

## REIGN OF WINTER



## PLANET OF DRAGONS

**T**HEIR WINGS DARKENED THE SKY: DRAGONS IN SPEARHEADS A THOUSAND STRONG. BENEATH THEM CAME THEIR ARMIES, MEN AND WOMEN TOO SCARED OR CORRUPTED TO DEFY THE INVADERS. THE LAST OF THE GREAT ONES MET THEM THERE—AERNON AND VAYUS, KARAPHEL AND DOSKIS, RHASKAN THE RIDERLESS. WITH SPELL AND CLAW, THEY TORE AT THEIR EVIL BRETHERN, GIVING THEIR LIVES SO THAT OUR PEOPLE MIGHT SURVIVE.

THE GREAT ONES ARE GONE NOW, BUT THE WAR OF HEROES NEVER ENDED. THE SKYFIRE MANDATE IS NOT A PLACE, BUT A PROMISE: A VOW TO NEVER FORGET THEIR SACRIFICE.

~THE WAR OF HEROES (AUTHOR UNKNOWN)



## PLANET OF DRAGONS

This volume's adventure takes place on Triaxus, another planet in Golarion's solar system that is in many ways similar to Golarion itself, with roughly the same size, gravity, atmosphere, and terrain. Yet while Golarion orbits in a standard ellipse that keeps it roughly the same distance from the sun, Triaxus's path brings it closer to the sun than Golarion at its nearest point, then slingshots it far out into the cold of space, where less of the sun's light can reach it. As a result, one orbit for Triaxus takes 317 Golarion years, and includes both sweltering, generations-long summers and seemingly endless arctic winters. These extreme seasonal shifts have defined the planet and its evolution, resulting in ecologies and cultures that oscillate in time with them.

This article is designed to supplement the adventure, and thus focuses on those regions and aspects most important to adventurers playing through this Adventure Path. For more information on Triaxus and the other planets in Golarion's solar system, see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Distant Worlds*.

### PEOPLE

Just as humans are currently the primary race of Golarion, so are the humanoid Triaxians the primary race of their world. Similar to humans and elves in many ways, they are distinguished primarily by the ways in which their bodies adapt over the course of generations to the planet's dynamic environment, shifting from dark, hairless skin in the summer to sleek coats of white fur in the winter. For more information on Triaxians and their three types—Summerborn, Winterborn, and Transitional—see their bestiary entry on page 86.

Yet while Triaxians may be the most populous race on Triaxus, they share their dominance of the world with two other races: true dragons and dragonkin. Unlike Golarion, where draconic creatures tend to be few and far between, Triaxus is rife with everything from brute drakes to the awe-inspiring true dragons, and these powerful figures claim entire continents with their warring and chaotic societies. Of these varied creatures, the most common are the vaguely humanoid dragonkin—weaker versions of true dragons that have adopted the use of weapons, and often bond with Triaxian riders as partners. Contrary to the beliefs of those outside the legion, dragonkin are not the offspring of true dragons and humanoids, but rather a species all of their own. Aside from their size and relative abilities, the biggest difference between the two draconic creatures is color. While true dragons have their morality and personality tied to their scale color in ways never completely understood, dragonkin may be of any color and disposition. Most of those in encountered in the Dragon Legion are good-natured—at least as much as the next soldier—yet dragonkin with their same coloration and breath weapon

### ADVENTURING ON TRIAXUS

Triaxus is similar enough to Golarion that adventurers from either world can survive on the other without any special advantages or liabilities. At the time of this adventure, Triaxus is still in winter, and thus its temperatures are extremely low, similar to arctic regions on Golarion. While the weather can easily kill, cold-weather gear and spells like *endure elements* should be enough to allow Golarion natives to survive and thrive in most situations. In addition, the greater distance from the sun during winter means that even full noon never offers more than low-light conditions on the planet's surface.

It should come as no surprise to adventurers that Triaxus has as many languages as Golarion. Draconic is a prevalent language on Triaxus, not only among draconic creatures, but also among the Triaxians they rule. In the regions covered by this adventure, however, most speak a common trade language, which for the purposes of translation and language selection should be treated as Triaxian Common, allowing PCs who take it as a language to speak to most NPCs.

can be found leading the armies of the Drakelands against them, creating great confusion during battles. For more information on dragonkin, see page 61 of *Distant Worlds*.

In addition to these two great powers, Triaxus also boasts many other civilized races—more exotic organisms who may mix with others or keep to themselves in remote regions. Examples of these include the three-eyed laialar with their birdlike adolescent phase; the cave-carving ottiks; the vampiric hordes of the Uchorae; the serpentine sky-priests whose veins literally flow with divine power; and the glowing poet-whales of the arctic oceans, whose true name has no syllables, only shifting tones.

Of Golarion's main races, only a few are represented on Triaxus. Small enclaves of elves from Sovyrian can sometimes be found, having immigrated either to establish magical trading routes with Castrovel's sometimes-neighbor or to seek asylum. More populous than these are gnomes, who according to legends emerged here from the First World at the same time as they first came to Golarion, fleeing the same mysterious calamity. Triaxian gnomes, however, are somewhat less manic than their Golarion kindred, and no longer suffer from the Bleaching, speaking of it only in legends as a great struggle that they eventually overcame. Of humans, halflings, dwarves, and orcs, the people of Triaxus know almost nothing, with only the greatest scholars or those who have personally interacted with planet-walking spellcasters having any concept of their existence. To most Triaxians, stories of travelers from other worlds are little more than fairy tales, and responses to the appearance of



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## DRAGONKIN COLORATION

While the personalities and alignments of dragonkin are not tied to their scale color, their breath weapons and innate immunities are dependent on their coloration. To determine a particular dragonkin's breath weapon and immunities, refer to the table regarding draconic bloodline breath weapons on page 75 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*. A dragonkin is immune to the energy type of its own breath weapon.

adventures from Golarion may range from excitement among scholars and magic-workers to terrified violence from a fearful populace.

