



THE ROUGH GUIDE TO

# SEA OF THIEVES



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## Introduction to Sea of Thieves

At Rough Guides, we believe that the world is best seen through the prism of a journey. Whether we're on the road, on our bike or on two feet, there's nothing we like more than experiencing life as an unfurling reel of wonderful scenes. In our book, the very best sort of journey is one that's taken under sail, the great arc of the horizon gaping in the eternal distance, sea creatures dancing around your bows, islands dotted invitingly here and there. It is this kind of journey that the Sea of Thieves invites travellers to embark on: The Pirate's Journey!

Taking in treasure-crammed underwater chambers, ancient monuments, enigmatic shrines, furious volcanoes and formidable monsters, The Pirate's Journey cries out with promises of the most wonderful adventure. Are you ready to respond to the call?

One of the great things about this particular journey is that it is guilt-free, for travelling under sail is about as green as it gets and the pirate life is remarkably self-sustaining. Yet while this way of seeing the world has enormous appeal both ethical and experiential, it is not without its perils. And we're not just talking about going (seasick) green yourself – no, it's downright hazardous out there on the high seas, with ruthless rogues after your loot and sabre-rattling skeletons after your soul.

Throughout our 40-year history, we've always been big proponents of solo travel. Not so much this time. Get some shipmates on board with you: it's so much easier when you work as a team, with different people in charge of different things. After all, there's a lot to do: you need to manually raise the anchor, set the sail, steer the ship, check your map, read your compass and fire the cannons.

That said, the sense of achievement and independence if you do go it alone is quite something. Simply managing to sail from one island to another can make you feel really rather pleased with yourself. This is island-hopping taken to the nth degree.

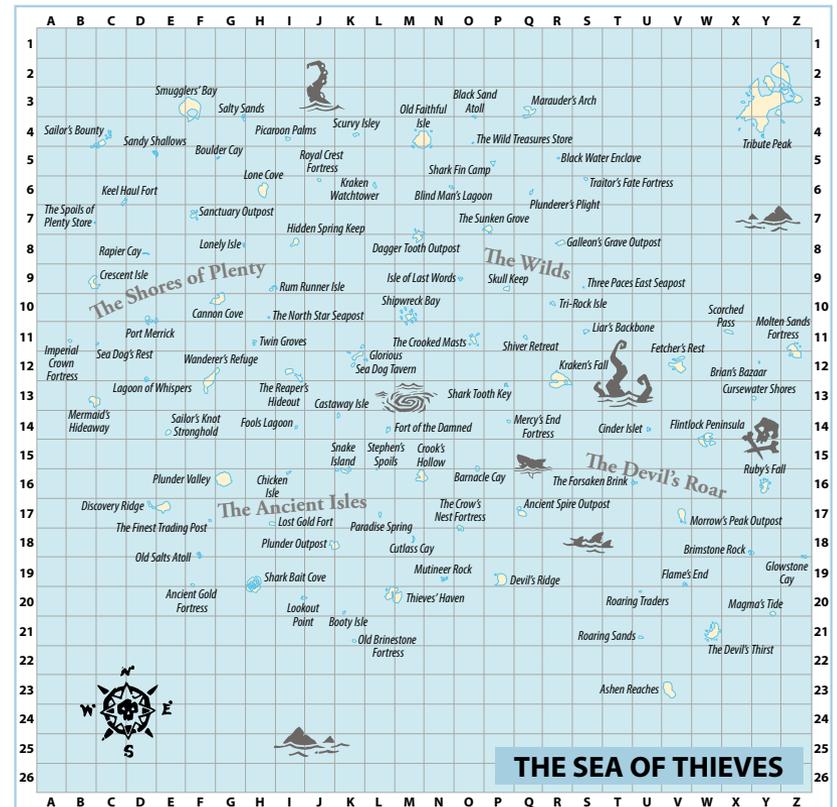
But don't get carried away with the self-congratulation – one lapse in concentration and you could be done for. You share this open world with friend and foe alike – and a

treasure-filled island tends to bring out the worst in people. Whenever you spot a ship on the horizon, you just don't know if it'll be filled with smiling chums or bloodthirsty enemies. Beware.

A confrontational attitude is not usually something we encourage when travelling abroad. But let's be honest: when you're facing legendary creatures and epic cannon battles against other pirates, you'd better be ready to test your mettle.

That said, this world is just *so* gorgeous, full of tropical colours and crystal-clear waters, that even the most gung-ho battles have a certain appeal. Fearsome sea monsters never seemed so, well, *stylish*.

Yet fearsome they are, so you should know how to enjoy the simple pleasures while you can – by embracing beauty and becoming a connoisseur of the high seas. Savour its tranquil moments and highest tempests alike. The sunsets, for instance, are simply scandalous (see box, page 9) – warn your Instagram followers now – while sailing at night will bring out the philosopher in you (see box, page 6). And when you get the opportunity to pop into a tavern for a refreshing tippie, grasp it. There's always time to get three sheets to the wind on some delicious grog (see box, page 8).



### STARGAZING SEADOGS

The seas don't sleep. You'll be missing an awful lot if you don't **sail at night**, especially with the aurora borealis glowing eerily all around you (granted, you may have had your fill of 'eerie' if you've spent much time in The Wilds). Sailing at night has a practical benefit, too: if you're voyaging alone, one way to avoid enemy pirate ships is to sail under cover of darkness. Before you raise anchor and set out into the night, though, it's a good idea to climb up to the crow's nest and have a look around first. The high vantage point will allow you to spot potential enemies in the distance and help you determine the best route.

