

Snake Pass South End

In the southeastern mountains of high-latitude Peredur (around 67 degrees South latitude, so within Nibirum's Antarctic circle), Snake Pass forms an important route connecting the plains of Yngvihagen to its southwest with those of Llanfairiogof to the northeast. Moreover, the area lies around the border between the main Polar Auroral and High-Latitude Auroral Zones for Nibirum, so the aurora is quite a frequent sight from the area, sometimes creating unusual magical effects at the surface. This map provides details on the southern part of the Pass, between the Schlange Plains and the settled area of Eine Nacht in mid-Pass.

Main river names are shown in blue, mountain names are given in italics, with a green label for Hope Forest (a term sometimes applied to any of the coniferous woodlands along this part of the Pass). The main Pass road (an unpaved trail) is shown by the thickest, near-central, winding, dashed line. Lesser trails off it are shown with narrower dashed lines (except the main turning to the Eine Nacht Township in the map's north), while the solid pathway lines by the central-western map edge show the mountain tracks, sometimes specially cut into the rocks, linking the off-map main town of Schlange with the Jewel Mine and Bleaklow Tower on this map. The Lindenbrook in the map's southeast corner is the most substantial river on this map, part of the upper course of one of the major rivers in southern Peredur. Here, it is notable for its many, often spectacular, waterfalls. The other named on-map rivers, the Ashop and Alport, are fairly minor streams, by contrast, for all they are the main water supplies for folk traversing Snake Pass. Their watershed lies in the dry valley section of the Pass to the northeast of Mount Edal. The climate is typically cold temperate in the region. The mountains are chiefly bare rock, with scrubby shrubs and grasses, often snow-covered, although there are no significant glaciers among them. Conifer woods mostly favour the hills and lower mountain slopes.

Ideas for places and their contents on the map were derived and adapted from randomly-chosen keywords in the many tables in the Knave 2nd Edition RPG rules by Swordfish Islands LLC, and cards from the following Inkwell Ideas' Hexploration Decks, "Into the Wilderness", "Settled Lands", "Beyond the Pale", "Along the Way", "Strongholds", and the Creature Decks "Animals & Vermin" and "Fey, Constructs, & Wildlife". Details for Eine Nacht village (see the Schlange Inn notes below) were determined using the settlement construction rules in the Shadowdark RPG.

Location Notes

Bandit Hideout: Hidden away in Hope Forest, at the foot of the mountains on the east side of the Pass in the map's southeast, lurks a group of bandits liable to try attacking travellers using the Pass who seem likely targets. They have a geis on them preventing them from harming clergy, and indeed will often assist such folks, should they be in trouble. Some time ago, they saved the cult members currently in charge at Sleeper's Hill, in the north of the map, and would be likely to do so again if required. They are exiles from their homeland far off to the southwest in the Yngvihagen plains.

Bleaklow Tower: Two great, ancient, small-castle-like watchtowers on the western side of this end of the Pass maintain active lookout stations over whatever traffic may come this way. Bleaklow Tower is the more northerly, a notable wonder, built from massive, unmortared, Cyclopean stone blocks, so well-constructed that despite its great age, it never needs repairs, despite its lofty, commonly windswept and icy position. The stretch of the Pass between the Edal Vineyard southwest to the Schlange Plains can be viewed continuously from here, as well as the mountains all around, and even parts of the Pass northeast beyond Mount Edal, as far as the northern outskirts of the Eine Nacht Township. Ironvine Tower, the other southern Snake Pass watchtower, is readily visible from here as well, with regular signal lamp messages exchanged between the two. Crewed from Schlange, some distance off-map to the west, and linked to that town by the route over Doktor's Gate. Visiting Dwarves from the Jewel Mine may be here at times too.

Blue John Cavern: In the mountains of the northeastern map corner, where the wooded foothills give way to the true rocky mountainsides, are a number of caves, of which this is merely one. It holds a hidden, supposedly long-lost, cache of enchanted weapons of mythical fame, which remains protected by a secret society dedicated to preventing seekers from finding it. While there are old tales that mention the weapons, none indicate they could possibly reside here, and no locals in the Pass are aware the place even exists.

