

Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook

ATHENAEUM ARCANAE TREASURE CHESTS



BY BRET BOYD

A+HENAÆUM ARCANÆ: TREASURE CHESTS

Adventuring PCs can find an ungodly amount of treasure during their travels. Some GMs might allow them to just take whatever they want without worrying about the realities of weight and encumbrance. But others are not so lenient, forcing the PCs to account for the weight of every last gold piece they wish to swipe. Many a time, treasure is spread about on the ground like some bizarre trophy, allowing the characters to easily pick and choose from the pile. Of course, there are those occasions when a treasure chest (or two, or three) is discovered. And why not? Can't intelligent monsters be tidy too?

Or perhaps it's not the monsters who are to blame but rather the GM? Perhaps treasure chests are something either too boring ("You find a chest with a lock.") or too predictable ("You've sprung the poison needle trap. Roll your Fortitude save please."). That's where this accessory comes in. Detailed below are 10 chests that can be immediately inserted into your fantasy game. Full details are given for each chest's physical description (dimensions, description), defenses (locks, traps), and possible quirks (permanent magical conditions which can be triggered by owner). Unless otherwise noted, these treasure chests are opened by way of a hinged lid and have the **standard statistics** for their

type: hardness 5; 15 hit points; Break DC 23. This means they are made of wood and are 1-1/2 inches thick. Standard dimensions for a treasure chest are 3 ft. (long) by 1-1/2 ft. (wide) by 1-1/2 ft. (tall). Unless otherwise noted, use these dimensions.

ADVENTURING WARCHEST

Description: Across the surface and interior of this chest are symbols of groups and individuals (identifying a symbol requires a check of either Bardic Knowledge DC 22 or Knowledge (local) DC 25) which belong to the previous owners—all adventurers or adventuring companies. The face of an open-mouthed horned demon adorns the front of the chest's barrel-top lid, its brass chin forming the clasp. The wooden sides and metal support frame are always in polished pristine condition, the magic of the chest keeping it free from dirt and grime.

Statistics: The 2-inch thick hardwood has hardness 5; 20 hit points; Break DC 26.

Defenses: There is no lock on the chest, but a magical trap can be activated at the whim of the owner. *Shocking Grasp* Trap: CR 5; magic device; touch trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; spell effect (*shocking grasp*, 5th-level wizard, 5d6 electrical);

If the GM is using a published adventure with treasure already provided, simply disregard any content suggestions listed here. It should also be noted that the description and quirks of certain chests may make for some good adventure hooks in and of themselves. As with any supplement, the GM should feel free to modify or change whatever does not suit his campaign. There is a deliberate array of both magical and mundane chests listed here for maximum usability.

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Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26.
Cost: 2,500 gp, 200 XP.

Quirks: Anyone who places a gold piece into the creature's mouth and utters the appropriate password ("loot") becomes the adventuring warchest's owner. He can cause a sigil representing his party or name to be scribed into the chest wherever there is room (or can displace the oldest symbol present if desired). In addition to this and the activation of the *shocking grasp* trap, the owner can command the chest to "walk." The chest immediately grows four brawny legs with the same hardness and hit points as the wood they grow out of. The chest gains blindsight and has a movement rate of 20 feet. Unless commanded otherwise, the warchest follows the owner at a distance of 10 feet. It can be given vocal commands at no further than 60 feet away (the same range as its blindsight).

Except for the defenses listed above, the warchest cannot make any aggressive moves. However, it can be positioned so that an enemy might be made to trip over it if bull rushed properly.

ANTLER CHEST (ALSO CALLED "HUNTERS' CHEST")

Description: Named for the antlers etched into the chest's sides and lid as well as the carved deer antler handles at the sides, the antler chest is the property of a big game hunter. Whether the owner is storing weapons or trophies, the fur-lined interior is a good place to do so. The genuine yeti fur has a pocket on the underside

of the barrel-top lid which commonly holds glass vials for healing, poison, etc. The antler chest was originally designed to hold not only animal bits but standard camping equipment like a hunting knife, a hand axe, and terrain-specific clothing to aid in camouflaging the hunter.

Statistics: Standard except size is twice as large (6 ft. x 3 ft. x 3 ft.)

Defenses: Good lock (Open Lock DC 30). *Summon Monster I* Trap: CR 3; magic device; touch trigger (*alarm*); no reset; spell effect (*summon monster I*, 2nd-level wizard), Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26. *Cost:* 100 gp, 8 XP.

Quirks: One of the most infamous monster hunters of the last century, a half-elf named Talon, used an antler chest during his outings. When he met his match in the form of a half-dragon sorcerer, his body was shoved unceremoniously into the chest and sent back to his residence. Several servants received quite a shock that morning when their employer's dismembered corpse spilled out upon opening it. When word got out about this grisly find, some demented spellcasters decided to add their own little twist to the antler chest. There is a 10% chance that any given antler chest has a *summon monster I* trap attached to it which activates when the lid is opened (emulating the corpse of ill-fated Talon). The monster summoned attacks the closest person to the chest until it is slain.

