

Ars Magica

Mythic Locations



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Chapter One

Introduction

Mythic Europe is honeycombed with supernatural locations. Many of these are famous and well known, and are frequently visited by the Order of Hermes. Many Tribunals keep accurate records of their area's fantastic sites, gathered by roaming magi of House Bonisagus, followers of Trianoma, and cataloged by the industrious Redcaps of House Mercere. Many of the more famous sites have been appropriated by the Order, farmed for their annual vis production, visited for mystical research and arcane experimentation, or claimed as covenants. Several legendary locales have been tracked down, explored thoroughly, and subsequently cultivated for the growth of the Order of Hermes. One might think that there is nary a magical spot left untrod and uncatalogued.

But Mythic Europe is large and vast tracks of land remain uncharted. Secret grottoes, forgotten caves, numinous temples, idyllic gardens, mysterious islands, and fog-covered moors lie just past the borders, sitting in anticipation of the eager explorer. Few sit vacant, and all manner of beasts, beauties, and baubles lie in wait for those clever enough to find the hidden places. Whether organized in teams or as an individual, the discoverer faces several challenges finding the site, and even more exploring its interior mysteries.

Mythic Locations offers ten such sites. Each chapter following describes a location in depth, explaining the site's mundane and supernatural features. Some locations are pulled from actual medieval legends, others from the history of the Order of Hermes, and others invented, using appropriate themes and elements to fit them into the imagined medieval framework of Mythic Europe. Each location suggests various ways to include it in your saga, offering multiple hooks to appeal to all types of play-

ers. Each location also suggests ways that the location can be used again, generating several stories and allowing a troupe to repeatedly use the location in their saga. While a troupe could base an entire saga in a location, using it as a starting point or a location for their covenant, each site is written as a stand-alone location. They are meant to be visited and explored, and their unconnected nature lets each member of the troupe act as a storyguide for the location that most appeals to him.

Bear Island

Geographic Location: The Sea of Marmara on the north coast of Anatolia.

Tribunal: Thebes Tribunal.

Overview: Bear Island lies off the coast of Anatolia, along the southern shores of the Sea of Marmara. Politically unimportant — a small province of the Byzantine Empire now ruled by a Latin king — Bear Island's history is vastly more interesting. 2,000 years ago, Jason and the *Argo* made an early stop here on their journey for the Golden Fleece. Intending simply to replenish their supplies and get directions, the Argonauts were hurled from one dilemma to another, including fighting savage giants, being trapped on the island by a raging storm, receiving advice from a magical bird, and searching for a sleeping titan, the mother-goddess. To escape, Jason brought a carved statue to honor and appease the mother-goddess. Her attendants, supernatural metalworkers and healers called the Idaian Daktyls, accepted the offering, the storms ended, and the Argonauts sailed away.

With the heroes gone, the island's super-

natural inhabitants slipped back into their previously undisturbed roles. As far as anyone knows, the mother-goddess, the Idaian Daktyls, the magical bird, and the savage six-armed giants still prowl the island's wild interior. The carved statue, fashioned by the same builder who made Jason's magic ship, has never been found. Magi wonder what its pre-Hermetic powers might be. Bear Island is easy to find, but its secrets are not easily extracted, and many suspect that more than lions, bears, and boars roam her forest-draped mountains.

The Baths

Geographic Location: The City of Bath, or wherever Romans were found.

Tribunal: Stonehenge Tribunal.

Overview: A city with links to Imperial and Celtic magic, and filled for centuries by hedonists attractive to the Infernal and Faerie powers. A city now dominated by the Church, and under the eye of the young King. A city sited, almost literally, on a magical powder-keg.

What could possibly go wrong?

Cursewood

Geographical Location: The remote forests of Pomerania, near the border with Novgorod.

Tribunal: Rhine Tribunal.

Location: More than a century ago a magus of House Tytalus sought to win great resources in a dark and forbidding forest, and

was never heard from again. The few magi who know of this have never gone looking. The place is shunned by locals and only spoken of in hushed voices as cursed and haunted. But now knowledge of the place has resurfaced. The cursed forest threatens the life of all but the most determined and skilled, and requires strength of will and leadership. Are the player magi up to the challenge of following in the footsteps of their long dead sodalis in search of greatness and treasure? Braving this place not only solves the mystery of the curse, it also offers a place of mystery to call one's own.

The Farne Islands

Geographic Location: A small archipelago of islands.

Tribunal: Stonehenge Tribunal.

Overview: Inner Farne was famously the home to a saint; according to his legend he drove out the demons who tormented the locals from Inner Farne to some of the islands lying further out to sea. Today, the influence of the saint is still very much present on the inner islands, whereas the outer islands are home to wilder forces.

There are several mysteries to solve amongst the islands, from the politics of the selkie courts to the identity of the mysterious inhabitant of Crumstone Rock. With stories drawn from all four supernatural Realms, these islands are sure to be of interest to members of the Order of Hermes.

The Poisoned Battlefield

Geographic Location: The Mendip Hills, or wherever Roman miners were once found.

Tribunal: Stonehenge Tribunal.

Overview: This site is no longer blighted, some magi say. The archnecromancer no longer lives here. The ghosts of dead druids no longer walk here. The miners all died scream-

ing centuries ago, so they are no threat. The poisoned soil is covered with a thin layer of verdant green.

A very thin layer of green.