## SEASONS

Triaxus's seasons are caused by its eccentric orbit, yet that orbit itself is mysterious and perhaps magical in nature, with the planet seeming to move in slow motion compared to its brethren. Both winter and summer on Triaxus seem reluctant to relinquish their reigns, occupying most of the planet's long "year," while spring and fall rush past in a generation.

In summer, Triaxus is a sweltering paradise of fertile fields, dangerous jungles, misty mountains, and warm seas. Food is plentiful, and many cultures abandon traditional farms and cities for long walkabouts and nomadic periods, or else expand their cultivated territories in great leaps and bounds. At the first signs of autumn, however—often given names like the Portent, the Chilling, or the Falling—wise societies begin to make arrangements for the planet's rapid cooling and ecological shifts. Glaciers spring up almost overnight as winter arrives in earnest. The seas, already gentle and languid because of the planet's lack of a moon, freeze over at the edges, and many ports are forced to either close their harbors or uproot and move their structures miles out onto the treacherous ice. Some islands find themselves suddenly connected to the mainland or each other via ice bridges, allowing people and animals to trade or migrate between them. Farming anything but those plants and animals adapted to the cold becomes folly as the ground freezes or is buried in snow, and many societies shift to hunting and gathering models. Thus, it's with great relief that most Winterborn residents welcome the eventual Thaw or Time of Floods, as spring is often known. Yet even this welcome warming of the planet is not without its dangers. As the seas warm up and the glaciers melt, the entire planet is plagued by floods and monsoons that are every bit as destructive as the bitter—but stable—cold. New predators forgotten for generations awaken, and skills developed to survive in the winter become obsolete as the traditions of summer living are dusted off.

Triaxian settlements change with the seasons. During the winter, cities are often squat and fortified against the beasts that prowl the blizzards, filled with hard people who protect what little they have with deadly efficiency. Some retreat into caves and caverns, and others craft the ice itself into great structures. Those without cities often travel in sleds pulled by domesticated beasts, dwelling in interconnected igloos or animal-skin huts. In summer, however, the stone cores of winter cities tend to be surrounded by sprawling masses of breezy, thin-walled wooden structures housing the booming population. While many winter cities have tunnels and hallways connecting important buildings, some of the greatest cities are built for both seasons, with the walls of these insulated hallways being taken down in the hot summers to reveal shaded lattice walkways.

At the time of this adventure, Triaxus is still in the grip of winter, though rumors whisper that the weathermages and meteorological prophets have seen signs of the coming Thaw, and that the first of the Transitional Triaxians have been born—though how soon the shift might begin in earnest is anybody's guess.

## ECOLOGY

Triaxus's unique environment has given rise to two distinct ecosystems. While the physiology of a few creatures, including the Triaxians, shifts and adapts to the changing environment, most plants and animals are ascendant during only one season, going dormant or dying back to a tiny minimum population during the other. Such survival methods vary wildly. Some organisms bury eggs or seeds deep in the soil that are programmed not to hatch or sprout until the favorable season has returned, while sufficiently long-lived creatures might hide and hibernate. Some winter-adapted creatures like the fire-horned acelope retreat to snowy mountaintops and polar regions during the summer, while the last of the sun-loving karbalands mate and then worm their way into stony niches to die, leaving their gestating young to gnaw their way out of the corpses over the course of decades.

At the moment, the grassy prairies and deep jungles of summer are only a distant memory on Triaxus, as are its summer residents—the great silver hunting cats, leech-bats, stilt-runners, porabees, echo moles, and so on. In their place are the hard-edged predators of winter—giant furred insects whose chattering mandibles can tear a person in half, terrifying frost worms, and the snowbirds whose beaks can punch through plate armor. Some land-based herbivores manage to subsist on the snowmoss, pale fungi, and hardy icefruit trees that grow along the glaciers and frost-choked fields and taiga, yet in the winter the great lakes and seas are a far better source of food, as aquatic life proceeds with only minimal changes beneath



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the bergs and ice sheets. Those Winterborn Triaxians who don't rely on ice-fishing, whaling, sharking, and other coastal pursuits often raise herd animals like the stringy, goatlike shabals for their blood and milk, working hard to protect them from the moonflowers, stormghosts, ice-shelled gammenores, and psychically gabbling moyeyes who would happily take such easy prey.

Icy forests make up a large part of the winter landscape, and Triaxus's trees have various ways of coping with the extreme winters. Some, such as the great conifers, simply shrug it off and change hardly at all. Others lose their leaves and go dormant, sometimes actively expanding their capillaries and allowing their sap to freeze solid, turning themselves into frozen sculptures that thaw in the summer. Those that don't run the risk of exploding as their sap freezes inside the wood—the smooth-boled burst tree actually does so intentionally, filling every branch with sap as the temperature cools and using the resulting explosions to spread its seeds, and turning its groves into shrapnel-filled deathtraps. Still other trees have even stranger variations, such as long-rooted dapoya, which lifts itself above snows and floods like a mangrove, and the gora, whose thin summer trunk is wrapped in great scales of flexible fibrous bark, used by locals for everything from making twine and baskets to shingling houses and crafting armor.