All in all, prepare to feel strangely at home. There's something wonderfully 'lived in' about this world, with its exquisitely imperfect details, its patches and repairs. But don't relax too much: there's loot to be had and adventures on the great horizon!

## Where to go

On paper, exploring the Sea of Thieves should be easy enough, divided as it is into four relatively neat regions, each with its own distinct characteristics. In practice, however...

In the northwest, **The Shores of Plenty** is composed mainly of small desert islands with white sandy beaches and lush palm trees. Think Golden Age of Piracy-era Caribbean – has the world known a finer era?

Down in the south, **The Ancient Isles** is a region of large, mysterious islands where you'll stumble upon the abandoned hideaways of long-forgotten pirate crews. Grab your fedora and your whip: with its riddle-laden ancient ruins, this neck of the woods is about as Indiana Jones in vibe as it gets.

Things start going bump in the night when you venture up to the northeast, where **The Wilds** awaits. In this doom-laden region of near-permanent cloud cover and ever-

### HERE BE DRAGONS! – KNOW YOUR ISLANDS

There are three main types of island: **outposts**, where you sell goods and tout for voyage commissions from the Trading Companies; **forts**, including the legendary Skeleton Forts, full of danger and reward; and **treasure islands**, where you go on voyages in search of treasure, valuable skeleton bounties or animals.

There are also a few **uncharted locations** that will not appear on your map. The chain at **N13** is made up of small, empty islands, with no items or resources, just a few remains left by castaways, some underwater ruins, a cave system, a coral reef and an oceanic trench (the kind of trench you'd expect a monster to take up residence in). That said, bear in mind that the terrain is unpredictable – what was once a safe haven might have become altogether more perilous by the next time you visit. **K9**, a crescent formation of land with an old shipwreck in the centre pool overgrown by coral, has evidence of people having survived there for some time – check out the hammock, pots and chains. Look out, too, for seeming evidence of a duel in the form of two slumped skeletons, and seek out the candlelit cavern for some barrels.

Other enigmatically monikered islands include **F11**, **K7**, **M8**, **K5**, **L4** and **N5** – they might not look like much, but they all have a potential role to play in The Pirate's Journey. You can also experience them on a number of the mapped **itineraries** we've detailed later in this chapter (see [page 20](#)).



withering flora, you'll encounter haunted and deserted islands (deserted for very good reasons) containing the restless remains of deceased pirates.

It's not just cannon fire you need to beware of in the southeastern **The Devil's Roar** region. The volcanoes in these parts will give you more than a shot across the bows: they'll burn you to a crisp given half the chance, while the waters themselves will boil a swimmer alive – and don't get us started on the deadly, skin-scorching geysers. Even in a sturdy ship, these are truly deadly waters, with the islands hereabouts covered in partly incinerated plant life and strange red crystal growths. There are caves dotted around the area that offer a little protection, but with steam vents and falling rocks, nowhere is truly safe. In this strange, treacherous place, the world itself is your enemy. Battening down the hatches won't save you here.

### OH MY GROG: TOP FIVE TAVERNS

You'll find some of the world's finest taverns in the Sea of Thieves. Get acquainted with them all – it'd be rude not to! – but here are five of our favourites.

#### THE SNAKE PIT

Up in The Wilds ([see page 54](#)), life can really get you down. Praise be, then, for The Snake Pit tavern on Dagger Tooth Outpost. Teri, the tavern keeper, does some really drinkable grog – so drinkable she puts a lot of it away herself. So her talk of there being treasure at Devil's Ridge may or may not be worth listening to. Around the back of the tavern, you'll find a short cave system leading to the east side of the island.

#### DROWNED RAT

Thirsty seadogs rejoice! The Drowned Rat, Plunder Outpost's tavern, is easy for even those with barnacles for brain cells to find: it's the tallest building in town. Ask the tavern keeper, Tanya, for a few jars of her finest: 'Chapman's Old Bilge Sniffer'. She won't serve you anything else, anyway.

#### THE GEORGE & KRAKEN

Naming a purveyor of the demon drink after a legendary sea monster that devours pirates on a daily basis is certainly cute. A great addition to lovely Sanctuary Outpost, The George & Kraken is tended by Tracy, who has worked in the business since she could see over the top of a barrel of grog. Ask her about William One Arm (and his shark).

#### THE CHARRED PARROT

If you're asking why The *Charred* Parrot, then you've obviously not visited The Devil's Roar yet, where most things are charred (including, most probably, your good self). The Charred Parrot, in the northwest of Morrow's Peak Outpost, is kept shipshape by the formidable Tallulah. Be warned, though: however sodden with grog you are, you still won't be volcano-proof.

#### THE TAVERN OF LEGENDS

The Tavern of Legends (aka Athena's Fortune or the Pirate Legend Hideout) is more of a private members' club than an 'umble tavern. You're going to have to be regarded as a bit of a legend by the Trading Companies to be invited in. It's some place: you'll encounter the ghosts of notorious pirates who have passed on and the Pirate Lord, who assigns pirates voyages, the most difficult of all to complete.

### LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON YOU

There are treasures aplenty in the Sea of Thieves, but some of the richest ones come absolutely free. We give you this spectacular ocean's most *ahhhh*-worthy sunsets.

