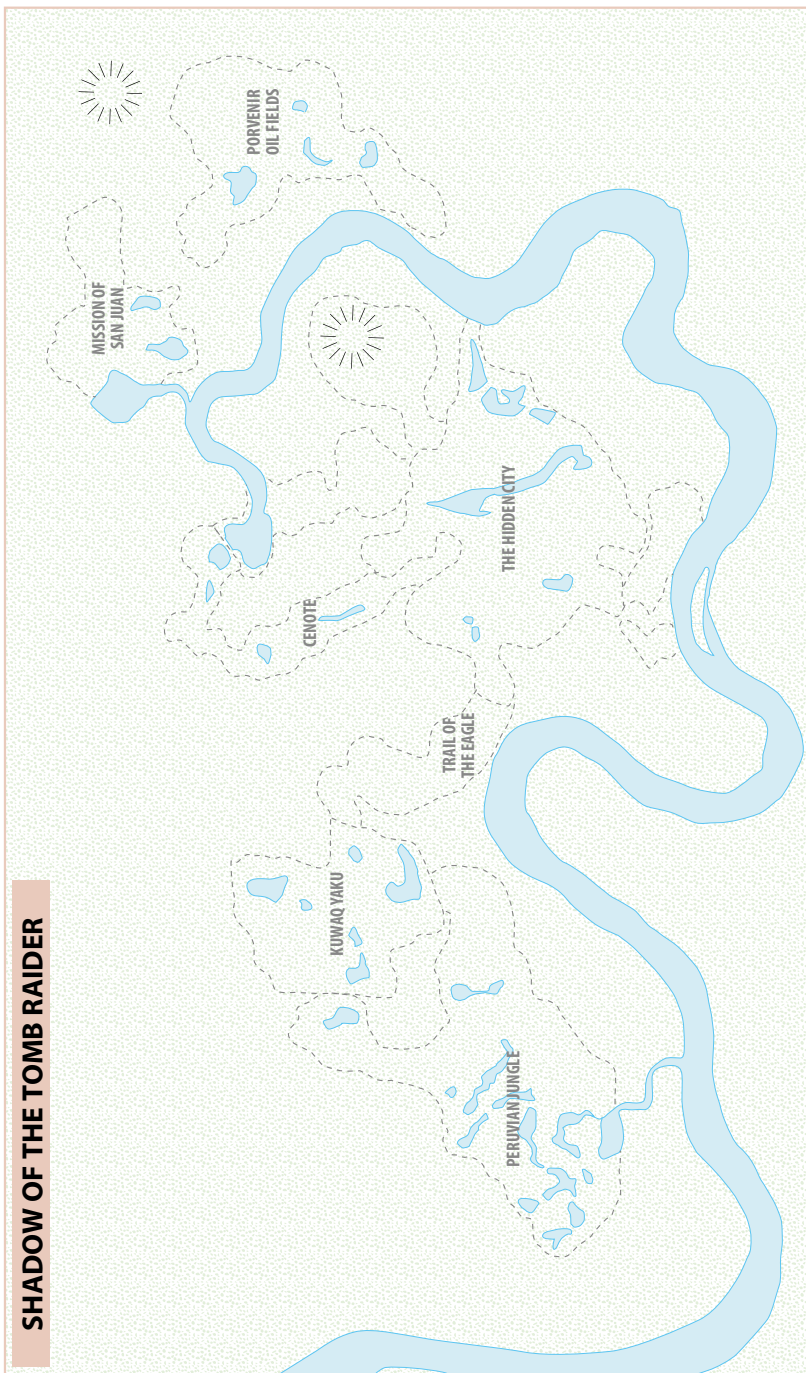
Derelict it may be, but that doesn't dim this holy spot's spirit-lifting atmosphere of history and community. [See p.85.](#)

### 2 KUWAQ YAKU

Backs of beyond don't get much beyond than this, yet Kuwaq Yaku remains an invaluable stop to stock up on supplies. [See p.96.](#)

### 3 PERUVIAN JUNGLE CRASH SITE

It really might have been better all round if you *did* miss this one... Still, there's always a silver lining and here it is in the form of a supernaturally charged tomb. [See p.96.](#)

**4 PAITITI**

A “lost city” that you’ll be very, very glad you found. The views from up above are simply unforgettable. [See p.97.](#)

**5 COZUMEL TOWN**

Enjoy festivals? Then Cozumel, where every day is the Day of the Dead, is the town for you. [See p.98.](#)

**6 CROFT MANOR**

The childhood home you always dreamt about, complete with hidden nooks and crannies – yours to explore at your leisure. [See p.98.](#)

**7 PORVENIR OIL FIELDS**

A flame-spewing oil refinery amid lush, tropical forest – what’s not to like? [See p.99.](#)

## Basics

### Getting around

If you’re looking for a fly-n-flop, all-inclusive kind of experience, where the most adventurous journey you take is in a speeding golf buggy, this might not be the trip for you. But many travellers (particularly Rough Guides travellers) are seeking a different sort of travel: one where you forge your own path and find untrodden ways. If that sounds like you, you’re in luck. Getting around on this trip is going to be a major, life-affirming challenge, with not a tourist shuttle bus in sight. You’ll be doing some rappelling and wall running, a bit of cliff scrambling and overnight hiking, with a fair quota of underwater swimming thrown in for good measure (watch out for those piranhas). Bring. It. On.

### Accommodation

They’re hardly luxury resorts, but you’ll be oh so glad of the base camps at your disposal. These blessed oases of calm allow you to rest, heal and generally get yourself back in fine jungle-explorin’, tomb-raidin’ fettle.

### Money

Cold, hard... gold is the currency of choice in these parts. Gold pieces can be acquired in a multitude of ways: by looting enemies, searching tombs and crypts, gaining rewards from missions and selling resources to merchants.

## Locations

### Church of San Juan

**SAN JOSÉ’s Church of San Juan** has a long and storied history – one that your presence here is quite likely to add colourful chapters to.

#### WALKING ON THE WILD SIDE

Birds, insects, eels, llamas, piranhas, monkeys, jaguars, capybara and frogs – you name it, the Peruvian jungle’s got it. And don’t feel you have to stand by and go all gooey over them – nope, a lot of these beautiful creatures can be hunted and harvested for pelts, poisons and other useful items. If that sounds harsh, well, you might want to rethink your travel plans, quite frankly, for there’s little room for sentiment out here. That said, if you really do want to avoid killing the poor critters, skins are available for purchase at trading spots. You can also always concentrate on honing your wildlife photography skills rather than sticking them with arrows.























## WHAT TO PACK

You know those signs at the airport that detail all the things that are forbidden to have in your hand luggage? Well, for this trip, you're going to have to find some creative ways to get around security. Why? Because the following items are absolutely non-negotiable for your Peruvian escapades: bows (and arrows); knives (for cutting ropes and, um, slicing tasty morsels from dead animals); rope (you never know when it'll come in handy!); rappel wire and ascender (don't ask); crampons (very, very sturdy crampons); rucksack (a nice big, waterproof one).

Its sprawling grounds, ravaged over the years by earthquakes, occupy a lovely spot, with mountains all around, palm trees drooping sleepily and a river running along the church's east side – head down the old set of stone stairs to find it. Admittedly, the church is derelict, but it is well loved and well used, with colourful fabrics strewn here and there, missionaries handing out food and locals praying in the grounds – all of which produces a charming sense of community.

Points of interest that must not be missed include the drained stone fountain in the church's courtyard and a secret crypt in the library.

## Brief history

Spanish missionaries were inspired to build the Mission of San Juan in the sixteenth century by a sequence of miraculous phenomena. Local lore has it that a vision of St John the Apostle occurred to local missionaries following four separate solar eclipses in a relatively short space of time.

## Kuwaq Yaku

Paddington Bear famously hailed from “Darkest Peru” and it might just have been **KUWAQ YAKU** where he grew up. The settlement is about as remote and jungle-shrouded as can be, yet it is clearly a modern site, with little of the ancient charm of Paititi – think corrugated iron roofs, hog pits and rough, if cheerfully painted, structures. All back-of-beyond places need a decent bar to alleviate the tedium, and Kuwaq Yaku is no exception. You can pick up a good range of supplies from the local merchant, from banana and rice to weapons, medicines and protective clothes. The echo of darker goings-on from the past is evident in the abandoned excavation that locals claim was the handiwork of a shadowy, ill-meaning organization. Make sure you head down to the stone tomb beneath the excavation site to check out the Maya mural (as if you needed telling).

## Peruvian jungle crash site

In the immensity of the **Peruvian jungle**, pinpointing the exact spot where the fateful plane crash that launched this entire voyage took place is quite a task. This, though, is undoubtedly the crash site, with plane debris and smashed-up cargo scattered all about the dense jungle, hanging from branches and littering the forest floor.

There is a base camp here (covered by a parachute), which will come in very handy for resting up and perhaps even appreciating the **wildlife**: budding nature buffs should keep their eyes peeled and cameras cocked for roaming tapir and orangutan, among other wonderful beasts.

What the ancients would have made of a great metal god crashing into their forest surroundings, we can only surmise, but their spirit haunts this place still. At the huge stone **monument tomb**, a supernatural presence looms in the fog. Do not be

bewitched by this sense of watchfulness lest you fall into one of the many dastardly traps laid hereabouts. If you can allow yourself to enjoy a little sightseeing, there's something unnervingly satisfying about the tomb's combination of rotting wood and moss-smothered stone. A huge ancient carving, perhaps of a god or native leader, dominates the scene – local legend claims it to be the source of the supernatural ambience.

## Paititi

Locals chatting in their native language, birds tweeting overhead, chickens clucking, the sound of hooves on cobbles, drums in the distance and llamas making llama noises – the “lost city” of **PAITITI**, nestled in a valley below high cliffs and monumental, water-spewing armaments, is just begging for you to find it. Half overtaken by nature and chock-full of thatched, clay-walled dwellings and muddy pathways, Paititi is a wonderful attack on the senses. This place has all the buzz of a thriving modern city – just without any of the mod cons. Paititi's civilization has refined its lifestyle here since time immemorial, finding the means to be perfectly at one with the surrounding landscape. So don't turn your nose up at the far-from-chic environs here: stay a few days and really get to know the place. Chat to locals as they engage in their back-to-basics trades. Check out the market stalls, decorated gorgeously with timeworn indigenous textiles, their wares displayed in mismatched



RIGHT COZUMEL TOWN



bowls. If you're looking for further distraction, take any one of the long stone staircases weaving around the city and make your way to the high vantage points for fabulous views of the city down below. There is also a waterfall that is just perfect for cooling off on hot afternoons.

## Cozumel Town

In **COZUMEL**, every day is the Day of the Dead and the town certainly looks especially fetching in its festive get-up. Candlelit tables are laden with food and drink; lights are strewn from rustic building to rustic building and from palm tree to palm tree; there are flowers and religious relics everywhere you look. Don a mask like the locals (when in Rome...) and you might be surprised by the effect it has on you – people have been known to do things they wouldn't normally dream of when their face is concealed. If this happens to you and you find yourself irresistibly drawn to the town's hidden areas, beware the armed and less-than-friendly townsfolk guarding them. When you're done roistering and rummaging, be sure to check out the enigmatic Cozumel Murals, which depict a legendary voyage undertaken by the Maya. Groundhog Day (of the Dead) ain't so bad.