One of the most common domesticated animals in the Skyfire Mandate and other portions of the northern continents is the wolliped. This creature is shaped somewhat like an eight-legged alpaca with two large, downward-curving tusks. Its copious fur keeps it warm in the winter and sheds to a length of just a few inches in the summer, with the discarded wool either felted or spun and woven to make most of the cloth in the region. In addition to its utility in textile production, the docile wolliped is also used as both beast of burden and steed, with ground-based cavalry often riding armored wollipeds into battle. Though wolliped tusks are normally used to break through ice or churn tough ground, the creatures also employ them for self-defense and mating displays—a battle-trained wolliped can inflict horrific damage on the battlefield.

### THE DRAKELANDS

No one knows exactly how or when the first dragons appeared on Triaxus, but legends suggest that in the beginning, there were only the somewhat humanoid dragonkin and the bestial drakes. For untold millennia, they lived alongside the Triaxians and other races with no more or less aggression than might be expected.

Then came the true dragons. Whether these were visitors from another world or plane or a natural evolution of dragonkin into something more powerful, the newcomers immediately took up rule over their lesser cousins. From their appearance in the heart of the continent now known

### FAMILIAR FOES

Though presenting another planet with all-new organisms may be intimidating to a GM, most of the differences between Triaxus and Golarion come in the animal, humanoid, and magical beast creature types. Outsiders and fey, being creatures tied to other planes and places, are roughly the same on both worlds. Undead and constructs, as created creatures, are functionally identical to their Golarion-crafted counterparts, and plants, dragons, and vermin have evolved in quite similar ways. As a result, though Triaxus boasts a host of new creatures, the worlds' similar environments mean that most monsters found in the Pathfinder RPG have corollaries somewhere on Triaxus that bear only superficial differences, and even some of the truly alien creatures can be easily simulated by re-skinning an existing creature's abilities.

as the Drakelands, the true dragons warred with each other, established nations, mustered armies—and began to spread.

Thus began the War of Heroes. For generations, the humanoid races of Triaxus not already enslaved by the draconic conquerors banded together to halt the spreading destruction. Joining them in this fight were those dragonkin who resented enslavement and subjugation, as well as the good-natured metallic dragons who sought to oppose their conquest-minded brethren. It was this first great alliance that eventually halted the dragons' advance, ceding them a single continent for their territorial disputes and establishing the Skyfire Mandate to guard against further growth.

Today, the Drakelands are a squabbling, chaotic mess of independent fiefdoms. These territories range from true nations complete with functional governments, metropolitan cities, and high quality of life for their subjects, to simple slave camps and villages paying terrified tribute to an overlord. Yet at the head of each state is a true dragon who sees the nation as his or her territory, and its governmental coffers as a shining hoard.

Life in the Drakelands flows according to a strict caste system. At the top are the "true" dragons, chromatic (and occasionally metallic) nobility with total authority over everything save each other. Below them come the less powerful but far more numerous dragonkin, who often work as generals, government officials, consorts, and other people of influence. Lesser still are the bestial drakes and dragon-blooded Triaxians—those humanoids who can trace their ancestry to a draconic dalliance. But even these are better than the mundane humanoids, who fall somewhere between peasants and livestock in the views of their superiors.

The political geography of the Drakelands is always changing, with nations falling or expanding as the dragons vie for power. This is especially true as the seasons



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change—during the winter, the barbaric whites tend to be ascendant, only to be driven back into the northern reaches during the summer by the more powerful reds and politically cunning blues. Greens and blacks, for their parts, tend to form more isolationist settlements to pursue their own ends, yet aren't above being drawn into conflicts or alliances when their territories are threatened.

Contrary to popular belief, not all of the dragons in the Drakelands are evil. While it's true that many of the noble metallic dragons were slain during the War of Heroes, and that those who weren't were hunted almost to extinction in the pogroms that followed because of their "racial treason," a few metallics still hold their own, banding together to

protect each other's nations against the chromatics. These lands are something of a fairy tale among the lowborn subjects of the other nations, and many Triaxian slaves run away in hopes of making it to these fabled utopias. The few who actually succeed find themselves welcomed with open arms—though not necessarily with the lives of leisure and plenty they might have imagined. The metallic-ruled nations are often highly militant, constantly forced to make hard choices and fight for their right to exist. Small wonder, then, that many of the metallics who managed to escape the Purges but didn't flee the planet altogether choose to forego nation-building and simply hide themselves away in remote locations, or within Triaxian societies.

### THE SKYFIRE MANDATE

In the rise of the true dragons, many Triaxians saw not only enslavement, but the potential extinction of their race. It was only through an alliance of Triaxian men and women, dragonkin, and metallic dragons—an army the likes of which has never been seen before or since—that the menace was halted. Huge sacrifices were made, including the lives of most of the humanoids' true dragon allies, yet the spirit of their alliance continues to live on today in the form of the Skyfire Mandate.

