

Selenos

Selenos is a small isle, around 14 miles northwest-southeast by 8 miles southwest-northeast (22 kilometres by 13) that lies roughly 6 miles (10 km) off the southern mainland coast of Statrippe, near the hamlet of Vernaez, in Artemisia. It is separated from the mainland by the Singing Channel, and is located in the tropics, at a latitude of about 16 degrees North. Despite that, it can have, at times, a curiously temperate climate, as it lies in an area where a cold current from the great Frigid Ocean to the north, sweeps down the east coast of Artemisia, turning west along that continent's south coast, where it meets a warm current from the Dorian Ocean between Dorian and Kumarikandam from the southwest, as it travels eastwards between Artemisia and Kumarikandam from the Misia Sea. This helps create frequent mists and fogs that conceal the isle's location, something the extensive offshore reefs, shoals and sandbanks help turn into severe hazards for navigators. This means despite its proximity to the mainland, only the most expert sailors familiar with the waters here even stand a chance of sighting the isle, let alone landing on it safely. There are a great many wrecks in the waters nearby that confirm this danger.

The isle's name loosely translates as "The Isle of the Full Moon", although some know it as "The Hidden Isle" or "The Isle of the Lost and Broken". This latter epithet derives from the fact it is the home and rebirth-place of the goddess Eunike Lysistratedoros, also known as Gaiane, more commonly referred to as **The Twisted Torchbearer**. Her domain is of misplaced, broken and imperfect things, and some tales suggest she created Selenos as her home. The island is certainly home to a great many unusual things, and is said to be riddled with hidden, subterranean features. While these include cellars, dungeons and caves, there are rumours of gems and minerals too. Some claim the offshore reefs and shoals are the spoil-heaps from all the subterranean diggings in past times. The frequent fogs and mists seem not to be chance occurrences either, and are doubtless influenced by the goddess' wishes. Many say the isle's name is because it can be found only on nights when the White Moon is full, and the waxing and waning of the Moon may reflect something of the goddess' nature, as she periodically dies, only to be reborn from the earth on this isle (see the Valley of Frogs notes). She secretly wishes to become mortal, so as to be able to die finally. She is sometimes said to have been the First Immortal.

Other than wild creatures, the isle is almost entirely uninhabited (see the Castle Peris notes for its sole humanoid inhabitant), although it is clear this was not always the case, as maps in Statrippe show a ruined castle, Castle Peris, standing in the island's north. Perhaps the most significant wild creatures are the **Moon Birds**, which fill the air with strange, haunting music all across the island and the seas around. They look like varieties of especially flamboyant, colourful Birds of Paradise, and their songs can be like those animals too, seeming almost to be artificially-generated at times. Various species are present in different places on the isle, and they are really magical creatures, made from solidified moonlight, which each gleam with their own internal light, like the silvery White Moon. They can see equally well by day or night, and they are able to see invisible things as well. As their songs can be heard far out to sea on still nights, the isle has the reputation of being home to Sirens, and that many of the wrecks are due to sailors being lured by their music to a watery death.

Selenos' topography runs to coastal cliffs of varying, though usually no great, height, with a few narrow, often shingle, beaches in places, and some wave-cut platforms at the base of the rockier cliffs. Inland, there are numerous low hills, typically covered fairly lightly with tropical jungle vegetation, although there are some denser patches of this too, notably further north in the Mist Forest area. There is one larger, low-lying marshy region in the Valley of Frogs south of this, along with several scattered small streams and minor rivers. Landing from the sea is always tricky, although there are a few places, notably near Castle Peris in the north and Scouring Inlet in the southeast, where this can be more practical at times, if never truly safe.

Ideas for all the notes regarding Selenos were generated using cards and procedures outlined in the Loremaster's Deck and Loremastery Expansion decks produced by The Story Engine. Some of the personal names were determined from random tables in Volume 1 of North Wind Adventures' Hyperborea RPG.

Labelled Places

Bamboo Maze: On the open plains in the isle's southeast is a mystifying, maze-like expanse of multicoloured, tall bamboo. The bamboo possesses magical manipulating powers, inducing visions for those who pass within its bounds for a time.

Castle Peris: Near the northern tip of the isle, this is a ruined castle on the low Elder Hill, and a nearby abandoned settlement that once formed the main harbour for the isle, although this is no longer so. The area is detailed by a separate Atlas map. It is also home to the isle's sole permanent humanoid inhabitant, a self-exiled, hermit-like Human, the former chief sage **Hypatos**. He successfully predicted a major eclipse and planetary alignment in the past, but being imaginative and forgetful, he then failed to warn of an abdication crisis he believed these celestial events portended, somewhere on the mainland (he is quite vague as to when

and where all this took place). He still wishes to right the wrongs he thinks followed that crisis. He is convinced there is something on the isle that will help him resolve those perceived wrongs, although he does not know what. (This may be the Talisman at the Spiral Tower of the Sea - see that Tower's notes.) He has some minor magical talents, and carries a magical, lightweight, shoulder-slung bag with him at all times. This contains a small, special library of important divinatory and astronomical/astrological works, and which bag also provides him with simple, fresh food, drink and clothing when he requires. It will not open for anyone else. He has also become (or perhaps always was) the sole priest, of sorts, for The Twisted Torchbearer, and is apparently under her protection. He is thus not always here, and may be at the Twisted Torchbearer's Dragon (her temple) instead, or indeed elsewhere on the island. He is very knowledgeable about the isle, and seems to have been here for a very long time, although his appearance suggests no great age, merely late middle-age.