Dire Rat Cave: This mountain cave in the map's northwest corner is home to a group of dangerous Dire Rats that are often found ranging over the mountains and vales for miles around here.

Diviner's Hall: Roughly midway between Bleaklow Tower, Jewel Mine and Mount Edal in the centre-west of the map, this a pilgrimage site at the foot of its mountain, ending a long, hidden, narrow valley northwest of the main Pass route. A trail runs right along this vale, marked by the Sunpost waymarker a couple of miles (3 kilometres) off the Pass road. The Hall is carved directly from the rock foot of its mountainside, created by a

divine act in past times. Pilgrims come here to seek visions that can be interpreted by experienced clergy based here. A range of rare artefacts and texts is also maintained at the Hall. Strange phenomena cluster around the valley in general, augmented by the presence of magical auroral effects. Although these sometimes affect Diviner's Hall, they leave no lasting effects at the Hall itself - damage mysteriously repairs itself, missing or stolen items are returned, and so forth. It appears that the Hall and these oddities are why the Bandits whose hideout is in the woods southeast of the Pass road, almost opposite the entrance to the Diviner's Hall valley, have a permanent geis to protect all clergy, and rarely tackle those using this vale route.

Doktor's Gate: An arrow by the mid-western map edge marks this site, as it is actually on the unseen northern mountain flanks here, and in the valley below it. The Gate is a stairway cut into the mountain rock on one of the steepest parts of the route from Schlange to Bleaklow Tower, linking with a high valley on the southern side of the stairway slope over Bleak Mountain. In the valley just below the stairs, the route bifurcates, where a second route turns northeast towards Jewel Mine further to the north. It is said the name derives from the local joke that by the time someone has climbed the stairs, they need a doctor!

Dragonblood Mausoleum: Atop one of the steeper, lesser peaks in the mountain slopes leading northeastwards to Kinder Scout, around 2.5 miles (4 km) north of the Dwarven Repository on High Don, this tower-like structure has been carved from the native mountain rock. Although a path once led up to it, its long abandonment and subsequent erosion make this now a difficult climb, and as hard to follow as if it were a hidden way. The tower has a tall, narrow, arched gate with a half-open portcullis, the archway surmounted by a strongly-curved-horn dragon's skull. These horns, the portcullis, the decoration around the gateway, and the great curving spikes that extend from the walls in many places, are all covered with still-bright, though weathered, brass. A pair of large, low-sided, empty, stone brazier-bowls flank the broad steps leading up to the gate. The tower structure beyond is very old and partly ruined. Legends say that many Dragonblood Champions (half-dragon humanoids) are buried here in it, and the crypts beneath, supposedly including the half-mythical treasure, the Helm of Dragon-shaping. The place became abandoned when a draconic disease swept the land long ages ago, and the Dragonblood folks all died out. Or so the tales relate.

Dwarven Repository: On the upper slopes of High Don mountain, with views over the Lindenbrook valley to the east and the southern end of Snake Pass to the west, stands this massive, rather squat, square-plan Dwarven fortress. It rises eight levels above the mountainside, tapering slightly towards its top. It marks the western border of a Dwarven realm that extends eastwards into the Ice Capped Range of mountains that trends west-east from Snake Pass off-map towards the easternmost cape of Peredur, and contains the most authoritative scripture and artefacts of the oldest religion of that realm, faithfully preserving its traditions through the millennia. Aside from the Dwarven priests who maintain all these things, there are numerous guards, scholars and sages, and as a further defence in great need, a magically-dormant Stone Giant hidden away inside. No one knows how deep its foundations and archive stores delve.