## Croft Manor

It was once home, sweet home, no doubt, but a house the size of centuries-old **Croft Manor** is not an easy one to make cosy. Perhaps that's why every one of the huge rooms (and even a lot of the hallways) features a fireplace. All in all, the place is like something written into a children's adventure book set in an endless summer, with a clock tower, perfectly manicured lawns, ancient oaks, abundant rose bushes, a fountain, wild rabbits and an irresistibly rambling tree house. This wonderland, set in palatial gardens, is cut off from the outside world by a high stone wall and iron gates.

### TOP FIVE MURALS

#### GOD OF DEATH – PERUVIAN JUNGLE

This is one gory mural. Ah-Puch is the god of death and ruler of Mitnal, the ninth and most horrible level of the Maya version of hell. One thing Ah-Puch apparently loved doing was dressing in putrefying flesh (don't we all?) and visiting the surface to prey upon the living. According to legend, the only way to save yourself from him was to scream like you're in unbearable agony. His harbinger demon was a screech owl named Muan. Cute.

#### KON – PERUVIAN JUNGLE

A depiction of the Inca weather god Kon, the son of Inti the sun god and Pachamama the moon goddess.

#### CONIRAYA – KUWAQ YAKU

Coniraya is the Incan god of the moon. Relatively low in status, he never found a mate.

#### INTI – KUWAQ YAKU

God of the sun, protector of the people and provider of warmth and light, Inti is represented by a bright golden disc. The Inca emperors were either considered his lineal descendants or the physical incarnations of Inti on earth.

#### GOD OF CACAO – SAN JUAN

The Maya god of the cacao bean, Ek-Chuah has black-rimmed eyes and facial features that seem to be melting at their extremities. Because ancient Mesoamericans used cacao beans as currency, Ek-Chuah is also a god of merchants and of trade.

## STAYING ALIVE

Travelling in the Peruvian jungle is not for those wedded to their creature comforts. You can definitely forget your flat whites and facials (though they do say mud is good for the skin...). Just surviving is going to be a challenge. With the threats guaranteed to come thick and fast, here are some tips for coming out on top.

### THE BEAUTY OF BEING UNDERHAND

In an ideal world, every fight would be conducted fair and square, on a level playing field, probably with bare knuckles and a no-nonsense umpire keeping an eye on things. This is not an ideal world. This is the Peruvian jungle. So be as sneaky as you like.

### GO WITH YOUR GUT

There's something about travelling in the Peruvian jungle that really hones your instincts. It could be the perpetual threat of death (that tends to do it). When you encounter a stranger, stay alert to what your instincts tell you – they could be the difference between life and death.

### EAT YOUR GREENS

Forget your pathetic parsley, the Peruvian jungle's herbs are on another level. They're so powerful, in fact, that they can perk you up midway through an exhausting fight. Keep yourself well stocked.

### SHOULD YOU STAY OR SHOULD YOU GO?

There's no point launching yourself into a confrontation every time you spot a stranger. Hang back, conceal yourself and carefully weigh up your options – letting them walk on by might be the best course of action.

### EMBRACE THE YIN AND THE YANG OF COMBAT

Even experienced explorers will struggle to avoid unfriendly, aggressive locals. But if you do end up in a fight, it's a good idea to keep on with the avoiding thing – sometimes ducking out the way is better than going in with whirling fists (we're told).

Once you've torn yourself away from playing *Swallows and Amazons* in the tree house, venture inside and explore the manor's interior, lined with expensive-looking paintings. The hall, with its floor-to-ceiling bookcases, is of particular interest, featuring a concealed reading spot that is well worth seeking out. Even more secret is the crypt beneath the house, where members of the landowning family are interred.

## Porvenir Oil Fields

Contrasts don't get much starker than the scene at **Porvenir Oil Fields**, where an oil refinery is juxtaposed with lush, tropical forest.

Normally, gushing flame is A Bad Thing – not so here, where the entire operation is perfectly controlled. Less well controlled are the locals, who do not take kindly to tourists. Keep a low profile (and consider smearing yourself with some of that good, sticky mud). Adrenaline junkies might want to take on the challenge of climbing the precipitous structure, all rusty metal and towering silos – doing so as the refinery disintegrates (not out of the realms of possibility) is said to be on certain maniacs' travel bucket lists. The more level-headed explorer might opt out of such madness and instead take the somewhat nobler challenge of cave exploration, where an impressive shrine and magnificent mural await.

A trip here is really going to take it out of you, so make sure to rest up before and after, and come with your batteries fully charged.





# Anthem

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FORTRESS OF DAWN

## Introduction

We travellers love to seek out the old, cobbled, timeworn corners of cities and turn our noses up at the glistening new builds. It's part of the reason that ruins are so irresistible. Then there are the unfinished places, of which Barcelona's Sagrada Família is the most celebrated example. Do we ever want Gaudí's masterpiece to actually be finished?

Well, welcome to the world of Anthem, where this theory is tested to its maximum. Here the entire world has been left unfinished by the gods, existing in a state of exquisitely violent volatility. Yet its very fragility is partly why it is so very, *very* beautiful, a vast, shimmering vista expanding endlessly towards the horizon in all directions. Oh and check this out: you get to explore those vistas with flying suits of battle armour.

### TOP FIVE VIEWS

Remember – enjoying views on your own is great, but doing it with others is even better. Why not strike up conversations with other travellers along the way and bag yourself a buddy so you can coo over these amazing views together?

#### STRIDER WAY

Has there ever been an unattractive waterfall? Probably not, but what makes Strider Way so special is the way that the waterfalls here seem almost intentionally arranged to decorate this blissfully peaceful corner of the Valley of Tarsis.

#### FORTRESS OVERLOOK

The Fortress Overlook gives a truly breathtaking view of the Fortress of Dawn in its awesome mountain setting. Peer closely and you'll be able to spot Vassa's Way, too. Sunset is hands down the best time to appreciate this one.

#### EDDIAN GROVE

Botanists with a macro lens will love taking close-ups in Eddian Grove, with its one-of-a-kind plant life. The rest of us will simply gawp in wonder at this unearthly reboot of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

#### ASTRONOMY TOWER

Sometimes a judiciously placed intervention in the landscape lifts the whole scene. Astronomy Tower is one such intervention, a sculpturally discreet monument that enhances rather than tries to compete with the spectacular mountain vista beyond.

#### WEST VALVE

This one's as much about the journey to reach it as the vantage point itself. Propel yourself towards this towering eyrie and soak up the lush jungle views dropping dramatically away from you.

Whooshing through tunnels into dense jungle, exploding up steep cliffs, plummeting down deep canyons as flash storms billow above you and then careening into gushing waterfalls splintering with exquisite sunlight – wow. When the adrenaline's pumping, it's going to feel a bit like paradise. But it's not paradise – it's very much unknown, to its very core. Do not be taken in by the lush beauty of the world's landscapes – they might look inviting, but they are very rarely what they seem.

## Things not to miss

### 1 ACADEMY RUINS

Quite possibly the most stellar roll call of must-do sights this side of NYC. [See p.116.](#)

### 2 EAST GATE

Shout out to the mining enthusiasts – this one's for you! [See p.117.](#)

### 3 EDDIAN GROVE

Don't even consider swerving this mind-boggling valley filled with upside-down trees. [See p.117.](#)

### 4 FORT TARSIS

If they made a medieval castle now, they might make Fort Tarsis. [See p.117.](#)

### 5 FORTRESS OF DAWN

As gravely beautiful as it is enigmatic, this fortress will last long in your memory. [See p.118.](#)

### 6 MONUMENT WATCH

A riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside a verdant ravine. [See p.118.](#)

### 7 VALLEY OF TARSIS

Its glory days might be long gone, but an air of grandeur lingers here still. [See p.119.](#)

## 5

# Basics

## Getting around

Once you step outside the walls of Fort Tarsis ([see p.117](#)), you'll need to take very special precautions. In fact, you won't be *stepping* outside the walls of Fort Tarsis – you'll be soaring outside of them. Flying via rocket-powered suits of armour known as Javelins ([see box, p.116](#)) is actually just about the only way to navigate the terrain. The real trick to Javelin travel is knowing when to use your boosters. Being in the vicinity of water is a good time to try them out, as they're less likely to overhear (and,



## AN ODE TO ANTHEM'S WILDLIFE

The old bark versus bite thing is very strongly in your favour here. A lot of the creatures you'll encounter look to have been plucked from someone's nightmares, but if you fly, most of the time you won't be troubled by them. On the flora side of things, the world's bioluminescent plants will take your breath away with their strange beauty. Below are some of the beasties you should keep tabs on.

**WYVERN**

Endemic to Eddian Grove ([see p.117](#)), the aggressive wyvern has the potential to spoil your enjoyment of that lovely spot. Try not to let it.

## SWARM TYRANT

Arachnophobes, look away now. The Swarm Tyrant is One. Big. Spider.

## SKORPION

This six-legged, acid-shooting, egg-laying baddie comes in three flavours: digester, soldier and worker. We're not sure which is worst.

**URSIX**

A bit like a dinosaur and a bit like a gorilla but as pretty as neither.

## GRABBIT

Grabbit, grabbit. The closest thing you'll get to having a pet on this trip.

**ANRISAUR**

This deadly foe might look like a bit like a crab but if you're expecting it only to move sideways, you're in for a nasty shock.

## BRUTE

Brute by name, brute by nature – beware this humanoid’s mightily sharp spikes.

**KOROX**

As you might have guessed from the name, the Korox is a little like a cow in its herd tendencies. Don't try to milk it, though.

happily, flying through waterfalls is a whole lot of fun). Cute fact: when you slip into the suit, you actually place your foot on its knee. Expect to feel a whole lot taller once you've donned your flying suit! You can also explore certain areas **by foot**, which is a lot less fun but sometimes absolutely necessary.

## Climate

You can expect a little mid-air turbulence. The storms here are ferocious, a feast of lightning and thunderbolts. But then this lively weather is only a reflection of the heartbreakingly fragile and beautifully volatile world you'll be exploring. Be very wary, however, of so-called "Shaper storms", which are so powerful they'll warp space-time, never mind turn umbrellas inside-out.

## Shopping

Use the local currency – simply known as **coin** – to pick up the scant available supplies that are on sale. This trip is all about scavenging and necessity being the mother of invention.