Fading Lodge: In the southern heart of the isle, where the Mist Forest jungle and eastern marshes of the Valley of Frogs meet, is this overgrown ruin, a stone-built structure whose architecture was inspired by the Flower of the Cold Flame, a slender, deep-ocean, flower-like, self-fertilising, sedentary creature, commonly found around undersea volcanic vents. The region surrounding the Lodge is filled with notably thorny shrubs, and the building itself is infested with **Assassin Rats**, horrifying in appearance, yet oddly friendly towards humanoids. They have the size of a typical rat, but have the form of miniature lions - with a mane, a tail-tip tuft and cat-like claws. They breed by laying a single egg each year, and are the symbol of a secretive league somewhere on the mainland.

Globe of the Hidden Watcher: By the east bank of one of the small rivers in the jungle-wooded southeast of the isle, this is a huge stone Globe supported on a stone pedestal that shows a mythically ancient version of Nibirum. It is a legendary, lost, artefact that once helped resolve a revolution, although in tales it is said to be haunted by the ghost of the crafter who created it. It has the magical ability to phase in and out of reality should it be endangered.

Hell's Sandbanks: A general title ascribed to all the reefs, shoals and sandbanks off the eastern side of Selenos by sailors. Often considered especially dangerous, as storms and squalls coming in from the east will drive ships to destruction on the rocks here, or along the isle's shoreline itself.

Mist Forest: Also known as Sky-Shrub Forest, this identifies the jungle that extends across most of the central, eastern and southern parts of Selenos, especially in its denser parts. The woodland is maze-like to pass through, with many hanging skeins and walls of aerial mosses, creepers and vines, so maintaining a steady course or sense of direction in it can be very difficult. The ground surface has many mysterious holes and hollows across it, some of which connect with various of the isle's subterranean features, and mist or fog lingers in places much of the time.

Pale Horse Reefs: Off the isle's northern shores, the marked reefs and shoals, and those to the marker's east, are areas where bioluminous seahorses congregate. They can communicate with sailors and others passing nearby in dreams, and can be playful - or sometimes capricious. They are valued by those knowledgeable for their blood, "Ray's Blood", a delicate substance that can be used to affect the moods and emotions of humanoids, but which can be spoilt easily if collected, stored or used incorrectly.

Pole of Confusion: Among the many offshore reefs and shoals to the isle's southwest, this is an extensive region where the rocks appear to be strongly magnetic, easily able to deflect lodestones and compass needles for some five miles around (8 km, an area shown by the shaded circle visible when the Magnetic Influence map toggle in the FCW version is active), or occasionally still further. However, it is not the rocks themselves which are responsible. Instead, it is an oddly spongy material that apparently defies natural laws, as it seems to be neither truly organic or inorganic in nature. It does feature on the rocks and the seabed here, often in weed-like patches, and also seems to grow slowly over time. Still more weirdly, it retains its magnetic properties only while immersed in seawater, losing them entirely when in air. Beyond this, the substance is not easy to find, because shellfish are attracted to it, often clustering in profusion over, and thus concealing, it.

Scouring Inlet: At the coast on the northern tip of the isle's southeasternmost area, a small river meets the sea in a narrow, rocky Inlet, lined with high cliffs. The Inlet's walls are green with seaweed around and below the waterline, with mosses and other smaller plants descending from the clifftops, so there is little gap between them. The Inlet is protected from the sea by a dyke-like granite bar at its mouth, which acts as a breakwater. The rock and soil strata here are unique across the isle, where they can be seen, and the cliff

surfaces show evidence of a previous shattering disaster here, although whether in a natural storm, or something magically-induced, cannot be identified.

Sea Drake Bay: The rocky shoreline of this northern Bay is where ocean-going Sea Drakes (wingless, lithe, dragons of the sea) come to make their nests, in the caves and nooks along the coast. These nests crackle with a special form of salt crystals that can store magical energy, even after removing them from the nests. Such crystals are said to bring their owners good luck too. The crystals are most effective when taken from nests still in-use, or just after being abandoned. The salt loses its power and dissolves back into the sea from the nests over time otherwise.

Shining Hearth: Where the vegetation thins-out in the lower-lying grasslands near the isle's southern shore is this feature. It looks as if it should be part of a ruin, yet no ruin is here, or anywhere nearby. The Hearth stands alone, built of mirrors and projects holographic scenes from its mirror-surfaces of many other places and times, as intangible, three-dimensional, images in the air nearby. It sits on a threshold between the worlds. The region surrounding it is abnormally dry and windy, which may explain the lack of substantial vegetation, albeit onshore salt winds tend to do that anyway.