The Skyfire Mandate occupies the long land bridge between Triaxus's western, dragon-controlled continent and the eastern lands of the Allied Territories. Rather than being a single nation, it is instead a vast collection of semi-independent military units in charge of protecting individual regions, called holdings. Together, these soldiers make up the famed Dragon Legion, sworn not to a monarch or a government, but to the promise of keeping the Drakelands from expanding.

Though all races are welcome to take up the Dragon Legion's cause, in practice the group consists almost entirely of Triaxians and dragonkin—hence the legion's reliance on its iconic dragonriders. These legendary pairings are fearsome in combat, the dragonkin often fighting with huge lances and glaives while their riders support them with archery or magic, yet it's a mistake to think of the dragonkin as steeds. Rather, these duos are true partnerships between equals, bonds of love, trust, and fellowship that extend beyond the battlefield, with the Triaxians acting as the dragonkin's domestic partners and caretakers.



**BRIOR THE UNBLINKING**



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The governmental structure of the Skyfire Mandate is a loose one. Commanders of the various holdings must be chosen by the acclaim of their soldiers and sponsored by two existing commanders from other units. Once instated, only a vote of no confidence from the men and women under their direction can remove commanders from power. Policy and overarching strategy for the legion as a whole is set in meetings of the Tribunal—13 of the most seasoned and respected commanders in the service—but beyond this, commanders have complete authority within their holdings. Though disputes between commanders are heavily discouraged, they can be settled through meetings arbitrated by other commanders (called “parleys”) or brought before the Tribunal, or in extreme cases can be decided through single combat. Outright military action against another commander is considered high treason, with all other commanders immediately seizing the offender’s holding and carrying out the sentence of death by high-altitude drop.

Of course, the majority of citizens within the Skyfire Mandate are not legionaries, but rather simple farmers, woodcutters, merchants, and other common people. They organize primarily into small townships and even city-states, though the formation of full-on nations is discouraged by the legion (a process many would-be rulers get around by establishing far-reaching guilds). These people are largely left to govern themselves, though the Dragon Legion both recruits from their ranks and retains the right to requisition what supplies they require—a little-loved process known as “tithing.” Though the commoners naturally grumble about the military “fattening itself while producing nothing,” those who’ve seen the legion or its enemies in combat rarely challenge the practice. Lately, however, many of the larger city-states to the east have begun protesting, demanding that the legion leave them alone, and sometimes even going so far as to claim that the dragons are no longer a threat.

As the Skyfire Mandate is hundreds of miles wide, the border holdings naturally see far more action than those in more eastern regions. While this gives those gung-ho commanders who claim the border fortresses that much more respect and prestige, the eastern holdings still pull their weight by regularly rotating units into certain fortifications along the border maintained specifically for that purpose, running minor invasions and annexation missions, dealing with local governments, and patrolling the vast stretches of sea to the north and south to make sure the dragons don’t simply try to fly around. Still, the fact that these soldiers get to retreat to relative safety rather than constantly living in the contested Parapets makes “eastlander” a popular insult among western legionaries.

### OTHER MAJOR REGIONS

In addition to the Drakelands and the Skyfire Mandate, there are several major populated regions of Triaxus.

**Allied Territories:** Spanning the entire continent of Ora, this region—often simply called “the Territories”—is a riot of nations both small and large, including monarchies, theocracies, democracies, and more. Once these nations struggled against each other in a political free-for-all, yet the first great wars against the dragons of the Drakelands drove them to ally into a single federated unit in order to ensure that humanoids would survive as anything more than just a slave race. After the great victories of the War of Heroes and the establishment of the Skyfire Mandate, however, the dragons became a less immediate threat, and old rivalries began to splinter the bonds of blood and fellowship. Today, the Allied Territories are a union in name only, frequently engaging in border skirmishes and even absorbing each other completely, while still paying lip service to the humanoid alliance of old. Should the dragons ever make another significant push into their continent, however, it’s likely that such feuds would quickly be mended, and all spears turned outward.

The composition of the Allied Territories is always in flux, particularly as portions of their population are driven south from the poles in winter or drawn north in summer, but of the hundreds of nations and free cities that spring up periodically, a few are particularly well established, having survived many seasonal cycles. The riders of Aylok, for instance, hold fertile plains and are widely notorious for breeding the best cavalry. Zo, the Port of a Thousand Ships, boasts markets where anything can be found, and in winter maintains magically melted shipping lanes. Prieta, the Scholar’s Paradise, values learning above all, and even the basest of its mercenaries seek to improve their minds. And everyone in the Territories has heard of Kamora, the wealthy gateway to the Uchorae Jungle, whose residents pay for their nation’s bounty by constantly defending their high-walled cities from vampiric predators.

**Ning:** An island continent separated from its neighbors by the wide Sephorian Sea, the Immortal Suzerainty of Ning is an independent empire rarely challenged by the armies of other nations. Nevertheless, the empire maintains a vast standing army that it uses to protect the countless rural villages strewn across its landscape from the many predators—both bestial and dangerously intelligent—that dwell within the forests and valleys of the continent’s interior. Many of these communities are reachable only by treacherous roads through sharp-toothed mountains and deep jungles, and thus one of the first things constructed in any new settlement is its shelterstone, a ziggurat-shaped fortress designed to house citizens during invasions by monsters, and which usually contains some magical means of contacting the empire’s military for help.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of Ning’s culture is its focus on social station, honor, and custom. Ruled by the benevolent Immortal Suzerain (a title conferred on each monarch when the previous one dies or abdicates),



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everyone in the nation, from government officials and nobility down to common farmers, is obsessed with matters of etiquette, and those who flaunt the rules—either deliberately or through ignorance—can find themselves treated as invisible by the affronted populace.