Edal Vineyard: At the southeastern base of Mount Edal, west of the Pass road, a trail runs west to this large, red-roofed, cream-walled building. It is large and imposing, set on the foothills as if it were a cross between a very grand chateau and a monastery, as it has a large, open square of trees in its midst, surrounded by covered, half-open cloister passages. A high-walled courtyard with a tall central gate-tower on its southwestern side overlooks the sheltered valley below containing the vineyards proper, extending to the south and west from here. The vintage produced from the Pass grapes here is excellent (despite the high latitude short summers), and can be found nowhere else. From time to time the place has been used as a neutral ground for parties from the lands beyond either end of the Pass to come and try to settle their differences. Its owner is a "retired" adventurer-assassin, with a, perhaps unsurprisingly, detailed knowledge of the politics in regions beyond the Pass. Security is guaranteed further by elemental guards, beyond the more usual Vineyard staff.

Eine Nacht Township: This is an area of farms and woodlands surrounding Eine Nacht village (marked on the map only as Schlange Inn). It is considered as a single unit in the Snake Pass valley by those who live here. The Township extends for approximately two miles or so on all sides of the Inn/village, including both banks of the River Alport in places. Minor tracks link the farms and hamlets, one of which continues on to Featherbed Top and Ironvine Tower west and southwest from the village, making for quite an extended area of law-abiding civilisation in the middle of the Pass. The folk here tend to consider themselves unaffiliated to any external settlement, although they are theoretically under the auspices of the ruler at Schlange, beyond the mountains to the southwest.

Elemental Pool: In Hope Forest north of the Pass route in the southwest of the map is this lake. It and the area surrounding it is exceptionally beautiful, with the colours and forms of everything - water, trees, rocks, lower vegetation, even the soil - seeming richer and more naturally perfect than anywhere else. It is always peaceful nearby, and restoratively tranquil, having been shaped long ago by druidic elemental artists.

Featherbed Top: Between Iron Mountain and the Eine Nacht Township in the map's north, this is a lower peak linked by a broad ridge to the northeastern slopes of Iron Mountain, as well as linked to it by ancient legend. A little below its peak, in a hollow on its southwestern heights facing Iron Mountain, is a partly ruined, half overgrown, tower, now a shrine. Its door opens only to the correct ritual prayer, and magical traps protect it and its approaches if this prayer is not performed properly. A small staff of clergy from Eine Nacht maintain what survives of the old tower, and are familiar with these protocols and dangers. The tower contains the bones of Saint Idvard who died atop Foundation Rock here, during the great battle that Ironvine Tower stood fast against, and ultimately won through. On the Rock, Idvard also stood unyielding against a tide of foes whose bodies lay in vast piles all around this spot before he was overwhelmed and died, a sacrifice that enabled the defenders of Ironvine Tower to achieve their final victory. His bones are believed to hold great magical potential; should they ever be set into a weapon, it would have great smiting power.

Feywoods: Concealed in the midst of the forested hills north of the main eastern bend in the Pass road, a little south of the Shattered Ground, and surrounding part of the northernmost tributary of the River Ashop, this substantial woodland zone is an area where the walls between planes are thin, allowing Faerie creatures and beings to slip from one world to the other with ease - as may also mortals, without due care. Deliberately making contact to obtain favours and eldritch trinkets can be best accomplished by spinning around until the person is so dizzy, they fall over (or so the tales relate). The area cannot be seriously threatened by mortals, as it is defended by endlessly varied illusions, created by an incomprehensible network of Fey contracts and bargains on a staggeringly huge scale for such a relatively small region (or so it may seem to mortals).

Giant Wasps: In Hope Forest, a little south of the Pass road in the map's centre-south is a Giant Wasp nest. They may be seen flitting about for some miles around here, hunting for meat or sugar early and late in the summer season respectively. They may occasionally attack Pass travellers in doing so, although they are not naturally aggressive otherwise, unless threatened.

Halfbuilt Hall: On one of the lightly-wooded lower foothills just east of the great bend in the Pass road, south of Iridescent Forest, is a series of partly-built brick structures that, while fairly overgrown, appear to be the start of a fort, tower or defended manor house. Vague rumours swirl locally about it, that it may have been meant as a lower-level guard post for the Pass road than the great mountain-top watchtowers, or that it was to be a hunting lodge for Quarry House, whose ruins lie just a couple of miles (3 km) to the southeast.