#### CROOK'S HOLLOW

Craggy, sloping Crook's Hollow is one of The Ancient Isles' Instagram hotspots. For the best views, head for the high rise on the southeast side and the accessible beaches to the north and west.

#### SMUGGLERS' BAY

Sunset aficionados should make a beeline for the plank bridge that overlooks the entrance to the bay at this crescent-shaped island in The Shores of Plenty ([see map, page 37](#)). If you're departing or approaching at the right time, don't miss the sight of the sun going down behind the rock formation.

#### SECRET REEF

Located between Shark Tooth Key and the Fort of the Damned, this reef offers delectable sunset viewing.

#### SHARK BAIT COVE

This beautifully intricate arrangement of beachy islets in The Ancient Isles only gets more irresistible in the golden hour.

What with this being the *Sea of Thieves*, there is naturally enough a whole other world to explore underwater: **The Sunken Kingdom** is a magical realm of coral and shipwrecks. Enchanted in a rather less life-affirming way, however, is the ominous **Sea of the Damned**, a spooky, ethereal region with some of the Sea of Thieves' most idiosyncratic public transport.

Finally, don't even think about entering the **Devil's Shroud**, an area of doubtful status that lies outside the main regions. That is, unless you *like* blood-red seas, dark skies and your ship breaking into little pieces?

## When to go

Nowhere on the planet is the elasticity of time more tangible than in the Sea of Thieves. An assailant can be on you before you know what's hit you, but you can also spend an unfathomable spell underwater without breathing apparatus or basking in the soft glow of an apparently endless dusk. And, of course, the sun never sets on the **Golden Age of Piracy** when you're sailing these magical seas.

You'll rarely feel the need to clock-watch when exploring this corner of the world, which lends itself to unhurried curiosity and general poking about, but it's worth bearing in mind a few time-sensitive exceptions.

There's an exciting calendar of **pop-up events** to partake in, for instance. Organisers in these parts tend not to give a great deal of advance info about these events – a quirk of local culture – but look out for the tell-tale strangely shaped clouds on the horizon. If you miss those, you surely won't miss the crowds making their way to the

shenanigans. These events are popular, and generally very well attended, so don't tarry if you spot a surge of other boats.

More **established celebrations** include the annual Feast of Bounty, Festival of Giving and, of course, Festival of the Damned (more fun than it sounds!), while each year in the Sea of Thieves starts as it means to go on with the fabulously dissolute Grogmanay. It's also worth keeping an eye out for news of **one-off events**; past events of this sort have included the self-explanatory Festival of Fishing, the dubiously festive Plundered Presents and the gruelling fortnight-long ordeal Champions of Souls.

## Author picks

In the course of researching this guide, our author has explored every corner of the Sea of Thieves, finding more than just idyllic beaches and treasure chests. Here are some of his personal favourites.

**Old Sailor Isle** This large, uninhabited island is on the very cusp of the Sea of Thieves. Verdant and seemingly always sunny, it's a great place for unseasoned pirates to explore and get a feel for this inimitable life. Head here early on in your travels to find your sea legs. You'll learn a lot.

**Shores of Gold** For an island at the opposite end of the scale to Old Sailor Isle, try Shores of Gold. Yes, this is also a large island, but that's where the comparisons stop, since Shores of Gold is full of traps, puzzles and huge underground treasure piles. Don't think about setting sail for this destination before you've learned the Sea of Thieves ropes.

**Chest of Sorrow** Finding treasure is always a pleasure. And it's not that it ever gets boring, exactly, but the Chest of Sorrow certainly lends some nuance and complexity to the emotional palette.

**Hurdy-gurdy** There's just something so darned addictive about playing this whacky instrument, with its funny handle and screeching honk. On your travels around the Sea of Thieves, you're in danger of getting hooked on collecting new specimens – not to mention songs to play on it. We learned to go easy on the grog before attempting to lead a shanty session on ours.

**Eye of Reach** A different type of instrument entirely, the Eye of Reach sniper firearm will become indispensable once you master it, though that is much easier said than done. We enjoyed combining a sneaky shot from this fine weapon with a flurry of cutlass swipes. Have at ye!



AN ASHEN CHEST  
TALL TALES





# 16

## things not to miss

It's not possible to see everything that the Sea of Thieves has to offer in one trip – and we don't suggest you try. What follows, in no particular order, is a selective taste of its many and varied highlights, from idyllic islands to bustling ports and remote outposts that have seen better days. All highlights have a page reference to take you straight into the Guide, where you can find out more. Coloured numbers refer to chapters in the Guide.



### 1 PORT MERRICK

[See page 37](#)

The good life! Palm trees, tropical fish, clear blue waters and arguably the finest tavern on the seven seas.

### 2 ANCIENT SPIRE OUTPOST

[See page 44](#)

Shop and drink. Drink and shop. Repeat. Ancient Spire Outpost is just a lot of good old-fashioned seadog fun.

### 3 SCRAPPING

[See box, page 27](#)

Be it a broadside-to-broadside cannon battle, a clinking, clanking, spark-showering sword fight or an almighty Kraken or skeleton ding-dong, scrapping is integral to the Sea of Thieves experience.

### 4 GALLEON'S GRAVE OUTPOST

[See page 54](#)

One of the major tourist hotspots on the high seas – be sure to sink a few grogs and marvel at the bizarrely elevated shipwreck when visiting.

### 5 KRAKEN WATCHTOWER

[See page 56](#)

An unforgettably forbidding wooden fortress, Kraken Watchtower's sheer terribleness is hypnotic.