CAMOUFLAGE CHEST

Description: The best way to describe the exterior of a camouflage chest is to say nothing at all. This is because the chest is

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magically able to reproduce the look and texture of its immediate environment, looking like an odd extension of the ground or wall. The chest is flat-topped, has rounded edges, no handles or clasps, and is divided into two equal sections (with a lid for each on the top opened via small indentations that can be grabbed with two fingers). The wooden divider inside is removal for maximum use of space.

Statistics: Standard

Defenses: Average lock (Open Lock DC 25)—located inside the keyhole to minimize outside blemishes while camouflaged—and camouflaging (see below).

Quirks: The reason behind this chest's camouflage ability lies with the magical adaptation of a mimic hide. Because of this ingredient, the chest's chances of hiding are just as good as that creature. A creature attempting to detect the ruse must succeed a Spot check against the chest's Disguise check (to which it adds a +8 enhancement bonus).

ELEMENT BOX

Description: Arcane symbols dot this steel chest's exterior. The barrel-top lid bears the evocation sigil which anyone succeeding a DC 5 Knowledge (arcana) check can identify. A similarly easy DC 10 Knowledge (arcana) check can identify the four side symbols: wavy lines (air), a rock (earth), a flame (fire), and an ocean wave or snowflake (water). The water design varies from box to box but the ocean wave is believed to be the first (DC 15 Bardic Knowledge check). The snowflake is simply the more aesthetically pleasing symbol. There are no handles as the box can be easily carried. The interior sports a layer of

crimson leather covering a green crystalline surface.

Statistics: Smaller and stronger than a typical treasure chest, the 2-inch thick steel element box is 2 ft. x 1 ft. x 1 ft. and has hardness 10; 60 hit points; Break DC 30.

Defenses: *Fire Trap:* CR 5; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*fire trap*, 7th-level wizard, 1d4+8* fire, DC 16 Reflex save half damage); Search DC 29; Disable Device DC 29. *Cost:* 305 gp.

* The tyrax crystal also enhances this trap, increasing the damage by +1 (included).

Quirks: The creator of the element box, a human evoker named Aldais Montrose, conceived it as the perfect container for his small collection of wands. The special crystalline interior is called "tyrax" crystal and is only found deep inside the lava tubes of inactive volcanoes. After some experimentation, Aldais discovered a beneficial effect of tyrax—enhancement of elemental magics. Wands (or indeed any magic items) that produce elemental effects that are kept in the box for over 24 hours are strengthened—the damage is increased +1 per die of damage for the first 1d4+1 uses after removal from the box. That particular item cannot benefit from the crystal's effects for another 2 days after the increased damage uses are expended.

F⊕⊕TL⊕CKER

Description: The soldier's all-purpose storage container, this footlocker has seen its share of use. Hardwood covered by black leather, the exterior shows numerous scuffs and scrapes. The flat lid is particularly scarred, having at least a dozen furrows where a knife was stuck into it.

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Statistics: The footlocker is slightly less sturdy than the standard treasure chest. Its 1-inch thick exterior has hardness 5; 10 hit points; Break DC 20. Standard dimension apply.

Defenses: Average lock (Open Lock DC 25).

Quirks: There is a 20% chance for something to be carved important into the inside bottom of the locker. This could be a person's name (owner, family member, friend, lover), a location (home, troop headquarters, next of kin), a set of numbers (combination or password), or a cryptic message (no longer than 20 letters).

GREAT ARK

Description: This treasure chest has two separate pieces—the trunk portion and the removable lid. The lid bears a small replica of a luxurious porcelain palace of “eastern” flare (whatever passes for an Arabian culture in your campaign). Several small minarets stand at the four corners of the palace's walls with a taller column representing the royal quarters at the center. Even this tallest structure is only 2 inches in height, the others reaching 1-1/2 inches. Several shorter structures are scattered within the green palace grounds. All aspects of this representation are expertly painted and are securely fastened to the ark's cover. A brass ball clings to each corner of the lid. These can be extended with a pull to reveal four 3-ft. long polls which creatures can use to move the heavy ark.

The base of the ark is marble in appearance (although the composition is mithral). Curled brass extensions on the corners allow the ark to stand on its own “feet.” A desert scene with a blue sky is painted across the exterior.

Statistics: This chest is twice the size of a standard chest (6 ft. by 3 ft. by 3 ft.) and is made of 1 inch mithral: hardness 15; 30 hit points; Break DC 30. The ark weighs 60 pounds when empty.

Defenses: A lock occupies each length of the ark. Both are of good quality (Open Lock DC 30) and need to be unlocked *simultaneously* in order to remove the lid. Otherwise, two hidden locks inside the chest's ends activate and prevent further unwanted tampering. This precaution isn't overly complicated for authorized persons with keys, but for two rogues to unlock the locks at the same time might make for quite a challenge (especially if rushed).