Herrman's Caves: A lower ridge on the eastern flanks of Bleak Mountain culminates in a fresh peak, on the lower southern side of which is a series of small, rock-cut, Caves, almost inaccessible except to the especially intrepid. Here, the noble-lineage hermit Herrman lives, following his own theological path, said to be very wise in such philosophical matters. He maintains a sheltered, open-air garden where he grows his own food, collects water and so forth. The climate is always oddly more temperate close to his Caves than elsewhere nearby.

Iridescent Forest: East of the great eastern bend in the Pass road, around 4 miles (6.5 km) east of Edal Vineyard, where the River Ashop forks into three smaller streams, all the vegetation, including the trees, has an iridescent sheen to it, thanks to some old, lingering, residual magic. The vegetation is all perfectly normal and healthy otherwise, but is a very obvious landmark, and can look spectacular in sun or moonlight.

Ironvine Tower: Set atop Iron Mountain in the northwestern part of the map, this is the other great watchtower keeping lookout over the southern stretches of Snake Pass, with Bleaklow Tower. From it can be seen the Pass from the long bend around the eastern foothills of Mount Edal by the Edal Vineyard, past Eine Nacht Township, and on beyond this map's northern edge. Its watch is maintained by folk from Eine Nacht, using pathways through the mountains along the northerly slopes of Featherbed Top and Iron Mountain itself. Less well-known in the region beyond now than Bleaklow Tower, as deeper in the Pass, this actually features in more important, far older, legends. Depending on which is believed, the Tower was either built, or crafted, or otherwise magically created, by the long-gone Stone Elves in elder days. It is not made of stone, but great, living, trunk-like vines of iron hardness that grow directly out of the mountaintop, twisting and intertwining with one another to form this magnificent, solid Tower structure, with internal floors, rooms and doors all of this same substance. The vines form a castle-like structure around the main watchtower as well. Anyone in the Tower, its compound and within about 30 feet (9 metres) of the compound outside it, once attuned to the magical iron vines (something that takes a full day here) are able to see in the dark. It is said that staying here for long periods also sharpens the eyesight of those so-attuned more generally. Iron Mountain and Ironvine Tower were the site of a mighty battle once, that shaped the subsequent history of southern Peredur. Legends record this as having happened in the very distant past, when Ironvine Tower and its Stone Elf defenders held off a final great assault. A plinth in the base of the main Tower contains a terse record of the event, and also refers to the shrine on Featherbed Top northeast of Iron Mountain, another central feature of this battle.

Jewel Mine: The northern fork of the mountain pathway below the Doktor's Gate stairs in the map's east leads over the mountainous terrain to this old Mine, still worked by Dwarven miners, who occasionally take trips to visit the folks at Bleaklow Tower, a couple of miles (three kilometres) to the south. Most of their time is spent in the deep Mine, hunting for fresh gemstones, when they are not off to Schlange, Eine Nacht, or further afield, to trade their latest discoveries.

Lair of the Ice Spiders: In a high mountain valley overlooking the vale leading to Diviner's Hall, is the entrance to this cave system, detailed by a separate Atlas map. Its valley can only be reached by a difficult climb, and although old tales speak of it having once been a pilgrimage site for bards, such folk come-by here only very rarely now. Few know of the site's location, perhaps fortunately.

Lightning Chapel: High up on one of the lesser mountain peaks in the northeastern map corner, not far from Blue John Cavern, stands this mythic Lightning Chapel, dedicated to the Thunder God, and still maintained by a small, lightning-blue-robed priesthood, one or two of whom may be seen occasionally in the valley at Eine Nacht village, or elsewhere in the Pass.