6



7



8



9



10

## 6 FISHING

[See page 38](#)

Do you want a fishy on a little dishy? Then whip out your tackle and get at it! Not only can you land yourself a delicious meal by finessing your fishing prowess, you might also make some wonga.

## 7 SHARK BAIT COVE

[See page 47](#)

Evocative and unforgettable reminders of a long-lost civilisation abound at Shark Bait Cove. As do sharks...

## 8 THE SHRINE OF OCEAN'S FORTUNE

[See page 72](#)

It's not quite the hushed-tone holy of holies you might be expecting, but the Shrine of Ocean's Fortune is one of the most memorable spots in all of the Sea of Thieves.

## 9 SHIPWRECK BAY

[See page 57](#)

By name and by nature... But if you're equal to the challenge, this island is awash with plentiful supplies.

## 10 PLUNDERING

[See box, page 74](#)

Oh, get over yourself. There's absolutely no moral dubiousness about gleefully plundering a shipwreck and picking over the bones of another poor crew's spoils. None whatsoever. Embrace it.



### 11 SMUGGLERS' BAY

[See page 38](#)

Sometimes nature does the darnedest things – Smugglers' Bay features hands down the most monumental natural entrance you'll ever see.

### 12 PETS

[See page 87](#)

Every pirate needs a good boy. Or girl. And your good boy (or girl) need not be a dog, either. What about a cheeky monkey? Don't forget to deck your pet out in a lovely outfit.

### 13 THE SUNKEN GROVE

[See page 58](#)

If you can avoid the snakes, you might just find yourself leaving this particular grove a whole lot richer.

### 14 THE MEGALODON

[See page 88](#)

Monstrous. Magnificent. Simply *mawsome*. The Megalodon might be the last thing you ever see – but you'll be glad you saw it.

### 15 THE DEVIL'S THIRST

[See page 65](#)

Volcanically spectacular, shall we say? Don't miss hitching a ride on the hair-raising geysers. Mind your eyebrows!

### 16 THIEVES' HAVEN

[See page 47](#)

The big city – relatively speaking – and just perfect for kicking back and enjoying the simple pleasures of life lived by the ocean.





# Itineraries

In the Sea of Thieves, The Pirate's Journey is ultimately the only itinerary that really counts – this is your personal pathway through this marvellous territory, so filled with challenges and opportunities. Only you can decide which path you will take, and no two Pirate Journeys are alike! With that understood, we present you with six themed and mapped itineraries that you might wish to weave into the rich tapestry of your personal Pirate's Journey.

## THE GOLD RUSH (GOLD HOARDERS TREASURE VAULT VOYAGE)

This itinerary – just one of many possible Treasure Vault Voyages – sees you travel to three small islands by way of a very special compass. In a quirky act of cartography, you'll also need to create your own map as you go – the one below is just to give you an idea of the exciting terrain you'll be covering. Now, your eyes may well have lit up at the 'treasure hunt' theme here – but getting greedy could be your downfall. When you reach the treasure vault, make it a real in-out job.

- 1 Galleon's Grave Outpost** Ask around here to learn more about the logistics of this itinerary from locals. [See page 54.](#)
- 2 Plunderer's Plight** Here's where you should pick up your map – well, the first bit of it anyway. [See page 58.](#)
- 3 The Sunken Grove** Cooney – second bit of your map here! [See page 58.](#)
- 4 The Crooked Masts** And your third and final piece of the map jigsaw is to be found at this spot. [See page 57.](#)
- 5 Shipwreck Bay** Keep your eyes peeled here for the catchily named 'Shark Vault Totem Key'. [See page 57.](#)

**6 Kraken's Fall** It's quite simple... Treasure! TREASURE! Also DANGER! Lots of DANGER! [See page 57.](#)

**7 Galleon's Grave Outpost.** Here's where the more level-headed traveller might round off this itinerary by handing in that hard-won treasure. [See page 54.](#)

## SUNKEN PLUNDER (MERCHANT ALLIANCE LOST SHIPMENTS VOYAGE)

This itinerary – a Merchant Alliance-flavoured Lost Shipments Voyage – is one for seafaring sleuths! Follow the route that a lost ship is supposed to have taken many moons ago, scouring the water for signs of its fate, before maybe, just maybe, finding the wreck itself and recovering its valuable manifest.

- 1 Sanctuary Outpost.** This is where you should set sail from, you shanty-loving Sherlock, you. [See page 36.](#)
- 2 Lone Cove** Seek out a local by the name of Deadshot Charlotte, who'll give you a clue as to your next steps. [See page 38.](#)
- 3 K5** Here's where a curious sailor – you, that is – might want to drop by and look for another clue. Let's just say that flotsam isn't always worthless... [See page 6.](#)