The Purgatory of St Patrick

Geographic Location: A cave under an island on a lake

Tribunal: Hibernian Tribunal.

Overview: The Purgatory of St Patrick is one of Ireland's most important pilgrimage sites. According to legend, the saint opened up a gate to Purgatory in order to teach the pagan Irish what perils awaited their unbaptized souls. There are several reasons why characters may wish to enter the cave on the saint's island, and purgation of their sins is just one.

It is rumored that a fountain of eternal youth lies within Purgatory, as does a mirror that can find any soul, and a furnace that can

change Essential Nature. One can meet with the souls of those who are beyond the reach of Hermetic magic, or perhaps even bring a loved one back from the dead. Those surviving Purgatory may enter the Earthly Paradise; those getting trapped behind may be consigned to Hell.

The Temple of Mercury

Geographic Location: In a Magic regio. The entrance is located in any territory that was once part of the Roman Empire.

Tribunal: Any.

Overview: The fallen temple of Mercury is a large ruined temple complex the size of a small town. There were, of course, many temples to Mercury constructed when the Roman Empire was pagan, but the existence of this particular temple complex is relatively well-known as it was very large and built by Augustus. However, knowledge of precisely



where the temple actually was has been lost. The player characters might discover where the temple was by recovering Roman Empire era texts that describe it, discovering a Mercurian portal that leads to the temple, receiving a vision from Mercury, or discovering (and recognizing and tracing) parts of the temple complex re-used in the masonry of buildings such as churches. It is also possible that the location may have already been secretly discovered by a Mystery Cult, Seekers, or another group of interested magi.

The Roman Cult of Mercury is a well-known antecedent to the Order of Hermes, and Bonisagus is known to have based some of his Hermetic theory on Mercurian rituals. The obvious use of the fallen temple is therefore as a resource to aid the recovery of further Mercurian rituals, and to inspire refinements to Hermetic theory. Pagan magi may also wish to restore the temple as a functioning site of worship. The temple site could be used as the location of a covenant.

The Toy Fair in Devil's Lane

Geographic Location: In a faerie regio. There are entrances in many cities.

Tribunal: Any.

Overview: The toy fair is a faerie regio that has entrances in many cities, selling curious magical and miraculous toys to the city-folk. A Merinita covenant is built within the fair, but the toys are actually made by elves hidden in workshops in the basements of the shops. The player characters might stumble upon the fair while exploring a city, or find (and trace) magic items from the workshop in the hands of mundane characters. The covenant is not a secret and the Redcaps know how to get in.

The player characters might visit the toy fair to buy or commission items, or to take advantage of the regio to travel to a distant Tribunal. The multiple entrances in many Tribunals also create questions of Hermetic jurisdiction over the covenant. The player

characters could also decide to join, or usurp, the toy fair covenant.

The Truffle Matron

Geographic Location: A small forest near Dijon in Burgundy, the dense forests of Périgord in Aquitaine, the Istrian peninsula in Croatia, or the Bohemian Forest.

Tribunal: Normandy, Transylvania, or Rhine Tribunals.

Overview: Mythic Europeans do not know why the delicious, aromatic truffle only grows under certain trees. They only know that truffles propagate through some supernatural method and that harvesting them may result in interaction with supernatural powers. Truffle hunters use animals to locate their prize because supernatural forces might punish them for improperly harvesting a truffle. Truffle hunters may attempt to appease the truffle guardians, but if their efforts are unsuccessful, they hope that the animal will suffer the punishment. Hunters face these dangers because the truffles they collect are often worth their weight in gold.

This chapter discusses one of the sources of truffles in Mythic Europe. Characters visiting the Matron of the Truffles are presented with the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and magical power through interaction with her subjects.

The Wolf's Court

Geographic Location: In the depths of a dense forest

Tribunal: Any, nominally Provençal Tribunal.

Overview: There is a cairn in a remote spot in a wolf-haunted forest. It is avoided by all locals, who consider the place cursed. However, sometimes when a man has been

wronged, and in his search for justice has been failed by the manor court, the bishop's court, and appeals to the saints, he will come to this cairn at the rising of the full moon and ask the wolves for the justice he has been denied elsewhere.

Characters might wonder at the wolves' capacity to enforce justice. Those who investigate might uncover secrets reaching back as far as Ancient Rome, and attract the unwanted attention of those dedicated to preserving those secrets.

What the Magi Know

There is a possibility that a character has heard something about a location before she visits. Exactly what she might know is determined by an appropriate Intelligence + Ability roll measured against a set Ease Factor. The Ability used depends on the location, and each location lists the appropriate Ability required for the roll. In some situations knowledge is gleaned by two rolls. For example, a character might have to succeed with an Area Lore roll, to see if she knows an area's legends, before determining if she can incorporate her understanding of the location's magic with a Magic Lore roll. Some locations allow more than one type of Ability check. Each location's specific rolls are explained in its chapter.

Information is divided into four categories: Known by All, Widely Known, Uncommon Knowledge, and Lost Secrets. Each category has a corresponding Ease Factor, and if the player achieves the required Ease Factor her character knows the information listed in that category. The specific information is listed in each location's chapter. The stated information is not necessarily true, it is just known. It could be misleading, partially true, or entirely false.

EASE FACTOR CATEGORY OF KNOWLEDGE

0	Known by All
6	Widely Known
12	Uncommon Knowledge
18	Lost Secrets