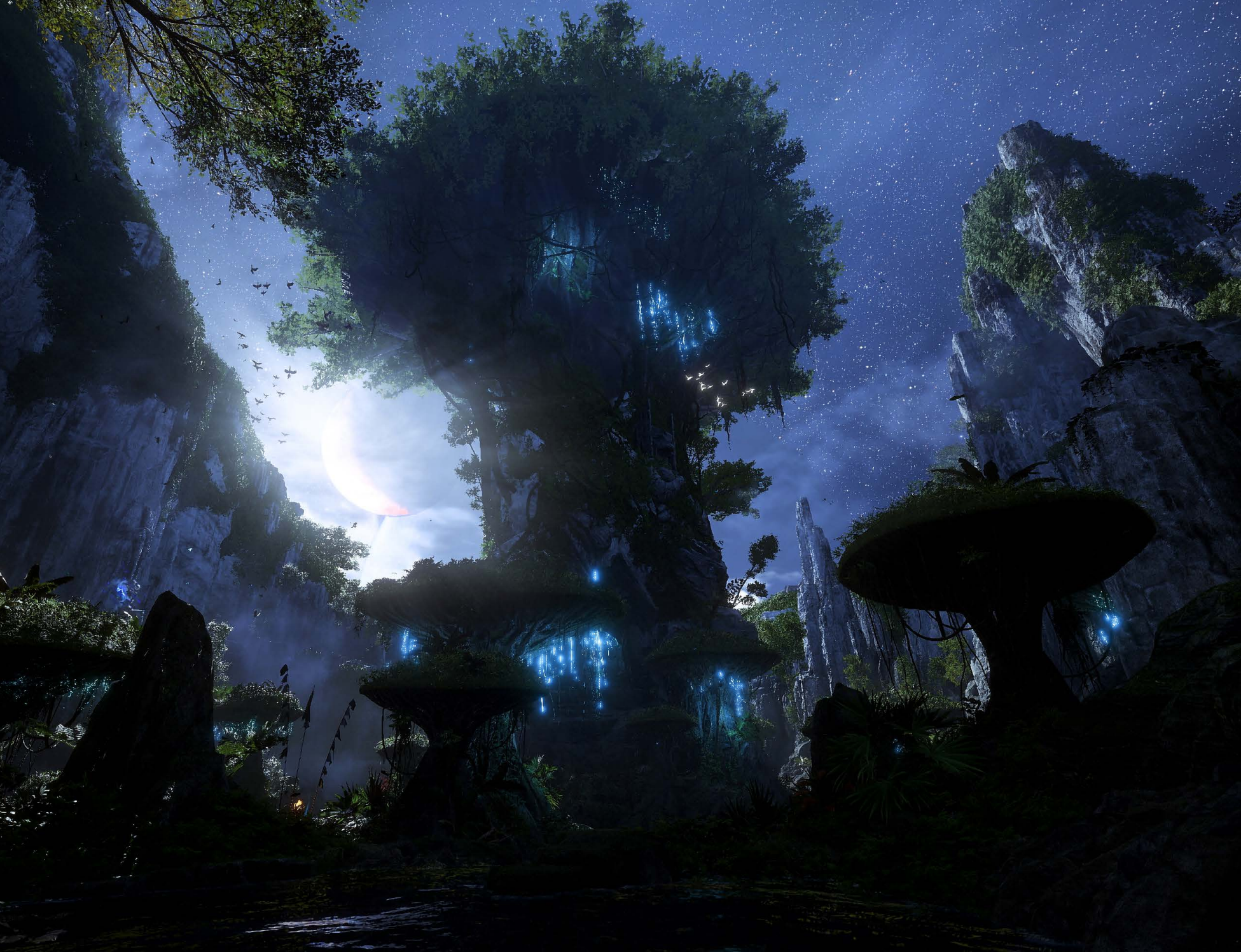














# Locations

## Academy Ruins

In spite of its name, **Academy Ruins** is no place for bookworms. Tropical, swampy and plagued by mosquitoes and other nasties, the Academy Ruins region really shouldn't be a tourist hotspot – but a tourist hotspot it undoubtedly is, with a world-class line-up of unmissable sights to enjoy.

First up is **Astronomy Tower**, an enigmatic piece of architecture perched in a breathtaking high-altitude position. The site has the feel of a sort of open-sided mausoleum; as for its true purpose, your guess is as good as ours. If the tower is something you could imagine sitting in an Asian or perhaps South American setting, meanwhile, the **Ring Gate** looks entirely out of this world. A pair of enormous stone-carved rings of uncertain origin, the fact that the site is invariably shrouded in mist only adds to the mystique. Next, you'll come to the Radio Tower and its tiered roofs, for all the world reminiscent of Chinese architecture – those who have visited both often make comparisons between the Radio Tower site and Beijing's Forbidden City. Northeast of the Garrison (where you should be sure to fly among the vines), the **Hollow Dungeons** are not forbidden, but perhaps should be. An irresistible lure to the more adventurous traveller, the dungeon can lead you a merry dance, so keep your wits about you.

It's not just trees you'll encounter in **Tarsis Forest**, which features the most bizarre array of what are essentially scarecrows. Nicknamed "The Happy Anzu", these statues of a wild, ferocious beast are thought to have been erected to scare away unwanted visits by the local wildlife.

You'll visit your fair share of locations with tragic backstories on this trip. **Solarium Court** has arguably the most affecting of the lot. Originally intended as a place to celebrate the coming together of humankind and the natural world, the upshot of the project was carnage on a grand scale. That said, these days there is a certain ghostly peace here, but it is difficult to feel entirely at ease.

Yet another site with a troubled past is the pass known as **Exiles Arch**, which has a long and less than glorious history as a place synonymous with the banished. Keep your eyes peeled for the cheerily named Hanging Tree.

Somewhere you really can kick back and rest your weary feet (and Javelin), the

### JAVELIN CHIC

Your **Javelin exosuit** is your ticket to ride in style around the Anthem world. It can go pretty much anywhere your courage is willing to take you – all you have to do is choose the model that suits you best. Check out our style guide so you don't make any Javelin fashion faux pas.

### RANGER JAVELIN

Versatility, versatility, versatility. You'll never look out of place in a Ranger.

### COLOSSUS JAVELIN

Like chucking on your sweatpants to get some DIY done, the Colossus ain't pretty but it sure is practical.

### INTERCEPTOR JAVELIN

Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee. Muhammad Ali knew about style and he also understood the importance of being light on your feet – he'd have definitely gone for the Interceptor.

### STORM JAVELIN

Capable of staying airborne like no other Javelin, the Storm is basically the magic carpet of the flying-suit world – and magic carpets are *always* a good look.

## YOU CAN CALL ME EDDIAN

Hooved and horned, the Eddian was a legendary beast that locals in these parts still hold to have once stalked the earth. The Eddian Tree is said to have sprung up at the spot where the Eddian died following a battle with a mighty enemy. If you fly around the tree, and squint your eyes just so, you might just make out the face of the Eddian discernible in its form.

**Praedean Falls** are so blissful – an explosion of gorgeous flowers and gushing water – you might almost think there's a catch. And, actually, there is: the site is perilously slippery – legendarily so, if the local tales of long-forgotten figures falling to their death here are anything to go by. Enjoy the views, but watch your step. Just as charming, but in a very different way, is **Moonpod Lagoon**, which might have you feeling you've stumbled upon a fairy-enchanted grove – bring your camera, otherwise the folks back home will never believe you.

## East Gate

You don't have to be a mining enthusiast to get a kick out of **East Gate** – but it certainly helps. Once you've passed through the impressive stone archway that represents the entrance to this region, make a beeline for the Skystone Path, which affords fabulous views over the mining platforms. In fact, seeking out vantage points in this lush, craggy site is the main way to spend your time here. Make your way to the top of the so-called **Scar Mast** for some breathtaking views of the area. The watchtower-like construction is a disturbingly successful defensive structure and has been rebuilt many times over by the Scars. An unlikely point of interest here is the improbably named **Lovers' Spring** caves – they're worth a look, but know that they're far from romantic in ambience. **The Necropolis** is another cave – more suitably named, this time – with a thrillingly secretive feel. To find it, keep your eyes peeled for a pair of firelights. Take care.

## Eddian Grove

Do not adjust your sets: **Eddian Grove** really does feature an upside-down tree of epic proportions. This place can have you rubbing your eyes and checking your medication, but once you get a little used to the astonishing scene before you, make the most of it: take a perch on the canopy of the main Eddian Tree (or one of its smaller siblings) and just enjoy the psychedelic surroundings, listening to the sounds of twinkling water all around and gazing up at the flocks of birds whooshing overhead. Deep inside the Eddian Tree, a set of shady ruins provides some respite from the blazing sunshine. The linguistic closeness to "Eden" with Eddian cannot be ignored – and you might just feel you have found your own paradise garden when you've spent some time here. At the risk of spoiling the party, though, there *is* one downside to this spellbinding place: local fauna includes the aggressive, dragon-like wyvern and the spiky-headed "brute" ([see box, p.105](#)). Both should be avoided at all costs, lest your blissed-out bubble be burst.

## Fort Tarsis

If you've ever wondered what life was like inside a medieval castle, a visit to **Fort Tarsis** might just provide you with a pretty accurate impression – albeit a rather more hi-tech one, and a fort built of concrete rather than a castle made of stone. The atmosphere here, however, cannot be so very different from those old castles, with a set-up whereby human life goes on behind formidably defended walls, beyond which any manner of enemy forces plot the downfall of the stronghold. Be sure to check out the central fountain and pay a visit to the colourful market. Many visitors to Fort Tarsis have



noted how the great modernist-looking spire rising from the structure resembles the steeple from some twentieth-century cathedral.

## Fortress of Dawn

Looking for a stupendous yet mysterious landmark? With its overlooking twin colossi statues and strategically high walls, the **Fortress of Dawn** has been sealed for centuries. Mountainous, forested and gorgeous, don't waste your time trying to solve the puzzle of entering the fortress – just enjoy the solemnly beautiful surroundings for what they are.

## Monument Watch

First impressions of the eponymous structure at **Monument Watch**, a towering, unnerving structure that has somehow taken root in a vast, verdant ravine, are unforgettable. The thing looks alive yet lifeless, planned yet chaotic, artificial yet organic. Its multitude of moss-covered arms grope out towards you, sometimes crackling with blue sparks, both pushing you away and inviting you in. Yet as eerie as

BELOW FORT TARSIS



## TOP FIVE HIDDEN LOCATIONS

### THE VAULT

Lurking deep underwater, The Vault is thought to have been built by an ancient civilization.

### THE HAVEN

What more romantic hiding place is there than a beautiful waterfall? The Haven enjoys just such a position. To find it, keep an eye out for the giant stone statue.

### THE BANE ENGINE

Monument Watch is awash with a sense of secrecy as it is, so good luck finding The Bane Engine.

### THE CORE

For travellers prone to claustrophobia, The Core, located in Ruins of Shadowmark, might be one to skip: there's only one way in, and the same way out.

### THE SHRINE

With an address like "between Hate Engine and Convector Henge," you'd think The Shrine might be rather conspicuous. But no...

the Monument is, exploring it is also somehow irresistible.

As unfathomable as the purpose of Monument Watch might be, we can attempt to dissect it a little. There are four principal areas, for instance. The first is **The Monument** itself, already described. Rumours abound that the metal used in The Monument's construction is unique the universe over and has the power to warp gravity: beware! The second main landmark at Monument Watch is **The Drill**, a large structure that appears to be functional (but what function?); it is best appreciated from the air. The **Iron Serpent** is another structure of dubious but undeniable power, while the **The Bane Engine** takes some finding, hidden down a dark tunnel – we're not sure anyone other than the chronically curious will find it in them to seek this devilish place out.

## Valley of Tarsis

On first impressions, the moody and somewhat melancholy **Valley of Tarsis** has an air of quiet, understated nobility. Tucked in between Fort Tarsis and the Eastern Reach, the Valley of Tarsis is lush, green and kissed by a smattering of charming waterfalls (Strider View affords superb views of these). The principal point of interest is **The Antium Lock**, celebrated locally for the historic role it played in preventing an unwanted southern animal migration. Other than the lock, it's also worth checking out **Howel's Tower**, **Honor Valley Dam** and the huge statue known as **The Faithful**.





# Halo 5: Guardians

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ALLUVION RESEARCH CENTER

## Introduction

We've travelled far and wide at Rough Guides – but never before into the future. Welcome to 2558.

