

Sussara

Banjar is a region of Kumarikandam with a small, very sparse and scattered population, set in the southern tropics of Nibirum, around 25 degrees South latitude, so it is unsurprising that even villages become notable features in the landscape. This small region, in the central Banjar Mountains, is near the headwaters of one of the two great rivers that drain towards the sea south of the province, the Kalabanjar ("Heart of Banjar"). The region's name derives from Sussara Village, in the centre of this map, where "Sussara" means "Glass flower", a comment relating to the impressive, naturally-occurring, flower-like crystal formations distributed over the surface in places near the settlement and elsewhere. While Banjar has been recently invaded by mysterious attackers, who seem intent on the destruction of the native populace and their settlements, the closest incursions towards Sussara along the Kalabanjar River so far have been over 100 miles (160 kilometres) away. There are elements at Sussara Village that may hold the key to eventually ridding the land of its unwelcome incomers, so it is possible they will never get any nearer.

Named Map features

Abandoned Mine: On the lower slopes of one of the larger peaks on the map, in the southeast corner angle between Riven Wadi and the Kalabanjar, is the largely collapsed entrance tunnel to an old ore mine. Hummocks nearby suggest a small settlement was once here too, along with rocky spoil heaps, themselves now only somewhat larger hummocks. No one in the area can recall what was mined here, although small amounts of lead may be spotted by keen-eyed prospectors.

Aqesh Road: Scarcely anybody in the mountains quite knows what "Aqesh" is. The name originates as the unpaved trail that runs by the western side of the Kalabanjar continues all the way to the sea at the Bay of Aqesh. Only the Billawr River is bridged on this map along the Road, at Sussara Village. The Sagirkala River has only a difficult, sometimes dangerously impassable, ford.

Banjar Dts Trail: (Banjar Heights Trail) A rough trail, or in places several lines of paths, that runs west along the high mountains to the headwaters of the other main river out of the Banjar range. On this map, it fords the Salt Wadi (when that river is flowing) and passes the Hunting Lodge before exiting the northwestern edge.

Billawr River: One of the main upper Kalabanjar tributaries, that meets the latter river at Sussara Village. The name means "Crystal".

Burial Cairn: By the eastern middle side of the map, west of Riven Wadi, is the deep ravine of The Cleft. On its northeastern edge is a substantial, oval, drystone-built, tumulus. Who lies within, or what else it may contain, are unknown locally.

Carven Cliff: Towards the northeastern map corner, west of the Ice Road trail, around 3.5 miles (5.5 km) north of the Shamesh Gate rock formation, part of a rocky hillside has been deliberately smoothed and carved with worn, ancient, reliefs showing several deity-like figures, with some lines of text. The writing is too worn to be read as a whole, although a few more legible pieces seem to be in a type of archaic local Banjar lettering, with others in a similarly ancient style of southern Tiantang characters (Tiantang being the vast central and western part of Kumarikandam, north of the Banjar Mountains). Those versed in such matters insist the name "Shamesh" can be made out among these still, even if no one is sure who or what that may once have been.

Cedar Woods: The dry, hot mountains are not conducive to dense expanses of vegetation, so these, often scattered, woods, extending a few miles east from Sussara, form an important source of timber for boats and general construction. Not all the trees are cedars, for all many are, with most others being of a similarly tough, hardy nature.

The Cleft: A deep, sheer-sided, ravine near the central-eastern map edge, just west of Riven Wadi. While there are several other narrow dry valleys elsewhere in the mountains here, including some of the wadi channels when not running, this is by far the most significant. It could have been created by some cataclysmic magic in the minds of the more impressionable. It is more than 5 miles long west-east (8 km), and up to 3,000 feet deep (1,000 metres) in places.

Crystal Spire: An unusually narrow, isolated, very tall, rock spire, almost as tall as The Cleft is deep (or so it is said hereabouts), and a significant landmark. It lies a little north of the Billawr River, west of the Salt Wadi confluence. The Spire is of native rock, not unusual crystal, so its name likely originated from the River's instead.

Eagle Caverns: Roughly halfway up one of the higher peaks south of the Sagirkala River, a number of cave mouths and ledges can be seen from places close-by. Eagles nest on the craggy mountain, as elsewhere in the area, although those seen here are claimed as notably larger birds than the usual kind. The climb to reach the Caverns is long and very arduous, for all they have a reputation for beautiful crystalline wonders within, according to the tales of the those who claim to have visited them and returned.