Another peculiarity of Ning society is a unique caste called *ukara*, or “battleflowers.” These individuals are elaborately decorated and androgynous warriors who renounce all ties to family, social status, and personal gender in order to compete in ritualized gladiatorial bouts. Those who do well are treated as high nobility, with great houses and powerful merchants competing for the honor of their favor, while those unable to prove their worth after their first year are banished from the major cities forever, forced to spend their lives defending outlying communities.

**Sephorian Archipelago:** The seas between these several hundred islands are remarkably gentle, allowing travel by canoe in the summer and by walking across mazes of ice floes in the winter. Despite regular trade between them, most of the small island communities maintain their own customs and traditions, with even a few miles between islands creating vast differences in culture. To the more “civilized” nations of the continents, the most interesting aspects of the archipelago are the mysterious cylindrical towers on some of the islands that periodically exhale smoke and, aside from being used as navigational aids, are treated as taboo by the residents. Many of the more fertile islands are also left fallow, for reasons either unremembered or unexplained to outsiders.

## GAZETTEER

As the Skyfire Mandate and Drakelands together compose a larger land mass than the entire Inner Sea region, this gazetteer focuses on groups and locations situated along the border between the Skyfire Mandate and the Drakelands, where “The Frozen Stars” takes place.

**Cadascon:** Not every dragon demeans herself by treating with humanoids or troubles herself with wars against the Mandate. In the steaming, sulfurous pools and thorn-roofed keeps of Cadascon, City of Brimstone, the black dragon Brior the Unblinking rules a palace of drakes and evil dragonkin. While the stony fields and craggy tarns outside the city proper are worked by Triaxians, these are slaves, not citizens, and Brior ignores both the Skyfire Mandate and her neighboring dragons with equal disdain. Those who dare approach the fume-choked city, however, quickly find that Brior is more than capable of guarding both her territory and the unique magical crystals that her slaves pull from deep mines in the mountains’ roots.

**Cumo:** The port city nearest the Drakelands, Cumo is rewarded for its daring by playing host to a huge number of ships from Ning and the rest of the great Sephorian Sea

as well as the short-range fishers and traders who weave between the islands of Kamaya Sound. In the markets of Cumo, exotic wares change hands constantly, and all haggling is done through finger-tapping sign language as part of a sleeve-covered handshake, so that no outside observers—especially the city tax collectors—can easily ascertain what price was agreed upon.

**Dragonseal:** Though most of the good dragons have long since moved east or gone into hiding, Peranon the Gold chose another path. A veteran of the wars, he has since ceased fighting for the region and instead turned to watching over a single town on the western bank of Lake Laramet. There he guides and guards the humanoids with kindness and wisdom, protecting them from both draconic attack and the shadowy creatures that live in the mountains above the city. Most of Dragonseal’s residents love their ageless leader and mascot, as he asks for little in return and absolves them of the need to tithe to the Dragon Legion. Those who wonder why exactly the dragon has chosen to guard such a seemingly random town have a variety of theories, speculating that it may have something to do with the strange horrors that periodically attack the town, a slumbering or bound creature hidden in the vast lake itself, or the strange rune-inscribed stones that are sometimes found deep within the Forest of Omens. Peranon himself refuses to speak of such things, noting only that his interests are always with the people of the Mandate first and foremost.

**Drakewall:** Most of the border between the Drakelands and the Skyfire Mandate is guarded by the treacherous peaks of the Parapet Mountains, but at its southern tip, the mountains’ spur plays out and offers a wide, easy grassland pass into the fertile lands around Kamaya Sound. Here, the ancestors of the Dragon Legions created the Drakewall, a 50-foot-high wall of stone and magic that stretches for more than 40 miles across the plain and then 20 miles into the sea, supported above the Sephorian Sea by great pillars and arches of stone. Small fortresses dot the wall’s length, staffed by soldiers from the many eastern holdings. While the stones of the wall are a useful defense against the dragons’ ground armies, the wall’s real power is in the invisible shield of force that it projects downward to the seabed and upward into the upper atmosphere and prevents any creature of draconic heritage from passing through, save via one of the stone wall’s gates. The vast magical power behind this great bulwark appears to be tied to magical engines deep inside the fortresses, which are guarded night and day by legionaries who know that if the magic were to be disrupted, no one alive today would know how to replace it.

**Emon:** The sprawling lakeside city of Emon is built almost entirely of wood cut in the Hoziah Forest and towed across the Emon Deep. The city is a welcome stop for traders and legionaries headed across the Flatlands, and



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most nights see the docks rowdy and festive, with every eave and window festooned with colored lanterns denoting the items or services available within. The town's claim to fame, however, is its' citizens' unique family structure. In Emon, paternity is not recognized, and marriage is a foreign concept. Both men and women mate freely and as they choose, yet all family structure is tied to maternity and fraternity. Brothers raise their sisters' children as their own, and women pass on wealth to their children and make alliances with both men and women without any legal bonds or blending of families. Love, where it grows, is a private affair, and though a couple might share the same bed every night for decades, to acknowledge it is the highest taboo—in public, such assignations are noted only as friendship. Needless to say, misunderstandings of this social structure have led to Emon being considered the most libidinous and libertine town in the Mandate, and hedonists from all over come to sample its attachment-free delights.