This is also the first time we've ever left the planet. And we're not talking about some meek little hop to the moon. Halo sees you ranging right across the galaxy, from mysterious alien jungles and snowy (though entirely extraterrestrial) mountaintops to sculpted monasteries and otherworldly caverns.

### FIVE MOVES TO ADD TO YOUR REPERTOIRE

To paraphrase The Bangles, walk like a Spartan... As a tourist in the Halo universe, it'll make your life an awful lot easier. You'll be able to avoid enemies, find new areas and just generally get about more quickly. Here are the five moves every Halo tourist should know.

#### SPRINT

As a tourist in Halo, you might sometimes be in a hurry – especially if you're in the middle of an intense firefight. Go forth and sprint.

#### SLIDE

Hold up! Sometimes you realize sprinting's a really bad idea (when, say, a barrage of incoming fire makes its presence felt). The Spartan armour is capable of performing a graceful sliding stop in such sorry circumstances.

#### CLAMBER

Spartan armour – making clambering cool one cliff face at a time.

#### THRUSTER PACK

With the ferocious thruster pack, you can burst forward in any direction you like. That'll show 'em.

#### SPARTAN CHARGE

Also known as the mother-of-all shoulder bashes.

A word about warfare. There's no getting around it: you will have to see your fair share of (really, *really* intense) battle action. It's just the way the world is – this world, at least. But there are also countless opportunities for less perilous exploration – what could be finer than spending a leisurely afternoon rooting around among the ruins of an alien civilization? Or practising your interplanetary communication skills, interacting with the habitants of a struggling human colony beyond the reach of the UNSC and besieged by hostile forces?

Whatever circumstances you find yourself in, one thing is for sure: you will be surrounded by quite exquisite beauty, from the pulsating heat of a desert to the wind-whipped desolation of a ravaged continent to spirit-lifting, flower-flecked green hills. It's all out there for you – but you have to earn the right. You have to *fight* for that right. Sad but true.

What's really unnerving about this sort of futuristic, space-travelling tourism is just how quickly you feel – if not at home, exactly, then certainly quite comfortable in these alien worlds. The human capacity to adapt is phenomenal. And boy are you going to need to draw on every ounce of that capacity.

One final point: you'll have to dress appropriately – specifically by donning the Mjolnir armour of a Spartan. You may feel a little more restricted than on previous flip-flops-and-shorts travels, but there's really no alternative. You might want to equip yourself with the means to protect yourself from less-than-friendly locals, too. All in the interests of self-defence, you understand.

## Things not to miss

### 1 ALLUVION RESEARCH CENTER (A.R.C.)

A strangely beautiful mining complex studded with monumental Forerunner structural interventions – your cup runneth over! [See p.125.](#)

### 2 APEX 7

Is this place for real? Apex 7 is going to blow your tiny mind with its artificial tropical vibes. [See p.126.](#)

## TAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF

Sometimes in life, we make it harder for ourselves than we really need to. Halo 5 has four difficulty levels: Easy, Normal, Heroic and Legendary. For travellers unfamiliar with these surroundings, why not take things down a notch or two and opt for an easy life? It'll allow you more time to soak up all those gorgeous, gorgeous vistas.

### 3 ARGENT MOON

This spooky, abandoned space station will bring out the urban explorer in you – the interplanetary version of the urban explorer in you, that is. [See p.126.](#)

### 4 PLAZA

A sort of futuristic Tokyo filled with baddies, you're going to need to keep your wits about you to survive a trip to Plaza. [See p.127.](#)

### 5 GENESIS

If you've had any doubts that alien-built worlds can be beautiful to human eyes, Genesis will put paid to them once and for all. [See p.136.](#)

### 6 MERIDIAN

This terrible testament to the power of the Covenant will rock you to the core. [See p.136.](#)

### 7 NUUSRA

A history buff's dream, Nuusra is quite simply a treasure trove of ancient alien sites. [See p.136.](#)

### 8 SUNAION

Raised above the surface of the Csurdon Sea by giant columns, alien Sunaion is eerily impressive. [See p.137.](#)

### 9 KAMCHATKA

Remote and uninhabited Kamchatka offers dark tourism of the most extreme sort – prepare for a spectacularly ghoulish sort of sightseeing. [See p.137.](#)

## TOP FIVE ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS

### CITY OF SUNAION

Built on jaw-droppingly elaborate stilts, the modern, alien city of Sunaion stands as its own empire, only accessible by air or sea, and vastly different from the old ruins in Sanghelios. Located on the continent of Qivro, on the planet Sanghelios, Sunaion sits above the Csurdon Sea near the coastlines of Nuusra.

### VADAM CLAN BURIAL GROUND

Sometimes architecture is even more impressive once it falls into ruins. The Vadam Clan burial ground, abandoned for centuries, is one such site. Built into the side of red-hued cliffs, the tomb throbs with a sense of being one with the landscape. And even in their crumbling state, the Vadam Clan statues are magnificently forbidding.

### THE GATEWAY

An enigmatic Forerunner structure located on the remote world of Genesis, the Gateway serves primarily as a link to the ancient information repository known as the Domain. Its powerful, circular architecture stands in stark contrast to the surrounding grassy terrain.

### MERIDIAN STATION

Form and function: some of the best architecture brings these two core aspects of a structure together with stunning mastery. Meridian Station, on the other hand, is a masterpiece of sheer function, a visual cacophony of industrial elements that nobody will forget in a hurry.

### FORERUNNER SPIRE

The Forerunner Spire stands in the middle of a warzone on Apex 7. Surrounded by sea, beaches, rocks and dense foliage, it is not the easiest place to access. Its hard steel lines and sultry dark metal hues are a stunningly sharp contrast to the lush natural surroundings.

## Basics

### Getting around

The universe is your oyster but, as vast as the distances involved in Halo are, you'll be spending much of your time **on foot**, whether strolling around, sprinting ([see box, p.123](#)) to evade nasty surprises or clambering up to various vantage points. Your Spartan thruster pack should come in handy, too. You've got some serious vehicular hardware at your disposal in Halo 5: Guardians. **Vehicles** can be small or gigantic, ranging from cars to planes.

### Travel essentials

It's sad but true: filled with enemies, the Halo universe is a decidedly dangerous place to travel. When on the road, always make sure you carry the most powerful weapon available and plenty of ammunition – after all, you never know when a hostile stranger will appear. Another great tool for explorers is the new Artemis advanced scanning system, which is basically your virtual personal assistant – it's like Alexa, just infinitely better.

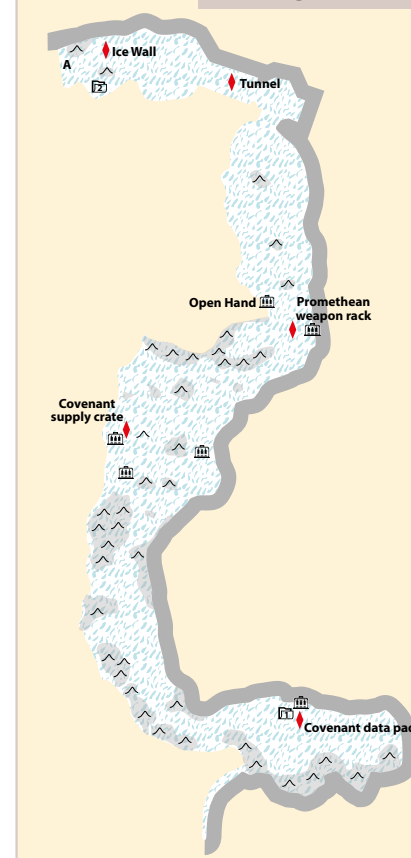
## Locations

### Alluvion Research Center (A.R.C.)

Mines are not on many people's bucket lists but, hey, UNESCO name quite a few among their World Heritage Sites list – and who's to argue with UNESCO? Shout out to two of our favourite UNESCO-recognized mines here at Rough Guides: the UK's Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape and Germany's Zollverein Coal Mine Industrial Complex in Essen. Mind-blowing stuff.

Located on the planet of **ALLUVION**, the **Alluvion Research Center (A.R.C.)** is a mining complex in the middle of an ocean. Eliminate your enemies and then proceed to have a nice leisurely exploration of the site's every nook and cranny, inside and out. Occupying what was once a seabed, the landscape is a vision of rock and stone, with the overall feel that of a desert canyon – a desert canyon with monumental Forerunner structural interventions, that is. As industrial and bleak as it is, there's a strange beauty to this place, if you have eyes to see it: the uniform bright orange colour scheme of the man-made installations and the angular edges of the architecture are a peculiarly pleasing contrast to the natural terrain. The Forerunner shield pylons, meanwhile,

## KAMCHATKA





## TOP FIVE VEHICLES IN HALO 5: GUARDIANS

### GHOST

Officially named "Type-54 Rapid Attack Vehicle", the iconic Ghost is a fast, light, anti-gravity classic. It's certainly not very robust, though, so keep your wits about you, otherwise you'll be a sitting duck.

### WARTHOG

An all-terrain monster, the Warthog is perhaps the most famous vehicle of the Halo universe. Its turret-mounted machine gun is (we have to admit) an awful lot of fun.

### WRAITH

The Type-58 Light Assault Gun Carriage – commonly known as Wraith – is like a heavier Ghost (if that's not a sort of oxymoron). It looks like a really nasty cockroach, but is certainly not squishable with a booted foot.

### SCORPION

The Scorpion (official name: the M820 Main Battle Tank) is a popular tank, with a 150mm cannon and super-thick armour. It can seat up to six people, so bring your pals.

### BANSHEE

The Banshee (or Type-54 Ground Support Aircraft), a single-pilot assault aircraft, is simply out of this world. Not only does it feature a plasma cannon and energy shield, it can do moves such as rolls and flips. This doesn't just look cool – a judicious roll can save your flipping life.

which force back massive walls of water to reveal the seafloor are a truly humbling sight. On the subject of clearing the A.R.C. of inconveniently hostile strangers, heading up to the Garage's rooftop is a great perch from which to engage opponents – the views are breathtaking, too.

## Apex 7

Pining for a piña colada? Well pack your Bermudas and bikini, because **APEX 7** has distinct tropical vibes. But, actually, vibes are about all you're going to get – for this is not a real place, per se. Rather, Apex 7 is – wait for it – a sort of simulated mash-up of various different research archives used for training purposes.

Yet it's not without its (virtual) charms, with white beaches, palm trees, blue skies and blazing sun. Take some time to explore the caves under the mountain and maybe grab an ice-cold beer from the... Actually, no beer. Apex 7 is essentially a training ground environment, remember. While your immediate environs are very "classic desert island", the other surroundings are somewhat more out there, comprising of a floating Forerunner spire, the rising Halo horizon on both sides and an incredible gas giant.

## Argent Moon

A research and development station employed by the UNSC's Office of Naval Intelligence, **ARGENT MOON** is a human-crewed space station – or rather it *was*.

The ship, which is reminiscent of deep space survey craft from back in the day, has long been abandoned. Still, you can commandeer a small Covenant Banshee ship to fly around and explore the outside of the station. There are cavernous hangars, a loading bay, labs, walkways, a data centre and a control centre. A large dry dock appears to have served for the construction of ships. Introducing a little extra drama to proceedings is the distant asteroid field.