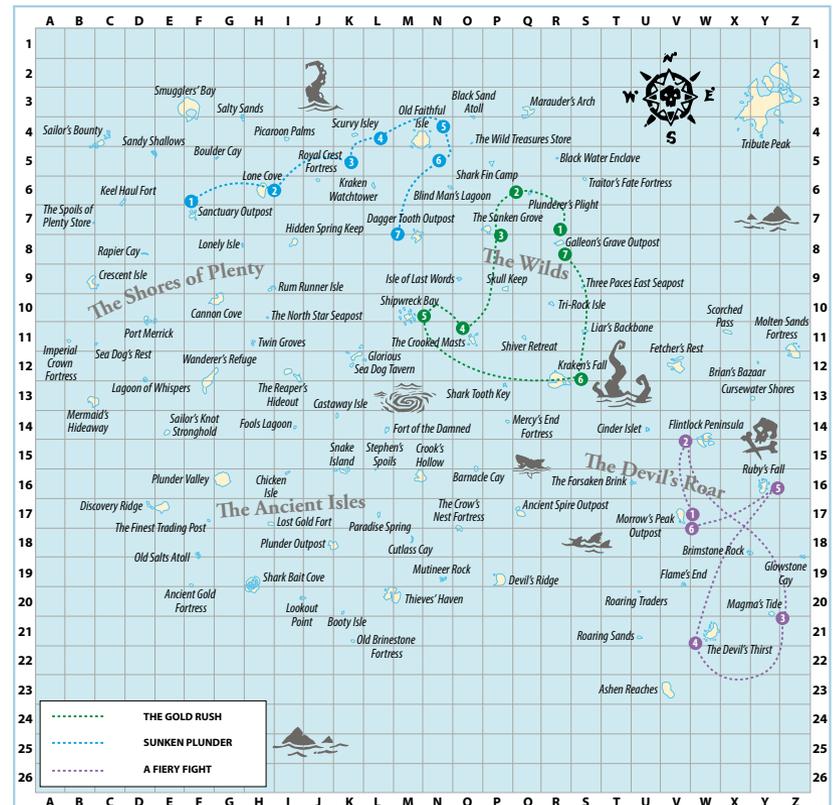
- 4 L4** Wait! Is that...? No, it can't be. Why would the Captain's Key just be lying about in some flotsam like that? [See page 6.](#)
- 5 Old Faithful Isle** Ah, if only messages in bottles were really a thing. [See page 58.](#)
- 6 N5.** If you were a shipwreck, wouldn't this be a lovely spot to rest your weary timbers? [See page 6.](#)
- 7 Dagger Tooth Outpost** Manifests are hot property at this particular outpost, that's for sure. And as for treasure... [See page 55.](#)

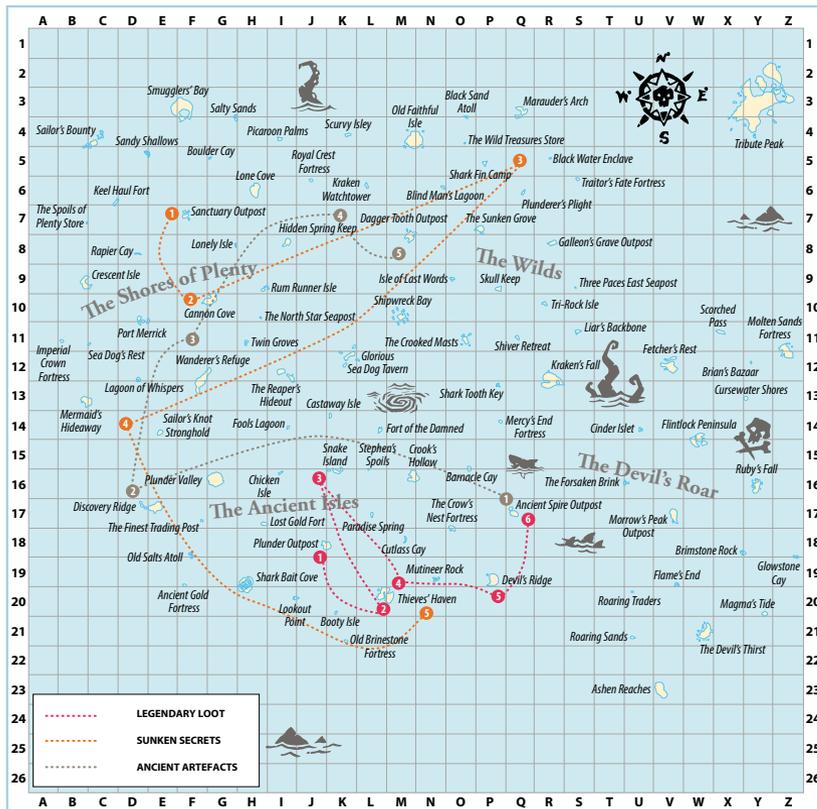
## A FIERY FIGHT (ORDER OF SOULS ASHEN BOUNTY VOYAGE)

We love travel for the sake of it – but isn't it nice when travel also pays? This itinerary could make you very rich indeed. It could also cause your skin to melt off, owing to the volcanic terrain. But: rich! So, swings and roundabouts. Note that there are various Bounty Voyages you could go

on – the one sketched out below is just one of our favourites.

- 1 Morrow's Peak Outpost** You don't want to set off on a perilous voyage like this without a little pep talk. Here's where you can get just that. Thankfully, the island's resident volcano is dormant, so you can enjoy your chinwag without fear of incineration. [See page 65.](#)
- 2 Flintlock Peninsula** Your first challenge awaits! [See page 65.](#)
- 3 Magma's Tide** And your second... [See page 66.](#)
- 4 The Devil's Thirst** Ouch – and a third. [See page 65.](#)
- 5 Ruby's Fall** Gracious, there's more? [See page 66.](#)
- 6 Morrow's Peak Outpost** If you make it this far, well done – you deserve all the rewards you've got coming to you here. [See page 65.](#)





## LEGENDARY LOOT (ATHENA'S RUN OF THIEVES' HAVEN VOYAGE)

If you've attained legendary status ([see page 27](#)), then you know that certain doors start opening for you – certain doors, and certain itineraries, like this one, a permanent Mercenary Voyage for Pirate Legends like you. It's a devilishly difficult challenge, with repeated visits to the labyrinthine Thieves' Haven island. You'll need to be street-smart, adaptable – and ready to play with fire.