**Emon Deep:** This massive lake appears seemingly out of nowhere in the middle of the Flatlands' plains and prairies, fed by a massive underground river called the Upwell that is believed to originate in Gosten's Rise. So deep that few have ever seen its rocky bottom, the lake is home to all manner of fish and other strange creatures, many of the deeper-dwelling ones eyeless or otherwise adapted for life in the darkness. Legends say that cracks and tunnels in the lake's floor lead to vast networks of flooded subterranean caverns, but most who live along the lake are content to ply its surface and not look too hard at the bizarre aberrations they sometimes pull from its waters.

**Frostport:** In Frostport, at the mouth of the River Cuin, the calm and shallow bays of summer become a liability in the winter, freezing over entirely. To keep trade flowing, the winter residents maintain a virtual fleet of nimble, ice-skimming sailing sledges that ferry goods up the river, along the frozen coastline, or out to the deepwater ice-ports, where breaker ships smash and blast their way through to the freedom of the open seas, often with the aid of elemental spellcasters specializing in fire and ice. These casters, called Waymakers, are highly respected throughout the region, and their guild doesn't take kindly to those who find ways around paying their fees.

**Haydensbank:** This booming metropolis along the River Ka collects great wealth from lumber in the Fellingwood, river trade, and gold washed down from the mountains. Surprisingly, however, the merchant city has used this wealth to become possibly the most educated in the mandate. On Scholar's Island in the center of the river's wide flow, two colleges bear the names of the legendary dragonkin and rider who founded them. St. Neomene's—named for the rider—rises up like a handful of needles from the island's south end, its impossibly tall and thin

towers held together by arcane forces and reminding everyone of the magical and philosophical arts studied within. The rest of the island, by contrast, is taken up by St. Morgran's, a series of halls and barracks where any of those seeking to study the art of warfare and other necessary military skills may do so for free in exchange for service in or to the Dragon Legion.

**Iris:** Legend says that the Lake of the Eye, 70 miles long and shot through with strange islands, was once the eye of a draconic progenitor called the World Dragon, whom the gods imprisoned beneath the earth in punishment for his ambition, only to have his eye freeze, melt, and form the lake. While this is clearly fantasy, none can deny that the strange lake's weird geography has a particular pull on dragons.



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Iris, the island city at the lake's center, is almost completely surrounded by a rim of stone that creates a vast and protected bay within the otherwise wind-whipped waters. Held by dragons since the very beginning of the Drakelands, the city is a mountain of masonry, where cupolaed buildings crouch one on top of the other as they climb the island's steep slope to the temple-fortress at its crest. The stones of the buildings, quarried from ruined structures along the harbor floor, are themselves bizarre and twisted, with sinuous runes and half-observed markings whose meanings elude their residents.

Presumed to be dedicated to the World Dragon, the temple at the city's summit is home to its warlord, a blue dragon named Harkor. Styling himself a priest-king, Harkor has long preached a pogrom against the Triaxians of the Mandate, but prefers to conduct it via magical research and manipulation rather than direct assault. Humanoids in his city are considered "absolved" and allowed to live as best they can—provided they tithe most of their earnings to the dragon—while Harkor and his draconic scholars delve into the mysterious chambers rumored to hold unexplainable objects deep beneath the island-mountain.

**Ivoryglass:** Located on the edge of the Vahara Glacier, Ivoryglass is the fortress of the white dragon Yrax, Lord

of the Howling Storm. Administering the stronghold is General Malesinder, an ambitious commander currently gathering barbarians, mercenaries, and monsters in preparation for Yrax's latest assault on the Skyfire Mandate. For more information, see page 43 of the adventure.

**Longdrop:** This holding's greatest defense is its location, halfway up the sheer walls of a chasm cut by the River Shea. Hundreds of feet above the valley floor and below the cliff top, Longdrop is partly a system of caves burrowed into the rock, and partly a series of angled towers and fortified structures jutting out from the cliff face. Interspersed with the defenses are surprisingly lush gardens connected by creaking rope bridges, as well as wide landing pads for dragonkin and their riders. Though a few treacherous and easily defensible staircases climb up or down from the fortress, nearly all traffic in and out of Longdrop is on dragonback or via magical flight, though a few Triaxians still practice the ancient art of thermal-riding in bizarre frames of wood and canvas.

Governing Longdrop's soldiers are the one-eyed Commander Terem Bosk and his dragonkin companion Chiaske, who share authority equally between them. No one in the legion questions either of their abilities, yet many other commanders look askance at the pair for their



## PLANET OF DRAGONS

public love affair and insistence on being recognized as husband and wife. To their soldiers, however, such taboos are a problem for small-minded peasants, not worthy of dragonriders, and over the years many riders and dragonkin with such predilections have gradually migrated to the cliffside aerie.

**Meredel:** In the tree-choked city of Meredel, deep in the Koracep Forest, knowledge is the greatest treasure. The city's ruler, the green dragon Aeomak, is a scholar of the highest pedigree, and recruits all those—both humanoid and drake—who wish to work his libraries and universities, even going so far as to lavish gifts and stipends on those who join them. The catch, of course, is that Aeomak is as greedy as the rest of his kind, and refuses to let any knowledge escape his clutches. Once a scholar joins his collective, which the dragon affectionately calls his “hoard,” that person is bound to him for life, and may never leave except on Aeomak's business. Though many scholars find this a reasonable price to pay for access to Meredel's incredible archives, the agonies of those who attempted escape are immortalized on the city's outer walls in colorful murals and frescoes.