## Plaza

Imagine a dream of futuristic Tokyo (one filled with baddies to boot), and you're getting close to the experience of a visit to **Plaza**, in the city of **PROMESA** on Planet Andesia. Usually at Rough Guides, we don't suggest one city is a great deal more dangerous than another – as long as you keep your wits about you and don't advertise your expensive camera and jewellery, you should be alright just about anywhere. Not so here.

Still, those with a taste for cities that wear their age on their sleeve will take to Plaza. The atmosphere of retro-futuristic demise is intoxicating: all around you are empty shops, hanging wires and worn, ripped posters. Once hailed as "the number one shopping destination in the quadrant", the stores in Flamenco Street's eye-popping Galeria Andinos tell a story in themselves: keep your eyes peeled for Flowers José Jerónimo, Mount Emei Umbrellas, Wu Drug Store, Enzo's Churrascaria and Maeyamas Noodle Bar, among many others.















### REMEMBER: YOUR EARS TRAVEL WITH YOU

The absolute and incomprehensible silence of deep space can be a little unnerving, to say the least. Praise be, then, for Halo's soundtrack, which ranges from the soothing to the stomping and is guaranteed to make your interplanetary travels just that little bit more memorable. Some of the must-hear tracks include the splendid Kamchatka and the gorgeously tranquil Blue Team. There are also four suites in four acts called "Osiris Suite"; quite simply, it is a thing of beauty to move from the beautiful and serene to the harsh, heavy and heroic.

6

## Genesis

If you've had any doubts that alien-built worlds can be beautiful to human eyes, **GENESIS** will put paid to them. And yet this is a weird, eerie sort of beauty. What's most peculiar about this Forerunner planet – also known as Nomos II – is the way the artificial and the natural are enmeshed. It's as if the place was grown out of one giant test tube. Always there is a sense of alien intelligence cast over the landscape – check out the way the world's rock formations have the mark of exquisite attention to detail on them. One of Genesis' most abundant examples of exotic flora are the coral-like plants known as fractals. In addition to these spiral-shaped beauties, Genesis' vegetation complement includes fibre optic succulents, paddle grasses, aloe husks, floating lotuses and much more. Of course, it's not just the plants – in its role as a Forerunner refugee world, Genesis was also seeded with its fair share of incredible animal life, from the majestic flying *lumenon*, to the ground-dwelling *logrodites*.

## Meridian

A terrible testament to the power of the Covenant, once-thriving **MERIDIAN** is now a godforsaken, barren, monochromatic world. Although relatively small, with a diameter of 3,073km (1,909 miles), the world is effectively one vast supercontinent. Against all the odds, however, some lifeforms do exist here: small hardy plants and arthropods cower in Meridian's caverns, and there are even colonist and research settlements, fitted out with air filters to contend with the fact that much of the embattled world's air contains microscopic glass particles. As far as tourism goes, then, there's not a lot of charm here, though the rivers of molten lava *are* quite impressive – if you like that sort of thing.

## Nuusra

Any tourist with even a hint of interest in history will love exploring **NUUSRA**, a dry, hot territory along the western coast of the Sanghelios continent of Qivro – a territory that is quite simply a treasure trove of ancient sites chock-full of alien history. Mainly

### KNOW YOUR HALO HISTORY

When you look at the traffic and tourists streaming past London's Marble Arch, the banality is lifted somewhat when you reflect that this was once the site of the city's notorious Tyburn Tree – not a tree at all, but large gallows where the condemned were hanged. History – gory or not – enriches our experience of a place, and it's no different in the Halo universe. While it would be a task of PhD proportions to know everything there is to know about the annals of Halo's history, it's worth swotting up on a few key events. The stunning beauty of the landscape is only going to be enhanced if you know a little about the temples you're exploring and alien species you're encountering. We recommend you take a couple of hours to read up on the history of the Forerunners, the Covenant, the Halos and the Human-Covenant war.

### A LIFELESS UNIVERSE

Whether it's the cataclysmic plasma ray blasts or the spectacularly sub-zero temperatures, much of the Halo universe is not exactly conducive to the spark of life. Still, a few species have wrestled their way into existence. Many of them are hostile (surprise, surprise) and should be avoided: **Unggoy**, **Kig-Yar** and **Sangheili**, in particular, are all worth looking out for, and steering well clear of.

composed of desert, Nuusra is covered in rocky valleys and canyons – but it is the way that the surfaces of those valleys and canyons have been moulded and marked by the world's former occupiers that really takes the breath away.

Everywhere you travel, ancient alien structures and temples have been built into the mountains and rocky canyons. Ruins litter cliffs, with the ancient building materials, made up of the local stone, melding atmospherically into the surrounding landscape. Any tourist hotspot attracts its fair share of ne'er-do-wells and the evocative ruins of Nuusra are no exception – keep your wits about you.

The murals inside the main chamber of the **Elder Council Chamber** are exquisite. Another sight that should not be missed – though quite different – is the **Kraken**, a gigantic siege tower from some long-forgotten conflict.

## Sunaion

**SUNAION** is a city on the Sangheili home world of Sanghelios. Often referred to by locals as the "Westward Temple of the Sea", this magnificent metropolis is raised above the surface of the Csurdon Sea by giant columns. The city has two levels: an upper level featuring large plazas, temples and other such buildings; and an undercity, connected by elevators, that sits close to the water. While this is an entirely alien-feeling environment – not somewhere you're likely to get homely vibes – those aliens sure know how to build. The huge domed buildings are very impressive, for instance, while the views out to sea from some of the city's platforms are utterly captivating, particularly with the red-glowing horizon and otherwise dark, stormy skies.

## Kamchatka

At the time of writing, remote and uninhabited **KAMCHATKA** was the scene of an appalling conflict. This is not a destination for the faint of heart – overhead, spacecraft blast away at each other as the epic battle unfolds in all its awful glory.

Other than that mild distraction – and the fact that the place is absolutely freezing – this world has an awful lot going for it from a touristic point of view. The cold produces a display of really rather pretty icicles, there are some epic waterfalls, and the views out the mountains in the distance can bring out the poet in the least romantic of travellers. Most of all, though, the architecture on Kamchatka is absolutely incredible. The planet itself is obviously a product of some sort of mind-blowing engineering of unimaginable ambition. As you explore, you'll soon encounter stunning architecture, not least a temple that is a vision of otherworldly elegance. The sheer scale of its interior is breathtaking, a vast, circular room with a decidedly religious ambience. But be warned: entry to the temple is far from straightforward.

Before you take your leave of Kamchatka, be sure to gaze up for a little while and watch the battle raging overhead – it's undeniably beautiful, in its own wretched, tragic way.

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# Metro Exodus

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THE CASPIAN

## Introduction

The fabled Trans-Siberian Express is arguably the world's greatest journey. The legendary railway tackles the vastness of Russia in such a way that it becomes something to be appreciated, with the locomotive making its way across the landscape, unhurried and untroubled.

Now, crank up the drama to eleven and you have the *Aurora*, a heavily modified steam train that will be your steed for a very different version of that same journey, taking you from a decidedly altered Moscow via the Volga all the way to an unrecognizable Caspian Sea and the banks of the Taiga river. Welcome, traveller, to post-apocalyptic Russia. The vistas are still magnificent, but they're a whole lot more morbid than you might remember.

### PACKING RIGHT FOR RUSSIA

Certain destinations demand customized packing lists, and for this trip to Russia, you're going to need some pretty specialized items in your luggage. Note that the likelihood of these being available at the airport is slim to none, so plan accordingly.

#### HELSING CROSSBOW

Doubtless the Helsing is a somewhat cumbersome thing to have to lug around with you, but you'll have cause to be glad of its stealthy effectiveness.

#### GAS MASK

A symbol of post-apocalyptic chic, the gas mask is also absolutely non-negotiable for anyone considering wide-ranging exploration.

#### NIXIE WATCH

It won't tell you how many steps you've taken but it will let you know something of more immediate relevance to your health: the remaining minutes of air left with your gas mask filter.

#### BRACER

Quite simply the Swiss Army knife of the wasteland, packing in everything from a Geiger counter to a compass. Don't go out and about without one.

#### CHARGER

You'll come to love this hand-operated dynamo like a friend. It'll juice up any battery you care to hook it up to.

On this trip, then, the train is not simply transport: it is also much-needed protection. Other than the violently changeable climate, steel yourself for some wild sandstorms and levels of radiation so high you'll end up sprouting an extra limb if you're not careful. Local wildlife, meanwhile, really *is* wild, as are the less-than-welcoming local communities. At Rough Guides, we normally encourage being open with strangers when you're on your travels – this time, not so much.

Yet it's not all bad news. On board the *Aurora*, things are a little different. Passengers on the Trans-Siberian Express often speak of the small pleasures of life on board, the little moments of human society that juxtapose with the unfathomable expanses of the scenes beyond the windows. That will apply on the *Aurora*, too. Enjoy the company of other passengers; after all, human connection is all we have in the long run.

Finally, a note on supplies. Usually, we'd say to leave things where you found them: tourists' habit of taking home souvenirs can have surprisingly detrimental effects on the local environment. Yet scavenging is actively encouraged here. But all in all, there's no getting around it: this is dark tourism taken to its most extreme degree. In fact, you might be inventing a whole new form with this trip. Horror tourism, anyone?

### When to go

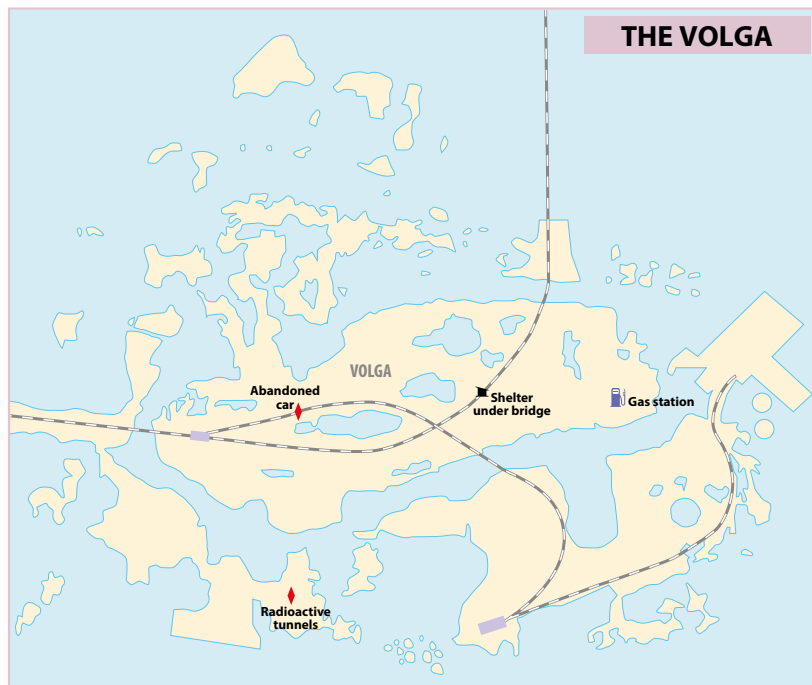
#### Spring

Nothing could be finer than a trip down the Volga come the **spring**, with the surface ice starting to dissipate and the local communities emerging from the darkness of winter. The latter is not always a good thing, however: we recommend you avoid Bandits like the plague. Another less happy consequence of spring is that the ferocious Shrimp ([see box, p.155](#)) and deadly Tsar fish ([see p.154](#)) become active again. You can't have it all.