Logging Camp: Under a mile northwest of the Iridescent Forest by the great eastern bend in the Pass road, a series of wooden shanties are being built as a Logging Camp by an intrepid group from near Schlange outside the Pass. The Pass locals would be appalled to learn they intend logging trees from the Iridescent Forest.

Moondance: Hope Forest south of the Pass road in the south-centre of the map conceals this huge, very old, rough ring of standing stones in the foothills of the eastern Pass mountains. Indeed, the ring is so huge (about 1.25 miles, 2 km, across) and the stones so widely-separated around it, few visitors would even think there might be such a structure here. As an area, the ring has no magical significance. However, it is used at times as a dancing-ground for the secretive Satyrs that roam the mountains and woods east of the Pass. Haunting music on clear nights around the full White Moon may lure nearby travellers to the ring, the time when dances happen. These are not particularly safe events for ordinary folk to attend. Some say the Wild Goats west of the Pass road on Mount Edal are the daytime forms of these same Satyrs.

Ochre Jelly Caves: Several seemingly inviting caves in the lower slopes of southwestern High Don, near the map's southern border, host Ochre Jellies, making them decidedly unsafe for those seeking shelter.

Old Quarry: By the northwestern base of Kinder Scout, east of the Pass road in Hope Forest, in the map's centre-east, is this abandoned Quarry in the lowest mountainside. The overgrown remains of a broad track lead back towards the Pass road from here, which peters out by the edge of the forest, and while there may once have been a bridge over the River Ashop linking to the road, no trace of that remains by the river banks.

Osso Monastery: Towards the eastern limits of Eine Nacht Township in the map's north, a little west of the River Alport, is this small community of monk-like, ever-helpful, healer-priests, and their low, rambling, stone-built Monastery. They are very knowledgeable about the various Pass factions, including the cults, thieves and bandits, as well as the more typical unaligned locals.

Quarry House: Less than a mile (about 1.25 km) north of the Old Quarry towards the map's eastern edge, in a pleasant valley of the wooded foothills, is a ruin, whose stone appears very similar to that in the Quarry. Rumours suggest it was built as a country retreat by one of the rulers in Schlange, who had some curious outside interests. When the ruler changed though, it was abandoned. There are hints there may be still some old experimental items left hidden here, of interest still to sages, priests or the newer rulers in Schlange. Despite their dissimilar construction, Pass rumours also imply there may be a connection with Halfbuilt Hall, a couple of miles (3 km) further northwest.

Schlange Inn: Central hub of Eine Nacht Township in the centre-top of the map, this is the main reason the village of Eine Nacht is here. It started as a wayside halt for travellers using the Pass, considered by many as about the halfway point through. It has grown over the years into a large main building with several ancillary blocks for guests, their mounts and goods storage. An open Market Place, or Camping Ground, stands in front of it, at the centre of the village, where traders and caravans may set up stalls from time to time. The Inn has been here time out of mind, supposedly. The rest of the settlement caters for law-abiding travellers, providing road patrols, travel guards and guides, and lookouts for Ironvine Tower in the mountains southwest of the settlement. Besides the Inn, there are a couple of decent taverns (the Jolly Bard, and Rusty Dagger), a modest temple (which provides the clergy that attend the shrine on Featherbed Top), a master blacksmith able to create magical weapons, armour and horseshoes, a fine glassblower, an artistic sign-painter and scribe, an apothecary, a Dwarven jeweller from the Jewel Mine, Madam Grigore the fortune-teller and potion supplier, and Mr Noble, who runs a shop trading in antiques and assorted curios. The Inn is a little over a mile

(1.5 km) off the main Pass road, over a well-maintained, broad stone bridge over the River Alport, although the Pass road originally ran much closer to the Inn, land now given over to farms feeding the settlement.

Schlange Plains: Down in the southwest map corner is the southern end of Snake Pass, where it opens from the mountains onto the farmland plains and hills around and south of the off-map town of Schlange, some 6 miles (10 km) west of the map's corner. Farmsteads, hamlets and villages dot the farmland from here to the town, a couple of which are shown on this map. The Plains are typically safer to traverse than the Pass valley.