**Orelan:** Cheren the Blue seems to be everything she purports—a capable leader who rules the port city of Orelan with a stern but fair hand. Certainly the Triaxians who live in her city seem to live as well as those in the Mandate, with the freedom to work, amass wealth, and self-govern as they choose so long as they pay their taxes and don't question her absolute rule. Yet despite Cheren's status as a seemingly reasonable monarch, the people of the Skyfire Mandate maintain only the most tenuous of trading alliances with Orelan, believing that the stable city-state the blue dragon has created is merely a ruse to help her seed spies and infiltrators into the Mandate in order to bring about its destruction—especially the removal of the Drakewall.

**The Parapet Mountains:** This great mountain range along the western edge of the Skyfire Mandate is the eastern nations' greatest defense against invasion from the Drakelands. The range's huge peaks and twisting passes funnel land-bound armies into narrow, easily defensible choke points even as its wild storms and strange winds play havoc with winged fliers. Said to have grown overnight from the blood of fallen good dragons during the early wars between dragons and Triaxians, the

Parapets remain the site of most skirmishes between the two powers, a constantly contested border patrolled by both sides.

In addition to the mountains themselves, the Skyfire Mandate is also defended by the Watches: magically constructed bunkers in the mountainsides where Triaxian soldiers can hide and observe wide stretches of territory, reporting on any enemy movements through magical communicators. Though well fortified and almost invisible, these listening posts are still subject to potentially devastating attacks whenever the draconic armies discover their location, and thus the Watches are moved regularly, with spellcasters digging new ones overnight via magic.

Those few Golarion scholars who've studied the Parapet Mountains have noted the striking similarity between the Watches and the anti-dragon bunkers of the Firewatch Peaks bordering Belkzen. Yet whether this is a result of simple parallel evolution or an indication of cross-pollination between the Skyfire Mandate and Ustalav remains anyone's guess.

**Prophet's Rest:** Having never known Aroden, Triaxus had its own varied reactions

to the end of reliable prophecy in 4606 AR. In the Skyfire Mandate, many of the prophets—particularly those who had gone mad—were sent into seclusion on the Isle of Dreams off the northern coast. Though some are still exiled in this fashion, today most of those who travel to the island are volunteers or petitioners seeking insight from the residents of the island, who have organized into a scattered society based almost entirely around oracles and prophecy. The port town of Prophet's Rest trades with and ferries such people across the monster-infested strait between mainland and island, and ensures that only those people who are allowed off the island ever leave it.

**Sorrowfell:** Once, Commander Ishak Ralam was the pride of the legion, yet the death of his dragonkin companion left him convinced of the futility of war. Rather than retire, the half-sane commander took Harrowfell Holding as his own, refusing to acknowledge either the Drakelands or the Mandate's authority. Those soldiers who wouldn't follow him were slain, and for the last 20 years the rest have raided their former protectorate at will, rebuffing all attempts to unseat the so-called Traitor Captain from his newly renamed stronghold of Sorrowfell.

**Spurhorn:** Located deep in the Parapets, Spurhorn is one of the Dragon Legion's most notorious frontline holdings,



TEREM BOSK



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currently run by Commander Pharamol. For more information, see page 20 of the adventure.

**Stalwart Hall:** This holding protects a rarity in the Mandate: a massive solar collector that captures the sun's energy and transforms it into heat, light, and magical energy for the sprawling town in the V-shaped valley at the fortress's base. Though the device is positioned well behind the front lines, Commander Quentane—a female dragonkin who has never taken a rider—knows that such strange technology is immensely valuable, and has staved off several attacks by those who would destroy or steal it for draconic tyrants.

**Summerhold:** The factions of the Skyfire Mandate may all share the same mission, but that doesn't mean they all see eye to eye. This is particularly true of Commander

Kariam. Within the walls of her fortress, Summerhold, Commander Kariam and her devoted soldiers refuse to acknowledge winter, believing that it's the collective power of Triaxians' belief that keeps the seasonal cycle running. To oppose it, her warriors shave all their hair and practice ritual surgery to artificially widen their naturally slitted eyes. Though they still take appropriate precautions when venturing out into the blizzards, the Summerholders keep the fortress swelteringly hot through magic, and preach their cultlike beliefs to any who listen. While this apparent insanity—combined with several other eccentricities on Kariam's part—discomfit her neighboring commanders, her military strategy is flawless, and her warriors' exceptional track record against the armies of the Drakelands keeps the rest of the Dragon Legion from acting against her.

**The Three Sisters:** This cluster of three active volcanoes is one of the most impressive landmarks in the Parapets. Once, untold generations ago, the mountains' calderas were home to the greatest holding of the Dragon Legion, three magically linked fortresses whose names have since been lost. Inside their walls, huge flywheels and forges harnessed the mountains' geothermal energy for immense workings of magic and machinery. Their value as an industrial center and research facility made the Three Sisters a key strategic location, and thus it was that a combined push from the dragons of the Drakelands eventually saw it blasted to rubble and its defenders charred to dust. So great was the magic unleashed that the mountains themselves erupted, pouring ash over the landscape for miles around.