#### Summer

Perhaps the only way to feel at peace with the tragic desertification of the Caspian Sea ([see p.154](#)) is to visit in **summer** and embrace its new arid incarnation. Beware





sandstorms, however, and know that you won't be the only summer tourist: Lurkers ([see box, p.155](#)) love the feel of hot sand between their toes, while the so-called Fire Worshippers are also fond of the blisteringly hot temperatures.

### Autumn

The valley around the Taiga river ([see p.154](#)) really comes into its own during **autumn**, when this blessedly untouched region explodes into a display of golden hues. In fact, it offers the only autumnal experience left in Russia.

### Winter

Moscow is at its most dramatic in the **winter**, but you are going to have to come prepared. The snowstorms are ferocious and the ground ice perilous. And don't be misled by the nostalgia-inducing beauty of the snow: there is nothing pure about Moscow, where the air is thick with radiation. Ensure you bring a top-of-the-range gas mask as well as the warmest possible clothing.

## Things not to miss

### 1 THE VOLGA

The light still plays delightfully on the mighty Volga river, but that's about all that remains unchanged. Navigating this legendary waterway presents a unique challenge today. [See opposite.](#)

### 2 YAMANTAU

A vast bunker complex that is anything but a refuge these days – post-apocalyptic tourists will love it, but know that visiting is far from a walk in the park. [See p.154.](#)

### 3 CASPIAN SEA

Is it a sea or is it a lake? Actually, nowadays it's neither. Come and shake your head in despair at this heartbreaking display of the bomb's power. [See p.154.](#)

### 4 THE TAIGA

The ultimate rural idyll. A wonderful reminder of the beauty of nature, but for how much longer? [See p.154.](#)

### 5 NOVOSIBIRSK

A winter wonderland it is not, but Novosibirsk's snowy streets give a fascinating glimpse of contemporary urban Siberia. [See p.155.](#)

## Basics

### Getting around

All aboard! What could be better than travel by **steam locomotive**? That's precisely what you'll be doing on this trip, with much of the vast territory crisscrossed on board the reliable *Aurora*. The romance of the vehicle does go some way to alleviating the less than happy circumstances of the journey. Note that this is a stopping service, so feel free to hop off and explore the environs **on foot** when the train comes to a halt. You may also have cause to take a turn in a **tugboat** and to go for a spin in a **van**.

### Accommodation

You'll mostly be bunking up in a **berth** on the *Aurora*, though you shouldn't turn your nose up at the various **safehouses** scattered around once you're out in the open. They're basic, but do the job, and sometimes you'll be able to pick up useful items discarded by previous tenants.

### Food and drink

Keep a good store of **water** in your canteen, drink all the **tea** you like and puff away on **cigarettes**. You're on the supermodel diet on this trip.

### Money and shopping

No need to go to the bureau de change before this trip – no money changes hands in Russia. But that doesn't mean everything's free or grows on trees. Your scavenging skills will be called upon time and again as you make your way around Russia, as will your prowess as a craftsman. Make do and mend is the name of the game.

## Locations

### The Volga

Many Russians might call the river "Mother" but it's a tough sort of love **The Volga** offers her children. Flowing through central Russia on its epic journey to the Caspian Sea, the Volga's sheer length is both part of the challenge and the pleasure of navigating her. While the views can be captivating, with snow-capped mountains in the near distance, atmospherically dilapidated structures dotted here and there and gorgeous low light casting a silvery gleam over proceedings, the harshness of the weather, with ice blocks floating on the river's surface, rarely make for an anxiety-free course. The local wildlife, meanwhile, do not take too kindly to sharing their habitat with newcomers. Beware





















above all the mutant Tsar Fish, which is as intelligent as it is deadly, the frightful Shrimps and the abominable Humanimals (see box, opposite), which attack in packs.

## Yamantau

The visual drama builds and builds as you draw ever closer to **Yamantau**, with the sheer soul-sapping degradation either side of the railway tracks in such stark contrast to the noble form of the mountain slowly growing in the distance. Of course, the history of this place is dramatic in itself – or at least it was *nearly* dramatic. Built into Mount Yamantau, highest peak in the Southern Ural range, is the **Ark**, the vast bunker complex where the Russian government were to take shelter in the event of a nuclear strike. It goes without saying that this plan did not pay off, and the bunker is now anything but the refuge it was intended originally to be. Still, these nuclear sites always have their morbid fascination, and as nuclear sites go, the Ark is basically a Wonder of the World for the post-apocalyptic tourist.

## Caspian Sea

Really a sea or actually a lake? Either way, the **Caspian Sea** is the largest drop of inland water on the planet – or at least, it *was*. In a truly tragic turn of events, this natural phenomenon has been diminished so savagely that what remains is a pathetic echo of the Sea's former, glorious self. Those with fond memories of gazing across its surface on previous trips will be moved to tears to see its current state, with the majority of the area once covered with water now barren, sweltering desert.

Yet it's not *all* bad: this graveyard of boulders, derelict buildings, scavenging birds and – if the reports are true – raiding bandits does have some redeeming features that you might like to check out when the train's itinerary permits an exploration, including the **Old Lighthouse** and strangely atmospheric **Communications Center**, just to the lighthouse's southeast. The latter is scattered with evocative old debris – phones, computers and the like – which will tell a tale of sorts to those with imagination. Entered through a cave, the **Watchtower** is also one to check out, while the **Baron's Fortress** is – relatively speaking, for this desolate environment – an absolute must-visit. Entered via a pretty demanding tunnel approach, the Fortress does have an on-site café but we cannot in good faith recommend it as a place for lunch.

## The Taiga

Offering blessed respite from the otherwise bleak landscapes in these parts, **The Taiga** is practically a vision of Arcadian bliss. The Valley is a reminder of the heartrending beauty of nature left to its own devices, with snow-dusted mountains and pine trees melding with the autumnal hues of deciduous forest. If you ignored the wider context of your travels in Russia, you might allow yourself to play out a “summer cabin” fantasy for a while here: scattered about you'll find charmingly worn huts and other structures which, come sunset, with fireflies starting to emerge, deer prancing through the woods and that twinkling river flowing nearby, can well bring to mind visions of simple contentment. So linger a while and entertain those harmless imaginings; unfortunately, cold beers and barbecues sizzling with good food are in short supply, so your imagination will have to do. As for bona fide points of interest, be sure to check out the domed **church**, occupying a gorgeous spot on the side of the mountain, and the enigmatic **Fortress of the Children of the Forest**. At the time of writing, the exact function of the latter had not been fully established, but there have been no reports of ill-doing. Less positive, however, are the rumours of a steadily deteriorating dam in the area; keep asking around for the latest on this. It goes without saying that you should take your leave of The Valley as a matter of urgency should the dam's state worsen.

## NOT ALL MUTANTS ARE TURTLES

Russia is replete with ferocious mutant creatures – who knew? Let's get real about some of the radiation-warped foes you're likely to encounter.

### WATCHMAN

An iconic sight in post-apocalyptic Russia, the sheer jaw-dropping ugliness of a Watchman is further testament to the terrible power of the bomb.

### SPIDERS

Some spiders are worse than others – and then there are these spiders. While recognizably arachnids with their eight legs and creepy, fang-pronged mouth, these specimens are somewhat larger and nastier than you might be used to.

### LURKERS

Less fearsome than their mean, ghoulish appearance might have you believe, the Lurkers are only really a threat when they're in groups. Most of the time they're quite content filling their faces with carrion.

### MUTATED BEAR

About as far from the connotations of “teddy bear” as it's possible to get, this bear is a huge lump of bloodthirsty gristle. Rule of thumb: run for your life.

### HUMANIMALS

These humanoid freaks are scantily clad, but that's the least of your worries. They'll attack on sight – get ready for a rumble.

### DEMONS

You're likely to see some pretty awful things on this trip to Russia, but this might just be the worst – if you see them at all, that is. The horrifically winged Demons are fond of doling out death from above.

### SHRIMP

You won't be barbecuing these babies, but they might just try to have you for dinner. Their tendency to spit acidic mucus is just one of their charming habits.

### WOLVES

Wolves warped by radiation are the worst – keep on your toes if you spot one of these cantankerous canines crossing your path.

### NOSALIS

The Nosalis looks cumbersome but, fond of hanging out in derelict urban environments, is like a parkour champ when it gets going. Stay away from its nest at all costs.

## Novosibirsk

Do not be deceived by the fetching blanket of snow covering **NOVOSIBIRSK** – this is no winter wonderland; this is a city in a deep freeze from which it may never emerge. The clues are subtle but glaring for those who look closely. Take the trees, for instance. You'd expect them to be leafless in this weather, but why do they look like they're writhing in agony to boot? Only the Siberian city's violent demise can explain that, and the full tale is yours to establish by exploring, if you are up to braving the elements (including the irradiated ones). Pieces of this citywide jigsaw puzzle include any number of semi-destroyed grand, historic-looking buildings, cranes frozen in action and a large statue of a public figure, still stubbornly standing in an otherwise desolate square. Of beauty there is very little, unless you count the great blocks of ice melting into the river; there is a sort of purity there, at least.

# Assassin's Creed Odyssey

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PARADISE ISLAND

## Introduction

The word “epic” is overused, especially in travel. Epic adventures, epic views, epic journeys. Come on – when your hotel’s breakfast buffet is epic, is anything? The word more correctly (some might say snootily) refers to those long (some might say interminable) tales of heroic adventure from classical times, particularly classical *Greek* times.

The first ever Rough Guide was to Greece, back in 1982. It represented a different kind of travel – a departure from the package holiday prescriptions and an off-the-beaten-track mindset. But it certainly wasn’t “epic”, not in the way those classical Greek dudes meant it – this new *Rough Guide to Greece*, though, is bona fide *epic*. Very epic indeed.

### TOP EXTRAORDINARY CREATURES

The wildlife in these parts is absolutely monstrous. Here are six of the best (or is that worst?).

#### NEMEAN LION

No ordinary lion (if any lions are ordinary), the Nemean Lion is impervious to long-range attacks, so be sure to get right up in its furry grill.

#### KRETAN BULL

This is not a bull to wave little red rags at, seeing as how it might just be the mightiest bull that has ever existed. Steer well clear.

#### CYCLOPS

Only one eye, but it’s a big eye, and the Cyclops is a big guy, and when the big guy’s big eye sees you, you’re in trouble. This particular cyclops you’ll have the pleasure (or pain) of meeting on your travels is named Brontes.

#### MEDUSA

Having snakes for hair is not a good look. It’s such a bad look, in fact, that when an unsuspecting traveller casts a glance Medusa’s way, they’ll likely turn to stone – literally.

#### MINOTAUR

The Minotaur has the coolest address ever: “The Labyrinth”. Cool he may be, but his attitude stinks. Avoid him like the plague, or like a man-eating half-bull/half-man thing, for that is what he is.

#### SPHINX

Do not get chatting with the Sphinx, a mad mash-up of woman, bird, lion and snake. Not because she will bore your socks off, but because she will eat you if you get her riddle wrong.

With its six thousand or so islands, travel in Greece has always been a bit special. Travel in Ancient Greece is something else again. Yes, you’ve got the relentless pounding sun, but you’ve also got the relentless pounding *foes*. You’ll encounter legends come to life and legends trying to take *your* life. There will be myths, miracles and magic. But there’ll also be the bread and butter of any fabulous trip: heartbreakingly beautiful light; warm waters lapping at your toes; boat trips; heart-warming interactions with locals; and endless vistas that will remind you once and for all that you’re alive.