Silvermoon Rocks: In the southern Mist Forest near the isle's centre, the jungle foliage clusters around an area where are these luminous Rocks, stony outcrops laced with platinum veins that radiate light and constantly emit an audible humming sound from their internal energies. These are electrical energies that can be used magically, once extracted. The platinum deposits continue underground.

Speckled Hollow: On the eastern edge of the southernmost dense jungle area in the isle's south is a curious stream valley filled with scattered statues of unicorns. Each is decorated with runes. The whole valley is pervaded by a magic-dampening field, so spells and magic items will refuse to function in it.

The Spiral Tower of the Sea: Atop some of the highest cliffs on Selenos, the rocks form a grotto from which extends this tall, spiralling Tower, once seemingly a watchtower out across the seas beyond the isle's southernmost headland. The Tower's base extends down into the rocks in a connected cavern, and the whole gives the impression it was partly constructed and partly grown from the rocks here. A particularly notable species of Moon Bird, with shimmering aquamarine foliage, and a very distinctive song, is found only around the Tower and its grotto. The Tower is overgrown with plants, vines and fungi inside and out, thus its interior is more or less impassable for typical humanoids, without extensive clearance work first. Hidden away in the cavern, deliberately concealed like a cache and further lost among fungal growths, is the grave of the mapmaker Jay-Larh, according to the runic inscription on it. In the grave with the body is an intelligent, sentient **Talisman** named Var-U-Kar. It has navigational abilities, and can manipulate luck, or even fate, to its owner's benefit, powers it burns to use as soon as a suitable living person takes hold of it. This will lead to the owner becoming an equally driven navigator-wayfinder and cartographer.

Star Cliffs: Roughly midway along the east coast are some moderate-height rocky cliffs that are being slowly consumed by the masses of Sea Stars (a type of large, spiny, long-limbed starfish) that frequent this area. The wave-cut platforms left at the cliff bases have numerous pools, created where the Stars have eaten away the rock. One of these pools periodically has magical healing properties (a periodicity relating to the tides and the White Moon's phases).

Tentacle Shoals: Offshore south of the Spiral Tower headland, and possibly drawn to the area near the Tower, is the undersea cavern lair of a juvenile Octopus-Kraken hybrid (so it is huge, but not yet gigantic, and is also intelligent). It is venomous, and periodically undergoes metamorphoses to a somewhat different, yet still related, form as it grows and matures. It ranges long distances from its lair in search of food at times, so need not just be encountered hereabouts.

Terror Water: A primeval Ooze hunts in the waters off the southwestern coast, absorbing food, and continually, if slowly, growing, as it does so. It radiates an aura of cold fear all around it, and it is able to detect the presence of iron from some distance away, so is often drawn to metal on-board ships at sea, which it will attack to feed upon the crew. While it uses the marked region as a loose lair, it roams far and wide across the Wildmoon Reefs especially.

The Twisted Torchbearer's Dragon: The isle's temple to the Twisted Torchbearer, this is a surprisingly large and lustrous building to which no paths now lead (there are hints that one may have existed between it and

Castle Peris at some distant time). It is decorated within and without using mother-of-pearl shell, and the whole has a mysteriously fractal-like, spiralling floorplan, rather like the swirling patterns in a blazing torch, when viewed from overhead. The temple is slowly crumbling in places, and is a partial ruin, a reflection of the Torchbearer's association with things broken and imperfect. Where its draconic epithet derives is unclear.

Valley of Frogs: Across this broader vale in the isle's south-central part, is a marshy area notable for its range of colourful, calling frogs. The holes and hollows that are found throughout Mist Forest cluster especially towards and through it, as this is the site where The Twisted Torchbearer is always reborn, emerging from the earth anew after her death each time. Sometimes known as the Valley Where Time Stands Still as a result, a region with a degree of nostalgic familiarity for the Torchbearer, who is sometimes to be found wandering here reminiscing, occasionally looking like a ghost, or freshly disinterred walking corpse, if just reborn and still caked with earth.

Whipper Whale: Towards the outer, eastern, edge of the offshore reefs of Hell's Sandbanks off the isle's northeastern coast, one or more hunting Whipper Whales often appear. These are particularly large Whales that have dark blue and yellow banding along their bodies. They are venomous and are associated with a deity, The Heartless Traveller, whose domain was that of forgotten and abandoned things, and whose visits tested the hospitality of mortals. Despite the seeming overlap with some of The Twisted Torchbearer's domains, the two deities are apparently unrelated, possibly because the Traveller vanished after the Nameless Crisis, an event that left no survivors, which was connected with something terrible burrowing beneath and which left a great smoking crater somewhere in the wilds, necessitating the redrawing of maps. The location and timing of all these things is extremely vague in the surviving myths.

Wildmoon Reefs: A general name sometimes given by sailors to the reef, shoals and sandbanks scattered through the shallower seas east and south of Selenos, regarded like the isle as a dangerous and unlucky place to try to visit.