- 1 Plunder Outpost** Set off on your merry – or should that be wary? – way here. [See page 46.](#)
- 2 Thieves' Haven** Look out for three X-marks-the-spots here. [See page 47.](#)
- 3 Snake Island** Get ready to solve a riddle, and take on an encounter with an unusual, shadowy foe. [See page 47.](#)

**4 Thieves' Haven** A mighty six X-marks-the-spots to cover on this visit! [See page 47.](#)

**5 Devil's Ridge** Another riddle, another shadowy foe – hold your nerve. [See page 46.](#)

**6 Thieves' Haven** You're not going to believe this: nine X-marks-the-spots represent the final hurdle of this taxing itinerary. [See page 47.](#)

**7 Ancient Spire Outpost** Reap what you have sown! [See page 44.](#)

## SUNKEN SECRETS (LEGEND OF THE SUNKEN KINGDOM VOYAGE)

This itinerary is very much pitched at the bookworms. If you've read everything there is to read ([see page 87](#)), then Sunken Secrets is for you. To complete this engrossing itinerary, you'll be following an esteemed scholar's buried instructions. They'll take you to three

magnificent shrines, full of secret chambers, treasure and coral-encrusted skeletons.

**1 Sanctuary Outpost.** Embark on your literary journey from this sun-kissed island. Don't get distracted by the enticing shopping options or especially greasy grog. [See page 36.](#)

**2 Cannon Cove** Your instructions await! What a thrill to be guided by a scholar of such repute. [See page 38.](#)

**3 The Shrine of Hungering** Entered by way of an ancient Megalodon's jaw! [See page 73.](#)

**4 The Shrine of Ocean's Fortune** You won't believe your eyes at this shrine of stunning architectural splendour. [See page 72.](#)

**5 The Shrine of Ancient Tears** Dry your eyes or this shrine really will give you something to cry about. [See page 73.](#)

## ANCIENT ARTEFACTS (LEGEND OF THE VEIL VOYAGE)

Another itinerary that only the legends among you will be equal to – regular folk simply won't

be able to wield the immensely powerful stones that are integral to this quest nor overcome the foes that lie in wait – not to mention destroy the Ghost Garrison emplacements. These truly fearsome structures simply must be seen off if this itinerary is to have any hope of success. May your cannonballs fly true!

**1 Ancient Spire Outpost** It's here at this green and pleasant island that the quest to end all quests kicks off. [See page 44.](#)

**2 Discovery Ridge** It's fight time – defeat the phantoms and win your first precious stone. [See page 46.](#)

**3 F11** More brains, less brawn is the order of the day at this juncture. [See page 6.](#)

**4 K7** It's the Ghost Garrison showdown! [See page 6.](#)

**5 M8** Now do the honourable thing and hand in that treasure. [See page 6.](#)





PIRATE CREW

## Basics

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## Getting there

**At its heart, Rough Guides is about solo travel. We started out producing guides for travellers who wanted to see the less well-trodden parts of the world and who didn't want to separate themselves from local culture by moving around in a luxury bubble.**

But that doesn't mean we envisaged travellers should or would stay 'solo' throughout their entire trip. A Rough Guide would, if it did its job, give them the means to get by if that was the case, but they also covered the myriad ways in which a traveller might meet like-minded folk, recommending everything from backpacker hostels to local volunteering opportunities. On most trips, meeting and connecting with others is a nice-to-have, a lovely byproduct of the wonderful activity that is travel. In the Sea of Thieves, meeting others is pretty much a requirement. A ship certainly won't sail itself, but seagoing vessels really are far too much for even the hardiest of individuals to handle solo.

Many backpackers have taken a chance on a captain they meet or hear tell of from others, who's plying an otherwise costly route. Line the good captain's palm with gold, perhaps do a little work on board for your keep, and job's a good 'un: you've smashed that Panama–Colombia journey without breaking the bank.

And many a backpacker knows, too, that it often doesn't work out quite so smoothly. Well, steel yourself – because playing crewmate Russian roulette is the chance you need to take if you want to make a go of it in the Sea of Thieves. You can't toss every single one of them in the brig.

But it's not the only way of getting going in the Sea of Thieves. If your introvert battery is inclined to get flat fast, then opt for a closed crew, which means that your merry band will be made up of pals. You can also go it alone. If you do, then good luck to you, lone wolf.

## Getting around

**It's a sailor's life for you! Your main form of transport will be, naturally, the ship. There are three main types in the Sea of Thieves: the smallish Sloop; the medium-sized Brigantine; and the mighty Galleon.**

Of course, you can swim, if you want. There's nothing stopping you, but there's also nothing stopping the sharks from nibbling your fragile flesh (top tip: don't stay in the water too long) nor the preternaturally

warmed seas of The Devil's Roar from boiling you alive (top tip: don't get in the water at all here).

Out on the open water, you'll want to make liberal use of the spyglass to scan the horizon – don't worry, that gigantic pig is *far away* – while, once on land, the tools at your navigational disposal include fetchingly antique-looking lanterns and a fiendishly un-self-explanatory compass. The real outward-bounders among the crew will, naturally, want to read the landscape using the skills passed down by their forefathers and that half-watched documentary – everything from rock paintings to the jaunty angle of a particular cliff can guide your way, if you have eyes to see them.