Frost Bowl: High on the double-headed peak west of the Shamesh Gate and the Ice Road in the northeastern quarter of the map, is a large, south-facing hollow, surrounded by high cliffs, so the Sun rarely ever reaches into it. A small glacier resides here, a source of fresh ice for Sussara, hence the name of the trail. It is very cold even away from the hollow on this side of the mountain, perhaps magically so. Mists and low clouds tend to linger around the peaks and into the Bowl as a result.

Great Cascade: The western tributary of the uppermost Kalabanjar (which retains the main river's name), falls in a series of impressive cataracts down the face of one of the highest parts of the central Banjar range. While difficult to reach, the sight is quite amazing, since the Cascade brings the river water down more than 1,000 ft (300 m).

Hunters' Trail: A minor track south from Sussara, fording the Billawr by the Village, across what are known as the Wheat Hills at the settlement. The trail runs only so far as the Sagirkala River, at its confluence with Red Wadi, albeit confusing side-tracks extend from the main Trail to either side among the Hills. It is a path used chiefly by herders and hunters.

Hunting Lodge: In the valley by the intermittent Salt Dan lake, near where the Banjar Heights Trail crosses Salt Wadi in the map's northwest corner, are a couple of low buildings, which, while well-maintained (by the folk of Sussara) are ordinarily unoccupied. When used, they provide shelter as a travellers' rest stop along the Trail, before beginning one of its steeper ascents to the west, or as a nucleus for those coming here gathering salt from the dry lake-bed and hunting, when the Lodge can become the centre of a small tent village.

Ice Road: This trail leads northeast from Sussara Village across a ford on the Kalabanjar to and through Cedar Woods, over the hills into the Shamesh Pass Wadi's valley, and then north off the map. The Frost Bowl mountain is west of the Trail south of the Shamesh Gate. An occasional series of standing stones, each carved with one or more mask-like faces, can be found alongside the Ice Road all the way to the Shamesh Pass to Tiantang, 50 miles and more (80 km) north of the map edge.

Kalabanjar River: The main central Banjar river system, whose name begins around this Sussara area. It runs from here for more than 300 miles (almost 500 km) to the sea in the Bay of Aqesh. Unsurprisingly, the name means "Heart of Banjar", as noted earlier.

Magic Grove: Along a stretch of the north side of the Sagirkala, just west of its confluence with the Kalabanjar and the Aqesh Road ford, are several stands of unusual trees and plants, exotic for the tropics, as being more typical of the deciduous woods of Nibirum's northern hemisphere. The place is known for its magical herbs and timbers, albeit these are never easy to find among the general vegetation. It is a very special, peaceful place.

Red Wadi: One of several more significant intermittent streams and rivers shown on the map, when flowing, this is a tributary of the Sagirkala. Its upper reach is in the valley south of the Ruined Tower. Its name derives from the red sandstone outcrops it has revealed along much of the vale.

Riven Wadi: Southernmost of the intermittent streams creating the upper Kalabanjar here, it runs past the east end of The Cleft, and it is said its name derives from that ravine.

Ruined Tower: By the west-central map edge, at the east end of a west-facing valley, are the ruins of an old stone tower. While the ruins are known of at Sussara Village, nothing more is remembered of the Tower or its former occupants. It is in a curiously isolated spot now, certainly.

Sagirkala River: Most major, and southernmost, of the Kalabajar's tributaries on this map. Its reliable flow means there are useful numbers of trees and shrubs in its bankside woods. Its name means "Little Heart".

Salt Dan: A rare, at times large, intermittent lake in the map's northwest corner, fed by a couple of equally intermittent streams. Sometimes, only their channels feature as flowing with water over the lake's basin, before combining as the Salt Wadi towards the southern tip of the lake area. As the lake, and wadis, dry out, salt forms in great patches, which the folk from Sussara will come out to collect, setting up a temporary tent village by the Hunting Lodge from which to do so.

Salt Wadi: Running at times from beyond the northern map edge, through the Salt Dan lake and into the Billawr, with a shorter tributary on its northwest side, it is unclear if it names the lake, or if the lake names it. Salt deposits are left in patches along it when it dries out.

Shamesh Gate: This is a great, natural rock arch, that rises surprisingly delicately for several hundred feet (100 m and more) above the surface in the vale of the Shamesh Pass Wadi, below which archway the Ice Road trail passes, in the northeastern map corner. It is a major landmark in the area.

Shamesh Pass Wadi: Longest of the intermittent streams on the map. As its name may imply, it runs most of the way to the Shamesh Pass over the spine of the Banjar Mountains to Ciantang, and along whose western side the Ice Road runs. Parts of the Wadi are subject to occasional, deadly, flash floods, and stretches of it sometimes form temporary linear lakes in the deeper hollows.

Sussara: The Village is detailed by a separate Atlas map.