## Things not to miss

### 1 ELIS

A vision of bona fide classical Greek splendour, with real Olympic Games connotations to boot. [See p.163.](#)

### 2 ARKADIA

One look at the bucolic “breadbasket of the Peloponnese” and you’ll be in love. [See p.163.](#)

### 3 ATHENS

Only the cradle of Western civilization at the peak of its powers – no big deal. [See p.163.](#)

### 4 KEPHALLONIA

You might expect the homeland of Odysseus to be a bit, well, fancier – but it is Kephallonia’s rural gorgeousness that’s the real draw. [See p.163.](#)

### 5 FOREST ISLANDS

Seemingly in a state of perpetual autumn, this magical island group’s big hitter is the legendary island of Lesbos. [See p.170.](#)

**6 MELOS**

Who knew a volcanic island could be so beautiful? We have the smouldering good looks of Melos' omnipresent obsidian to thank for that. [See p.171.](#)

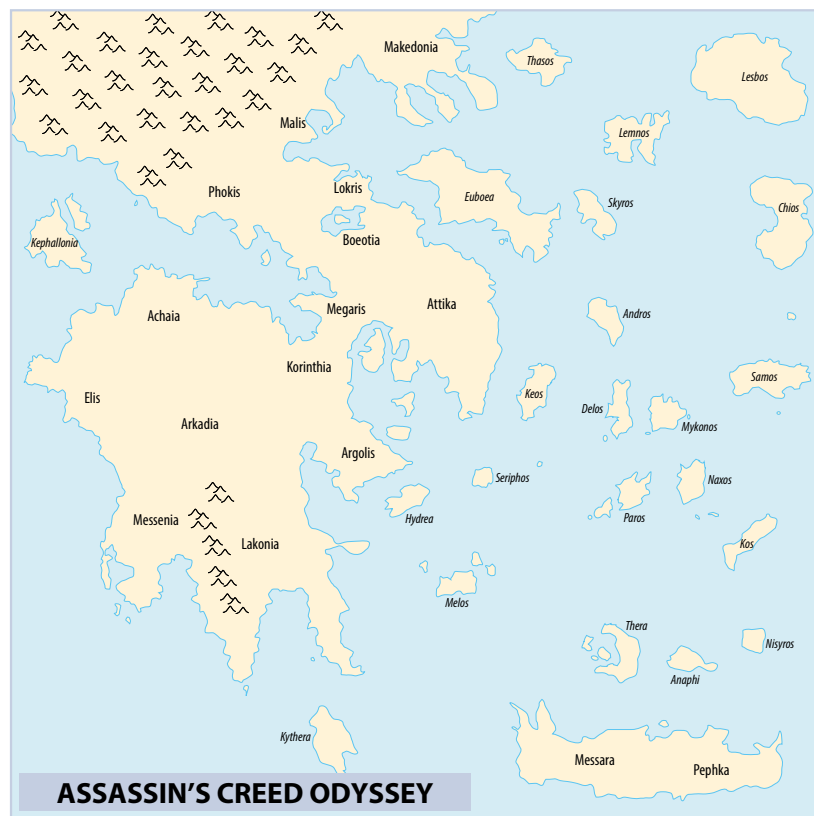
**7 THERA**

One for the volcano hunters and thrill seekers, Thera will keep you on your toes. [See p.171.](#)

## Basics

### Getting around

When on an Assassin's Creed trip, the most common way of travelling is **by foot**, but **swimming** also has a crucial role to play. You'll need to be a confident swimmer because there are certainly no lifeguards here, and the waters are frequented by sharks. The horses in this destination, meanwhile, are true thoroughbreds, so you should ensure you make time to learn some **equestrian skills**; note that one breed has battle in its blood, while another is particularly suited to mountainous terrain. It's the done thing in these parts to pimp your ride, too: if you don't like your steed's appearance, change it! Finally, there's nothing better than experiencing the beautiful Aegean by **boat** – so why not consider building your own crew and setting



### TOP FIVE STATUES

If you're going to be a statue, you might as well be properly statuesque. You should be ashamed of yourself for even *considering* whipping out the selfie stick in front of these five magnificent giants.

#### THE STATUE OF SISYPHOS

Poor Sisyphos is probably just glad of the rest. This chap, of course, was condemned to perpetually push a boulder up a hill, over and over again forevermore. But as so often, from others' pain comes our pleasure – the sculptor has made something really rather beautiful from this myth, with Sisyphos seeming to be straining to hold up not just a boulder but an entire hillside.

#### THE STATUE OF KRONOS

Hell's bells! War criminals have been dubiously honoured with a statue plenty of times over the years, but this is just beyond the pale – a winged nasty fangs-deep in the flank of a screaming human infant.

#### THE STATUE OF ZEUS

If you were the king of the gods, thunderstorms, justice and divine law, you'd want a statue too. And a massive one at that. Right on top of a hill. Overlooking a turquoise bay. Some gods have all the luck.

#### THE STATUE OF POSEIDON

The Greek god of the seas, horses and earthquakes carries off the trident look with effortless grandeur. As fabulous as this statue is, however, we don't suggest you attempt to copy his nude spearfishing chic.

#### THE STATUE OF ARTEMIS

The Greek goddess of the hunt and the moon is captured beautifully here doing what she does best: firing enormous stone arrows.

sail in the good ship *Adrestia*? A word of warning: in these parts, you need shipmates you can count on in *any* circumstances.

### Shopping

You'll find there are fantastic **shopping** opportunities and a wide range of quite unique products available on this voyage, from all manner of lovely decoration for your ship to ornately crafted armour and weaponry.

### Money

If you thought cryptocurrency was complicated, steel yourself. You'll need to get acquainted with a variety of different ways to pay: **Helix Credits**, **Drachmae** and, most unusually, **Orichalcum Ore**. Ore is even more in demand than gold – if money talks, ore bellows. You can also trade with resources such as soft leather, iron, olive wood, ancient tablets, obsidian glass and precious gems.

### Climate

You can expect the weather to be as epic as your travels: rain and thunderstorms can turn to blue skies and ferociously hot sun in the blink of an eye.

### Time

As sure as your luggage hits the carousel last, so day turns into night (via some very special sunsets). Be sure to look up when darkness falls, for these unpolluted, god-given



### UNLIKELY ENCOUNTERS WITH LEGENDARY ANIMALS

The sheer number and regularity of sightings of certain supposedly “legendary” animals in these parts can no longer be written off as the ravings of crackpot conspiracy theorists. Here are eight that come up time and again in the local officials’ reports:

- Kalydonian Boar
- Hind of Keryneia
- Nemean Lion
- Kretan Bull
- Lykaon Wolf
- Kallisto the Bear
- Erymanthian Boar
- Krokottas Boar

skies are resplendent with stars. Darkness may also help you spot torches if you are searching for a gathering or secret passageway.

### Crime

Crime is, unfortunately, universal. As with anywhere, we urge you to keep your wits about you and avoid unnecessary confrontation – unless you have a taste for that sort of thing, of course. That said, sometimes it is unavoidable, and there have been reports of **bounty hunters**, **mercenaries** and **pirates** in this location (you might be one of them). If you want to avoid their attentions, keep your head down and don’t make a scene – but we have a feeling you probably don’t want to avoid their attentions (or indeed their loot). As ever in the poorer regions of the world, though, **corruption** is rife. It can sometimes come in handy – should you need to have recourse to it, paying someone off might be a tactic to consider.

### Wildlife

Wildlife lovers will be in their element on this trip, with some of the world’s most awe-inspiring animals at large in the locations likely to be on your itinerary. While the sea life (including whales) is stunningly rich, take care to avoid any contact with sharks; the local species is particularly nasty when they scent even the merest whiff of human blood. Similarly savage are (wait for it) the chickens you’ll encounter – cross them at your peril. Much friendlier are the dogs, goats and horses ([see p.160](#)). Even the leopards, lions, lynx, bears and wolves can be tamed, with a little patience.

### ELIS: AN ARCHITECTURAL MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

Be sure to factor the architectural delights of Elis into your itinerary. Grand enough to be designated one of the ancient wonders of the world (the ultimate bucket list, basically), the **Statue of Zeus** ([see box, p.161](#)) is a truly awesome spectacle. Then there’s the structurally peculiar **Altar of Zeus**, made from the ashes of sacrificial victims and the monumentally unpleasant **Statue of Kronos** ([see box, p.161](#)), to which you might consider offering sacrifices (or gifts) should your visit coincide with the spring equinox. The man-made **Cave of Ionides**, meanwhile, is a nymph-inhabited shrine to Zeus said to have healing properties. If your name’s not down, you’re not coming in to the **Temple of Hades**, entrance to which is traditionally granted to just one priest on one day of the year. (That’s not to say you shouldn’t give it a shot.) The neighbouring **Temple of Apollo** is worth a visit if you’ve already done Hades – it gives good views of the surroundings, too.

## Locations

### Elis

Capital of the Peloponnese, **ELIS** is a vision of Classical Greek splendour – albeit a vision of classical Greek splendour with swampland around its edges. With the ancient Olympic Games having sprung from this region of Greece, it’s entirely fitting that you’ll be needing to do your own version of the decathlon to get the most out of a visit here (with a bit of fighting thrown in for good measure). Running, leaping, hopping, clambering – you’ll have to use every skill in the book to make a success of your stay. Because of its ties to the Games, the city sees more than its fair share of tourists – and very fit ones at that! Puff that chest out and walk tall so you look the part.

### Arkadia

When you first witness the gentle beauty of **ARKADIA**, it’s easy to see how the region’s name became a byword for an ideal pastoral paradise – an “Arcadian” landscape is, of course, one where people live an idyllic, innocent and untroubled life. Yet in spite of the balmy climes and gorgeous beaches, it’s not for Arkadia’s appeal as a holiday destination that this nickname came about. That was all about the region’s agricultural prowess: the wide, open meadows of Arkadia are so ripe for wheat cultivation that the region was long known as the “breadbasket of the Peloponnese”.

You won’t be farming, of course, so don’t let the arcadian vibes make a simpleton out of you. There’s much to do here ([see box, p.170](#)), not least spotting the occasional flying horse, galloping through the trees and soaring in the skies overhead.

### Athens

Your brain works the way that it does partly because of **ATHENS**. No other city in the world can claim such a profound effect on the earliest, most profound principles of human understanding. Yet while its grand landmarks will be startlingly familiar as temples of Western culture, the experience of walking around Athens is surprisingly low key. This dreamily pink- and orange-hued city has not, for instance, lost its sense of connection to nature: sand roads wend their way about the place, with pink and purple flowers dotting the scene all around, while the sea and mountains always feel close at hand. Much of the human intervention in the city is humble, too, with simple, colourful market stalls and rough wooden scaffolding making do for the mundane ventures of commerce and storage.