It's not the most dignified way to travel, nor one we'll be repeating very often, but an alternative means of getting from A to B around the Sea of Thieves is via... cannon. Unconventional, yes, but very effective. Try propelling yourself from your own ship to a nearby vessel using this method, or launch yourself up to a lofty perch that would otherwise be out of reach. You'll make quite the entrance, that's for sure.

## Food and drink

**You'd better like bananas. And if you don't, you'd better start liking them. They're a big source of energy in the Sea of Thieves, as are coconuts, mangoes, pomegranates and pineapples. That's your five-a-day right there.**

When only a barbecue will do, chuck some fresh pork, chicken or just-landed fish on there. It tastes better cooked that way than on your poky ship's stove. Best not try bringing any back through customs, but there are a few rather more 'exotic' local delicacies to try, too. If you're the type of traveller who seeks out *hákarl* in Iceland and *casu marzu* maggot cheese in Sardinia, then we have two words for you: Kraken and calamari.

The taverns in these parts serve up some truly excellent grog. Drink too much (or just enough, according to your take on things) and your visuals and movements will become a little squiffy. Drink even more and nature will take its course: you'll blow spectacular chunks (note that this can be used as a weapon). You can fill up your ship's grog barrel by speaking to a tavern keeper ([see box, page 8](#)).

## Shopping

**You'll be needing the tools of your trade now, won't you?**

Don't set sail without your compass, pocket watch, lantern, shovel (treasure doesn't unbury itself) and merrymaking musical instruments for when you have the opportunity to let your hair down. And of course then there are the real 'tools', which you'll need to get from the weaponsmith's shop ([see box, page 27](#)).

### **treasure sure are seductive – and boy do they talk.**

That said, doubloons have gained a degree of traction (you might call them the cryptocurrency of the Sea of Thieves), especially with Larinna, leader of the Bilge Rats. Almost as important as huge chunks of treasure for doing business is your personal reputation – build that up and you might well find treasures easier to come by.

Of course, there's no sweeter way of communicating that you've made it than buying a ship all of your own, naming it after a childhood sweetheart or

## Gold

**They're not the most convenient forms of currency in the world, but gold and**

### **KEEPING THE RIGHT COMPANY**

It can be difficult, when travelling, to get to grips with certain facets of local culture. The more arcane ones, for instance – those traditions and ways that have developed over countless centuries – or the ins and outs of old-established bodies, with their procedural intricacies. But do not shy away from interaction with the Sea of Thieves' venerable Trading Companies. Not only will meeting them face-on throw you in at the cultural deep end in a way that will ultimately enrich your experience – they are also your ticket to ride! Completing their contracts will earn both rewards and reputation. But be wary in your dealings with them – believe it or not, not all of their intentions are noble!

### **GOLD HOARDERS**

The Gold Hoarders are a greedy, gold-loving, treasure-hunting piratical Trading Company. All they're interested in is amassing wealth in all its forms. Get in with them and you'll be richly rewarded. They are the only Trading Company to possess so-called 'skeleton' keys.

### **ORDER OF SOULS**

The Order of Souls have their sights set on a higher plane. This mystical company was founded as an organisation dedicated to understanding the world's magical forces, reading the minds of the dead in the hope of learning their secrets. The Order seeks insight into the supernatural, including ghost ships. How do they plan to do that? By trading in valuable skulls, of course. But beware – there are some skeletons so feared even the Order won't pay pirates to tangle with them.

### **MERCHANT ALLIANCE**

The Merchant Alliance is a benign offshoot of the Grand Maritime Union, who control trade in the wider world with an iron fist but lack the means to seize control of the Sea of Thieves through brute force. Gain their favour by fulfilling voyage commissions (delivering cargo, recovering manifests from shipwrecks, etc) in timely fashion and you will undoubtedly go up in the world. It's kept on the down-low, but some of the Alliance merchants also take orders of hush-hush 'special' wares.

### **ATHENA'S FORTUNE**

Athena's Fortune is a secret company whose operations are cloaked in mystery. Gain their trust and your reputation among some of history's greatest pirate legends will be boosted.

### **HUNTER'S CALL**

The Hunter's Call Trading Company will pay a good price for prime cuts of nicely cooked meat, as well as for tasty-looking fish. They'll even take other bits and pieces you snag on your fishing line off your hands, from old boots and hats to skulls.

### **CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON**

Your ship bristles with mighty cannons, but what about your personal armoury? You need something to defend yourself with in these parts. Even the scurviest young scallywag starts out with a cutlass, pistol, blunderbuss and 'Eye of Reach' rifle. Finer versions of them all can be purchased from the weaponsmith's shop.

### **CUTLASS**

The cutlass is a type of short, curved sword, just the ticket for rearranging someone's innards during a spirited melee. You'll need to practise your slashing and lunging techniques with dedication. Perfect your handling and no son of a biscuit-eater'll dare mess with you.

### **PISTOL**

The pistol fires just five shots and you have to prime each one – not a good time to be all fingers and thumbs.

### **BLUNDERBUSS**

The wonderfully named blunderbuss fires a wide blast of shot. If you're out of signal flares, pumping on the blunderbuss trigger will do a similar job (if directed vertically, dumb).o

### **EYE OF REACH**

The 'Eye of Reach' is a sort of sniper firearm that allows you to zoom right in on that backstabbing rat up there in the crow's nest and take him out with a single shot. Bear in mind that the weapon's scope glints in the sun making you visible from a long distance – the hunter can easily become the hunted.

beloved pet, and pimping your Captain's Cabin just how you like it.

on their great deeds – and maybe even down three grogs in quick succession.