Today, the half-ruined structures of the holding still stand, some with their magical subterranean engines still turning with an audible grind. Any attempt to reclaim the holding, however, is blocked by its sole remaining defender—a venerable brass dragon named Esophenes. For as long as anyone can remember, the mournful true dragon has guarded the location against legionaries and dragons alike, apologizing to those of pure heart but still refusing to offer more than a single warning before attacking.

The reasons behind his eternal vigil are the subject of much speculation; Esophenes says only that there yet lies something within the fallen walls that must remain buried for the good of the legion.

**Treehome:** Foregoing the mountaintop aeries so popular in the Dragon Legion, the soldiers of Treehome reside inside the hollow trunks of massive jugana trees, each bole the size of a castle tower and surrounded by thick



COMMANDER KARIAM



walls of living wood. From her chambers in the highest tree, Commander Ventari keeps watch over the western mountains, Garndeeep Forest, and the whole of Shoshona Bay. In addition to providing fairy-tale homes for the soldiers, the jugana trees have highly alcoholic sap that keeps the trees from freezing solid in winter—and that is easily harvested, making Treehome a rowdy and sought-after posting.

**The Unbound Tribes:** Not everyone in the Drakelands pays allegiance to one of the draconic overlords. Ranging from small groupings of a few families to large and militant clans, the Triaxian people collectively known as the Unbound Tribes place their freedom above all, refusing to join with either the dragons or the “citified” folk of the eastern lands. Instead, they live along the borders between draconic domains, constantly moving, sometimes raiding dragon-controlled slave settlements, other times simply seeking to be left alone. The more powerful dragons, for their part, could easily wipe out these pests, yet their positions on the borderlines between territories means that any military movement in that direction would look like an invasion or annexation attempt to the neighboring dragon. What’s more, the groups’ status as constant irritants also makes them uniquely useful, and it’s not uncommon for a dragon seeking revenge against a neighbor to hire a warlike clan to cause trouble in her enemy’s domain. While some of the tribes would never agree to work for their draconic oppressors, others are more mercenary and care little where their gold comes from, so long as they can live free.

Though often lumped together into a single group by outsiders, the myriad clans of the Unbound Tribes are wildly different in their customs and practices. Some are bloodthirsty barbarians, little more than bandit gangs that prey on the cowed slave-folk of the Drakelands, while others are idealistic egalitarians fighting to liberate the continent. Still others want only to be left alone.

Several of these groups regularly pass through the region near the Parapets, and thus are well known to the people of the Skyfire Mandate. Ullos Drakeskull is a wild, savage warrior, legendary in the Drakelands for having single-handedly slain a powerful drake—whose skull he still wears as a helmet—and enslaved its brood, riding them into battle or sending them against enemies of his followers like a pack of hounds. While Ullos bears little affection for anything but gold, drink, and women, Lyara Keffa is the opposite: a peerless warrior whose tribe, the Freepeople, she regularly recruits townsfolk to her banner, leading an endless (albeit fiercely independent) crusade against the drakes with her enchanted spear. Kammon Half-Truth—the name by which he’s most often known in the Skyfire Mandate—leads his own band through cunning and carefully forged allegiances, and while he can often give useful information, he makes few bones about

## ADVANCED TOPICS

For the most part, GMs running games on Triaxus can simply use the normal Pathfinder rules, treating the planet as if it were simply a different region on Golarion. This greatly streamlines gameplay, but if GMs wish to give their players more of a sense of the planet’s alienness, here are some larger considerations.

**Magic:** All the spellcasting classes are represented on Triaxus, but the magical traditions don’t always line up with those of Golarion. Spell components are often different, new spells have been discovered, and class spell lists might even be modified slightly. The adventure presumes that all magic functions normally, but GMs are welcome to make their own modifications.

**Religion:** Though the gods can touch any world on the Material Plane, they have their favored peoples and regions. Divine casters from Golarion function the same way on Triaxus, but the local pantheon is markedly different. Worship of Apsu and Dahak is common, especially among dragons and dragonkin, and other lesser draconic deities have small shrines and temples across the planet. Triaxians themselves tend to worship the older gods, with Pharamasma, Desna, and Asmodeus being the most prominent, as well as several local deities, with the doctrines and interpretations of established gods sometimes deviating markedly from Golarion’s. The ascended deities—Cayden Cailean, Norgorber, and Iomedae—are virtually unknown on Triaxus.

**Time:** In the scientific sense, Triaxus’s orbital year is 317 Golarion years long. Combined with the planet’s lack of a moon, this creates a different reckoning of time than Golarion natives are used to. Most Triaxians reckon time in days, tendays, months (40 days), years (400 days), seasons, and cycles (an orbital year). More often, however, histories are written in terms of generations, making mathematical reckoning difficult. For ease of game play, it’s best to simply assume that units of time are being converted for players during the translation.

his willingness to sell to both sides. And of the green-painted Wilders, little is known, as the fiercely insular nomads have historically rebuffed all attempts at contact, often with blades and arrows.

**Wavebreaker:** Rather than isolating themselves deep in the mountains, the soldiers of Wavebreaker Holding perch on the seaside cliffs of Kamaya Sound, where their dragon-prowed ships can guard the seas and provide mobile bases for dragonkin scouts. Though some legionaries sneer at the idea of soldiers who don’t ride dragons, Commander Shen “Blackeye” Corbin is happy to defend her ships’ honor with her fists, and has cost more than one wagging jaw its teeth.