Quirks: The great ark is the treasure container for sultans and other desert monarchs and princes. Besides being able to hold a lot of loot, the great ark is a status symbol. Anyone who sees the ark for the first time and recognizes it with a DC 15 Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check is initially awed by the owner. This translates into a +5 morale bonus for the owner when using Diplomacy and Intimidate against the creature who recognized the ark. This bonus only lasts for the first encounter but might be just the edge a character needs in a tough negotiation.

MOON CHEST

Description: Made of pure white marble, this squat rectangular chest seems to soak in ambient lighting and magnify it so that it is the first item one sees when walking into a room. The lid and base are two separate pieces. Both are decorated with every phase of the moon running in progression across the exterior. These carved images are plain but graceful and serve as the only decoration for the moon chest.

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Statistics: The moon chest measures 5 ft. by 3 ft. by 2 ft. and the 2-inch thick marble has hardness 8; 30 hit points; Break DC 26.

Defenses: None

Quirks: Besides doubling as an altar for moon-worshipping religions (characters might be able to know this with a successful DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check), the moon chest serves as general storage for the well-to-do. However, only a handful of souls know of the moon chest's special property. While many believe the moon carvings are why the chest has its name, this is actually a hint to the true reasoning. During a full moon, if the chest's interior is exposed to the pale rays of moonlight, the bottom and any contents present vanish to reveal a mysterious marble staircase. The stairs lead to a small extradimensional space that moves with the moon chest. The space measures a tidy 10 ft. by 6 ft. by 20 ft. room framed with misty (but immutable) borders that radiate a pale illumination (equivalent to torchlight). The space remains in existence at all times, but is only accessible when the above criteria are met. Living creatures caught in the extradimensional space need not worry about air to breathe but food and water are its responsibility.

SARCOPHAGUS

Description: Who says, "You can't take it with you?" Many who have their own stone sarcophagus probably thought they could. This type of treasure chest is a bit on the unusual side, yet many rich and powerful individuals enjoy the idea of storing their treasure with their corporeal remains. The lid and base are two separate pieces,

the former having a likeness of the deceased sculpted onto it. The base, if it has any ornamentation at all,

Statistics: Made of 5-inch stone, the sarcophagus is 7 ft. by 3 ft. by 4 ft. and has hardness 8; 75 hit points; Break DC 30.

Defenses: None

Quirks: While a character might have heard factual rumors about the deceased's stored wealth, it may be another matter to find it. Inside the sarcophagus, one finds only the corpse. Searching for false bottoms or sides inside the stone coffin yields nothing. However, when one searches the foot end of the sarcophagus (DC 25 Search check), he discovers the hidden panel. A 2 ft. by 3 ft. by 1-1/2 ft. cubicle serves to store the deceased's chosen treasures.

SCROLL CHEST

Description: This plain wooden chest looks more like a crate. The flat-top lid does not lift open on hinges but rather swivels open while staying connected to the back left corner. Inside the chest is a series of slots just large enough to insert a rolled sheet of parchment into (1-1/2 inch). Total scroll capacity is 64.

Statistics: The scroll chest is 3 ft. by 1 ft. by 1 ft. and walls of 2-inch thick wood: hardness 5; 20 hit points; Break DC 26.

Defenses: Very good lock (Open Lock DC 35) with a trap in the lock—Ungol Dust Vapor Trap: CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; gas; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. room); never miss; onset delay (2 rounds); poison (ungol dust, DC 15 Fortitude save resists, 1 Cha/1d6 Cha plus 1 Cha drain); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 16. *Market Price:* 9,000 gp.

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Quirks: Much like the element box (see above), the scroll chest is for spellcasters who need a safe place to put their items when they don't require them for an adventure. In this case, those items are scrolls. The only oddity to a scroll chest is that it has a false top. The swivel lid's bottom has leather padding which can be removed (DC 25 Search to detect and remove). Within this tight space can be kept a single unrolled scroll, usually a spellcaster's most precious one.

TRAINING CHEST

Description: This is the most common looking treasure chest one can find. The double-hinged barrel-top, keyhole on the front clasp, and hardwood composition are images everyone has when the words "treasure chest" are uttered. But the training chest has one distinguishing feature that

can be found with a successful DC 15 Search check—a crude cross carved onto the exterior bottom. Rogues can attempt an easy Intelligence check (DC 10) while other characters can attempt a Knowledge (local) check (DC 25) to identify the cross as the universal marking of thieves' guild property. The cross represents a dagger and the chest is one used to train novice rogues in thievery.

Statistics: Standard

Defenses: Simple lock (Open Lock DC 20) and a Poison Needle Trap: CR 1; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; Atk +8 ranged (1 plus greenblood oil poison); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 20. *Market Price:* 1,300 gp.

Quirks: The training chest has not only a false bottom (Search DC 20) but a false side as well (Search DC 22). These secret pockets are 2 inches deep.

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