

## The Darklands

Deep beneath Nibirum lay the Darklands, an expansive network of tunnels and caverns complete with their own unique flora and fauna. Icy seas, black mountain ranges, forests of tree-size fungi, towering crystals, and cities and villages of subterranean-dwelling folk are but a few of the features of the Darklands. While most adventurers have explored the caves and dungeons of the surface world, few have journeyed deep beneath to the underground world of the Darklands.

The tunnels of the Darklands range from narrow cracks two feet high that force explorers to belly crawl to enormous caverns stretching a mile or more high. Some portions of tunnels are twisting mazes, impossible to map, some are gently-sloping, and others fall at steep angles or sheer cliffs. Some areas are in pitch blackness while others are illuminated by strangely-phosphorescent fungi and glowing crystals. There is no day or night, no seasons, no tides in the Darklands. There is weather phenomenon, however, in the form of earthquakes, tremors, and volcanic activity that can produce winds – some extremely powerful. There is “rain” and “snow” as water drips off the cavernous ceilings from condensation and surface water seeping down from above. Fungi cover much of the area from carpets of mosses to forests of giant mushrooms. A few true plants grown in the Darklands, including pale twisted trees with sickly yellow-white leaves; the wildlife on the Darklands ranges from bats, insects, blind cave fishes, and amphibians to larger animals and horrible subterranean beasts.

The chief inhabitants of the Darklands are dark elves and dark dwarves. Both have built cities and have survived and flourished with the resources available to them in the caverns of the Darklands. The two subterranean races have been at war for generations, spilling unguessable quantities of blood and laying waste to each other’s cities. The ongoing conflict has been at a stalemate for eons, although neither will be the first to suggest a cessation of hostilities.

Other organized inhabitants include giants, dark fey, and goblins, all who have built cities and villages in the underground world. Trolls and other dark-loving monsters regularly wander the tunnels looking for prey but are not organized into villages.

The dark dwarves have complex cities built in the mountains of the Darklands, while the dark elves have erected cities of steep-roofed basalt and onyx houses, towers, and temples to their demon goddesses. The small villages of the giants are little more than collections of ramshackle huts and lean-to built from scraps, while the goblins have lairs in mazes of tunnels and caverns. The dark fey live in small hamlets of deceptively-pretty story-book houses built tall and narrow and at crooked angles with diamond-paned windows and scalloped shingles.

Numerous monoliths dot the Darklands, ancient and mysterious, even to the underground inhabitants. Called Stones of Power, they are inscribed with glyphs of an unknown language and are said to hold great power, although no one knows exactly what that might be.

The Darklands likely stretch even farther, hundreds or even thousands of miles in other directions. Passage from the surface world to the Darklands is usually through steep tunnels, deep fissures or old abandoned wells.