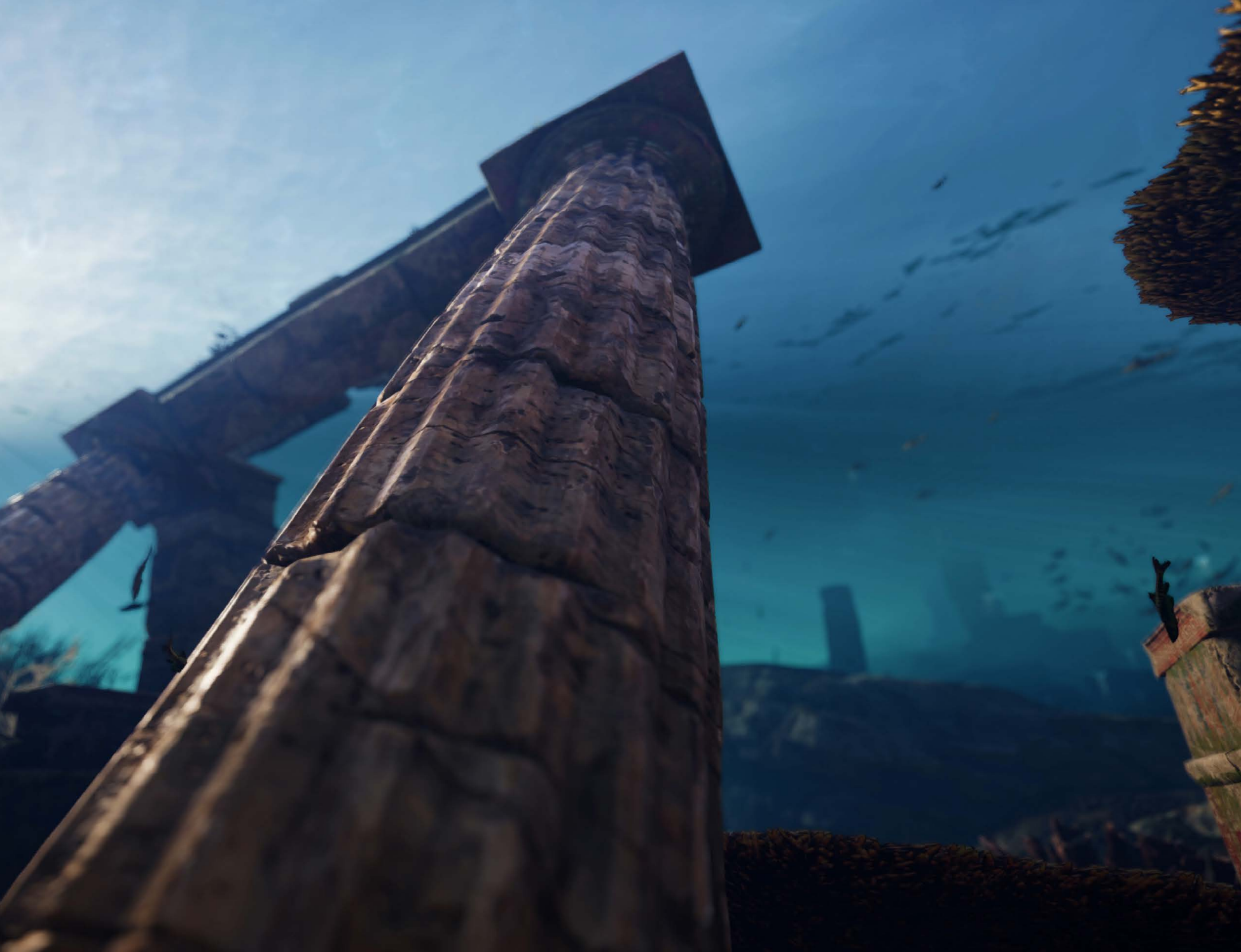
But then, of course, there’s the statement-making architecture, the structures that pleased the gods and awed the mortals. From the iconic **Parthenon** temple and monumental **Odeon of Perikles** (said to have been modelled after the tent of the defeated Xerxes the Great) to the stunning **Theater of Dionysos**, this is your opportunity to explore buildings that inspired a million copycats. On this visit, incredibly, you’ll be able to walk among the toga-clad workmen (or are they slaves?) as they sculpt the stone for gold-gilded statues and monumental edifices.

### Kephallonia and Ithaka

The bucolic feel of this perfect pair of islands belies their storied past: **KEPHALLONIA**, the larger of the two, is said by some to be the homeland of Odysseus, the hero of Homer’s epic *Odyssey*. For the slightly less ambitious traveller, the islands offer the perfect escape from the hustle and bustle of Athens and Elis; it’s quite possible you’ll encounter more dogs and goats than humans during your stay. The atmosphere is













pleasingly domestic and rural. Old pots stand outside the houses, with dusty tracks leading you from charming corner to picturesque nook via groves of pine and stands of oak.

There are a few must-see sights (see box, opposite), but really it's just a lovely place to explore at your leisure, with timeworn clay houses and ruined temples dotted around. The prevalence of wooden structures is testament to Kephallonia's heritage as a timber-based economy. In the heat of the afternoon sun, it can be nice to take a dip; there are some gorgeous underwater ruins that make for wonderful dive spots, for instance. If you start running low on supplies, head over to well-stocked Sami Village.

## Forest Islands

Perfect pearls of the Aegean Sea, the Thassos, Petrified and Abantis island groups are known collectively as the **FOREST ISLANDS**. The Petrified Islands comprise Lesbos and Chios. A characteristic shared by all the islands in the group is the autumnal hue of their rich forest coverage – no matter what time of year you visit, you'll be treated to this magical phenomenon, whereby all the trees exist in a state of perpetual golden autumn. **Lesbos** is the big draw for tourists, not least for its legendary links to the all-female Daughters to Artemis. It doesn't take much of an exploration to feel the history here, from the timeworn Artemis temple with its worn-smooth cobbles and staircase to the red-tiled Leader house, decorated with evocative designs on its exterior and mosaic flooring inside. But there are just so many excursions to take on Lesbos, you're going to need a few days here. You might visit the temple to Poseidon up in the mountains, with its panoramic views of the island, delve into the Petrified Valley, location of another ancient temple that legend holds to house the awful Writing Dread, or climb Mantamados peak for awesome sunset views of the ocean. Nobody should take their leave of the island, though, without a visit to the Tomb of Orpheus, an atmospheric cave that is said to be the last resting place of the poet's embalmed head.

## SIX MUST-SEE REGIONS OF ARKADIA

### FOREST OF SORON

Arkadia's westernmost, heavily forested region boasts the unmissable ruins of hilltop Samikon Fort.

### GOLDEN FIELDS

The clue's in the name: head to Golden Fields to understand why this region is known as the "breadbasket of the Peloponnese". Above the village of Stymphalos, it's also worth seeking out the peculiar (and somewhat unnerving) Stymphalos Armored Bird, a bird-shaped tree decorated with armour.

### MOUNT PSOPHIS

Both a mountain and a region of Arkadia, Mount Psophis boasts a must-visit tomb containing a daughter of Atlas, no less.

### PAN'S CRADLE

Pan's Cradle is named after the god of wilderness and wild things – go wild.

### SMUGGLER'S FOREST

The history of Arkadia's easternmost region is easy to guess. Less well known is that it features the Fort of Arkas, where every visit guarantees adventure.

### VALLEY OF ARTEMIS

Located in the deep south of Arkadia, the Valley of Artemis is named in honour of the Greek goddess of hunting and the moon. If it's good enough for her...

## TOP FIVE PLACES TO VISIT ON KEPHALLONIA

### STATUE OF ZEUS

Sitting pretty on the top of the island's mountain, this monumental statue is Insta gold.

### DROGARATI CAVE

Located near Markos' Vineyard, pay a visit to this cave to check out the shrine dedicated to Hermes.

### MELISSANI CAVE

More spelunking fun! Just to the northwest of Sami Village lies another cave, this one dedicated to Pan.

### STAR OBSERVATORY

The Pronnoi Peninsula is worth a visit in its own right, but the opportunity to check out the Star Observatory seals the deal.

### CAVE OF THE NYMPHS

Kephallonia's sister island, Ithaka, boasts the Cave of the Nymphs, whose eponymous inhabitants supposedly spin the waters of the sea into the finest purple cloth.

## Melos

With Hydrea, **MELOS** forms part of the Obsidian Islands group. Their name comes from the obsidian glass that the islands' volcanic activity would bring violently to life, which provides the islanders with an unusual vein of economic lifeblood to this day.

Melos itself is made up of three island groups: **Champion Point**, **Black Crescent** and **Typhon's Revenge**. While the obsidian sold by Melos locals was undoubtedly beautiful, its other main export, sulphur, was not so easy on the eye – or rather nose. Melos has a strange beauty still, with the predominance of volcanic rocks giving parts of its landscape a dead-looking appearance. Yet there is life here – human, animal and, in the form of the Cyclops (see box, p.159), something neither one nor the other. Volcanic activity means that many folk do not stick around Melos – you'll find many abandoned houses, which naturally makes for good nosy explorations. Come sunset, the overall dilapidation looks really quite picturesque, especially when the volcano's lava is glowing in harmony.

The Black Crescent region's standout point of interest is undoubtedly the ornately decorated **Melos temple**. Heading to the top of this temple gives you some wonderful views, which are trumped only by those from the summit of the volcano on Typhon's Revenge.

## Thera

This is next level adventure tourism: **THERA**, one of the Arid Islands, is so arid, it's practically aflame. In fact, parts of it *are* aflame. If the sheer terror of being in such a desolate, volcanically volatile environment isn't too much of a distraction, then there's a certain gorgeousness in the visual contrasts here. On the one hand you have the intimidating terrain of grey volcanic rock, sulphur lakes and once-grand buildings reduced to rubble and ruin by volcanic blast. But it's all sitting there in such peculiar juxtaposition with the deep blue Aegean that the sight can stop you in your tracks. Other than gawping at your surroundings and nervously anticipating the next devastating volcanic eruption, there's really not a great deal to do here. What pastimes there are include exploring the ruins or diving off the islands into the blessedly blue water to check out the shipwrecks. It is said that true Arid Island connoisseurs come to love the play of volcanic steam in the bright sunlight and the sight of lava glowing menacingly through cracks in the terrain. We're afraid that we didn't stick around long enough to vouch for those claims.







# Small print

177 Small print

## A ROUGH GUIDE TO ROUGH GUIDES

Published in 1982, the first Rough Guide – to Greece – was a student scheme that became a publishing phenomenon. Mark Ellingham, a recent graduate in English from Bristol University, had been travelling in Greece the previous summer and couldn't find the right guidebook. With a small group of friends he wrote his own guide, combining a contemporary, journalistic style with a thoroughly practical approach to travellers' needs.

The immediate success of the book spawned a series that rapidly covered dozens of destinations. And, in addition to impecunious backpackers, Rough Guides soon acquired a much broader readership that relished the guides' wit and inquisitiveness as much as their enthusiastic, critical approach and value-for-money ethos. These days, Rough Guides include recommendations from budget to luxury and cover more than 120 destinations around the globe, from Amsterdam to Zanzibar, all regularly updated by our team of roaming writers.

Browse all our latest guides, read inspirational features and book your trip at [roughguides.com](http://roughguides.com).

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## Help us update

We've gone to a lot of effort to ensure that this edition of **The Rough Guide to Xbox** is accurate and up-to-date. However, things change – places get "discovered" and technology can move at a staggering pace. If you feel we've got it wrong or left something out, we'd like to know, and the more detailed information you can give, the better.

Please send your comments with the subject line "**Rough Guide Xbox Update**" to [mail@uk.roughguides.com](mailto:mail@uk.roughguides.com). We'll credit all contributions and send a copy of the next edition (or any other Rough Guide if you prefer) for the very best emails.

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