Shattered Ground: A sizeable area in the wooded foothills east of Eine Nacht Township, north of the Feywoods, is riven by cracks in the ground, which all appear fairly recent. The area lies much closer to the mountains than the Pass road, so few talkative locals have become aware of these as yet, although the more secretive groups associated with the surrounding Feywoods, Sleeper's Hill, Blue John Cavern and the Lightning Chapel have all independently discovered it. Whether the cracks are signs of earthquakes, nascent volcanic activity, or something else, is currently unknown.

Sleeper's Hill (Cave): East of the Pass route and Eine Nacht Township in the map's north, towards the northern edge of the treeless hills west of the mountains, this Cave is an old mine in a lightly-wooded hill, currently used as a religious site by followers of a minor cult anticipating the arrival of their Chosen One. A second, similarly minor cult, or perhaps a faction of the first, wants to prevent this from happening. The locals have noticed more similarly-robed cultists about of late, without realising what they are about. The Chosen One's followers faction has ties to the Bandits whose Hideout is further south in the eastern Pass foothills.

Starmetal Crater: Roughly four miles (6.5 km) east of the great eastern Pass road bend, by the centre-eastern map edge, is one large and several much smaller craters, now largely overgrown, partly filled-in by erosion, and not easy to locate, as all are in the forested hills. Magical meteoritic material has been, and still can be, found here, although this is mostly buried now. No tales mention the impact event, but some local stories still tell of the finding of such magical material in the past, and how it was made use of. They do tend to be vague as to exactly where the Crater is, however.

Sunpost: About two miles (3 km) along one of the western side-trails off the main Pass road near the map's centre, on the trail's northern side, stands this tall, wooden waymarker post, with a radiant, golden-metal sunburst symbol towards its top, on the side facing the path. It marks the path as that leading to the hidden valley at the end of which is Diviner's Hall.

Thieves' Hideout: In the woods northeast of the Schlange Inn, near the edge of the settled lands of Eine Nacht Township, by the map's north-centre edge, this is a well-concealed Hideout for thievish raiders liable to attack travellers only north of the Township along Snake Pass (north and off-map here), taking advantage of the fact the northern part of the Pass nearby is often less well-patrolled than the southern part on this map.

Warboar Patrollers: Two miles (3 km) west of the Pass road near the south-centre of the map is this large building in Hope Forest. It has two main storeys, set upon a great stone plinth, the upper storey a little smaller than the lower, each with a red-tiled roof, and wooden window-walls all around, many of which window-walls slide open as doors, Earth-Oriental-style. A broad, fenced pathway leads to a large red-tiled, white-walled porch-gatehouse at the southwestern front, the main entrance. Fenced grounds surround paddocks and stables for the warboars, towards the rear of the main building. A force of warriors trained in the use of breeding, training and riding such boars is stationed here, nominally beholden to the ruler of Schlange, albeit semi-independent defenders of travellers along the mapped part of Snake Pass here, maintaining law and order along it, in conjunction with the Bleaklow and Ironvine Tower folks, and those of Eine Nacht Township. Patrols are likely to be encountered along the Pass road at least once every day.

Wild Goats: Near the map's centre, and ranging widely across the western slopes of Mount Edal on the heights above the Diviner's Hall valley, are to be found numerous Wild Mountain Goats. Some say they are under the protection of the Mountain God, making it unlucky to kill one, as they may be the daytime form of the local Satyrs.

Wyrd Coomb: A great sheltered hollow high up on the northwestern slopes of Kinder Scout in the map's southeast features some unusual effects, due to the magical wards that appear intermittently, a residue from an ancient ritual cast here. Those visiting the place may find themselves instantly teleported to a random location anywhere in the Snake Pass region within roughly 10 miles (15 km) of the Coomb. When active, the wards appear as free-floating, metallic-purple magical symbols in the air throughout the Coomb. The locals know enough to warn visitors about this strange spot, though not necessarily why.