

Random Desert Generator

This is a random desert wilderness generator. It does not use a hexmap, it only notes places of interest and the links between them. This is because my group hates maps but do want a wilderness adventure.

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1. Make the Regions[\[edit\]](#)

Take one sheet of paper and draw twenty coin-sized circles. These are the regions of interest, each represents a couple of square miles. The regions do not touch, distribute them evenly over the map.

Geography[\[edit\]](#)

For each region, roll d20 on the following table.

1–4. **Sand sheets** - A flat, undulating area of sand.

5–7. **Sand dunes** - Hills of sand formed by wind flow.

8–10. **Stony desert** - Stable ground with scattered rocks, supports small plants on desert soil.

11–13. **Rocky desert** - Hilly terrain with exposed rocky material, may have significant bedrock outcrops with cliffs.

14. **Yardang** - A ridge, a mile or more long and up to 100 feet high, formed by continuous wind moving in one direction. The rock has sleek-shaped formations running parallel to the wind.

15. **Alluvial fan** - A fan-shaped deposit of sediment crossed and built up by streams. Formed by flash floods from nearby thunderstorms in local hills. May support islands of vegetation and a habitats for animals.

16. **Playa** - A wide, shallow dry lake covered in salt pans. It was formed from excessive rainwater that then evaporated.

17. **Arroyo** - A fast but short-lived stream running through a canyon or channel. When it dries, it leaves a dry river filled with gravel.

18-20. **Oasis** - an isolated area of vegetation surrounding spring water, providing a habitat for animals.

Point of Interest[\[edit\]](#)

In each region, roll d8 to determine the point of interest.

1. **Monster lair.** Roll 1d20: 1. Giant hyenas, 2. Giant vultures, 3. Giant spiders, 4. Giant constrictor snake, 5. Ogre, 6. Giant scorpion, 7. Mummy, 8. Wight, 9. Couatl, 10. Lamia, 11. Air elemental, 12. Fire elemental, 13. Cyclops, 14. Medusa, 15. Young brass dragon, 16. Young blue dragon, 17. Guardian naga, 18. Efreeti, 19. Gynosphinx, 20. Roc

2. **Monument.** (see 5e DMG p. 108)

3. **Ruins.** Roll 1d6: 1. Town, 2. Temple, 3. Fort, 4. Wall, 6. Standing stones

4. **Settlement.** (See 5e DMG p. 112)

5. **Stronghold.** (Use the dungeon creator and dungeon history tables in 5e DMG pp. 100-101)

6. **Wierd locale.** (5e DMG p. 109)

7. **Camp.** Might be 1. bandits, 2. traders, 3. nomads, 4. pilgrims, 5. hunters, 6. herders

8. **Mine.** 1. Gypsum, 2. salt, 3. copper, 4. iron, 5. gold, 6. silver, 7. clay, 8. gemstones. This might be surface deposit mining at an alluvial fan or playa.

Contents[\[edit\]](#)

Use the "dungeon chamber contents" (5e DMG p. 296) to determine the principle encounter in each region. Regions with a stronghold or mine might have several in a mini-dungeon. As the focus is wilderness exploration, these should not be comprised of more than three rooms.

Monster

Use the Desert Monsters table in Appendix B

Hazard

Ideas:

- Rock slide (Rocky desert)
- Hidden burrow (Sandy desert, stony desert or dunes) - A hard-to-spot tapering pit left by an ant lion or other large burrowing creature. Treat as quicksand (DMG p. 110)
- Overgrown path (any) - the route through this region is overgrown with a vast field of fast-growing cactus. Treat as razorvine (DMG p. 110)
- Desecrated ground (ruins or monument) (DMG p. 110)
- Sandslide (dunes) - the route through this region has been engulfed by an immense sand dune. The party can go around it, adding 2d6 hours to the travel time and risk becoming lost; or travel over it. Anyone who fails a DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check slips down to the bottom of the dune. This wastes 1 hour and the check must be made again.
- Sand slime (any) - related to green slime, it is encountered in patches covering hundreds of square feet. It looks exactly like wet sand. A successful DC 20 Perception check or DC 15 Survival check reveals its true nature. Sand slime is sticky and absorbs the slightest moisture, which withers and kills most small animals (which the slime then absorbs). Creatures that step into sand slime, or start their turn in it, take 5 (1d10) necrotic damage and become restrained. A stuck creature can use its action to make a DC 12 Strength (Athletics), breaking free on a success.

2. Region Links[\[edit\]](#)

In the region that the players will start in, draw three straight lines leading to neighboring regions. For each other region, roll 1d3 to determine the number of links it has (including any that have already been drawn to it).

Links represent obvious routes of travel. Each is 2d6 miles long. The nature of the route may be intuited from the region's geography and point of interest (e.g. a river feeding an alluvial fan), or you can roll 1d6 on the following table.

1. Well-worn caravan route
2. Stream
3. Canyon
4. Trail through rocky hills
5. Regular marker stones across the sand
6. The point of interest in the next region can be seen from an elevated position

The geography along the route is otherwise that of the nearest kind of desert (sandy, dunes, stony or rocky). The players *can* travel in non-route directions. Assume that the non-route area between regions is mountainous, vastly featureless or otherwise treacherous: the distance is 3d6 miles and group will need to check to see if they become lost (5e DMG p. 111)

Travel speed is the slowest base speed of the members in the party divided by 10, in miles per hour. For example, if the whole group are mounted on camels, they travel at 5 miles per hour.

3. Other Stuff[\[edit\]](#)

Foraging. For most desert locations, the foraging DC is 20. At an alluvial fan, the DC is 15; and at an oasis the DC is 10.

Weather. The average temperature is 80 degrees Fahrenheit, and there is low humidity. Each time a new region is entered, roll 1d20.

1. Dry thunderstorm which lasts for 1d6 hours. Accompanied with strong winds, dust storms and bush fires.
2. Strong winds and dust storm which lasts 1d6 hours.
- 3-16. Normal
- 17-19. Extreme heat for 1d6 hours (see DMG p. 110)
20. Rainstorm which causes flash floods.

Quest locations. Number the regions from 1 to 20, starting with 1 at the player's initial location and getting progressively further away. An early quest location can be placed by rolling 1d10; a final quest location is at location 1d10 + 10. A secondary quest location can be determined with 1d20.