## Living the pirate life

**The word 'legend' gets bandied about far too easily these days. Time was you needed to commit remarkable acts of strength, courage and resilience to come into that category.**

Now you just need to down three grogs in quick succession or acquiesce to a request from a persuasive underling you shouldn't be so easily persuaded by to get called a 'legend'.

In the Sea of Thieves, the term 'legend' has been reclaimed. To be a legend in this no-nonsense region, you really need to earn it – and, like the good old days, becoming a legend in the Sea of Thieves is all about reputation and standing.

Once you're in with this particular in-crowd – and not many make it into its exclusive embrace – well, the doors it opens! One of the best of these is a literal one: the door to The Tavern of Legends, where Sea of Thieves greats can rest their weary bones, reflect

## Crime, security and personal safety

**Is it crime when there is no law? Don't get distracted stroking your beard as you ponder this puzzler, as someone will doubtless pilfer your pockets.**

Yes, the Sea of Thieves is an untamed wilderness, an unregulated frontier, filled with pirate types even dodgier than you. We don't encourage violence, but it pays to come toolled up – purely in the name of self-defence, you understand.

## Festivals and events

**The Bilge Rats are the party animals and events planners supreme in the Sea of Thieves, and their Bilge Rat Adventures are not to be missed.**

The Bilge Rats have a particular fondness for events centred on skeletons, so put your squeamishness to one side, but they also organise high japes involving the destruction of underwater cursed mermaid statues as well as cursed cannonball fun and your common or garden sea battles against galleons crawling with the undead.

## Pirate customs

**It can seem like life is played fast and loose in the Sea of Thieves, but look more closely and there are, in fact, certain codes of behaviour that you should be aware of. The Language section (see page 88) has more on this.**

At times, yes, you'll need to act first, speak later, but it also pays to have some diplomatic skills in your locker when navigating these seas.

First, there are the crew power dynamics to think about – at times, you'll need to curry favour with others on board and seek to sway votes such that your preferred outcome is reached. You might be voting on whether to take on a particular voyage, for instance, or – God forbid! – whether to scuttle your ship.

Diplomacy also comes in handy, of course, when forming alliances with other crews, and it is elevated to an art form when the matter of engagement with an entirely different species enters the equation. How do you meet one of the merfolk at their level or see eye to eye with a siren? That is for you and your soft skills to work out.









# The Shores of Plenty

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# 1 The Shores of Plenty

Lush palm trees caressed by the breeze. Birds gliding through the warm, hazy air. Icing-sugar sand. A clear sky that throbs blue by day and sparkles with a billion brilliant stars by night. Sunsets that melt the horizon and your heart. This is the life – this is The Shores of Plenty.

Blessed with a balmy tropical climate, its waters liberally studded with islands like so many pearls, this northwestern region is a superb off-the-beaten-track alternative to some of the more touristy tropical destinations. You can take your overcrowded beaches, for The Shores of Plenty makes only one omission to its abundant abundance: people. Herd-free and blissfully far off 'Banana Pancake Trail', canny travellers can have entire islands to themselves here. So go now, before every traveller demographic, from the luxurians to the digital detoxers, wend their inevitable way to these magical, sun-kissed shores.

It's not just eye candy here, either. Plenty really does mean plenty. The possibilities for adrenaline-pumping outdoor activities come thick and fast. Indeed some of the things you can get up to in The Shores of Plenty are unique – unique in all the world – to this one region. Imagine being the very first traveller to witness Polynesian surfers or the South Pacific tradition of *nagol*, that ancient ancestor to bungee jumping – and then joining in! Those are the kinds of wonders that this region has in store for you.

## Outposts, fortresses and shrines of The Shores of Plenty

So where to go? Longstanding, undisputed party island **Sanctuary Outpost** is worth a brief visit, if only to take selfies next to its world-famous signage: 'Welcome to Sanctuary Outpost – Serving the Greasiest Grog There Is!' Don't make any morning arrangements if you plan to partake of the local hospitality – we discovered to our dual delight and dismay that it really is the greasiest and groggiest grog there is.

If construction takes a back seat to intoxication over on Sanctuary Outpost, it's all build, build, build on **Port Merrick** (formerly New Golden Sands Outpost), The Shores of Plenty's Little Dubai. In recent memory, this burgeoning town was a sleepy backwater. If the architectural tourism gets old, grog can be had, with the rambling The Captain's Head, formerly a humble tavern, serving a decent pint.

Just because somewhere looks pretty doesn't mean it's all piña colodas and inflatable flamingos, of course. As many a backpacker has found, you can't eat good vibes, and sometimes a little casual work is in order. Thankfully, The Shores of Plenty offers money-making opportunities aplenty. These waters are rich with wildlife, for starters, including the Plentifin fish, which fetch a good price at **The Spoils of Plenty Store** and at **The North Star Seapost**.

Fortresses in these parts include **Keel Haul Fort**, **Sailor's Knot Stronghold** and **Hidden Spring Keep**. The last of these boasts an especially hard-to-reach eyrie known as the Skeleton Throne, which sits plumb atop the fortress's tower – you may need to think outside of the box and consider alternative modes of transport if you'd like to get up to it.

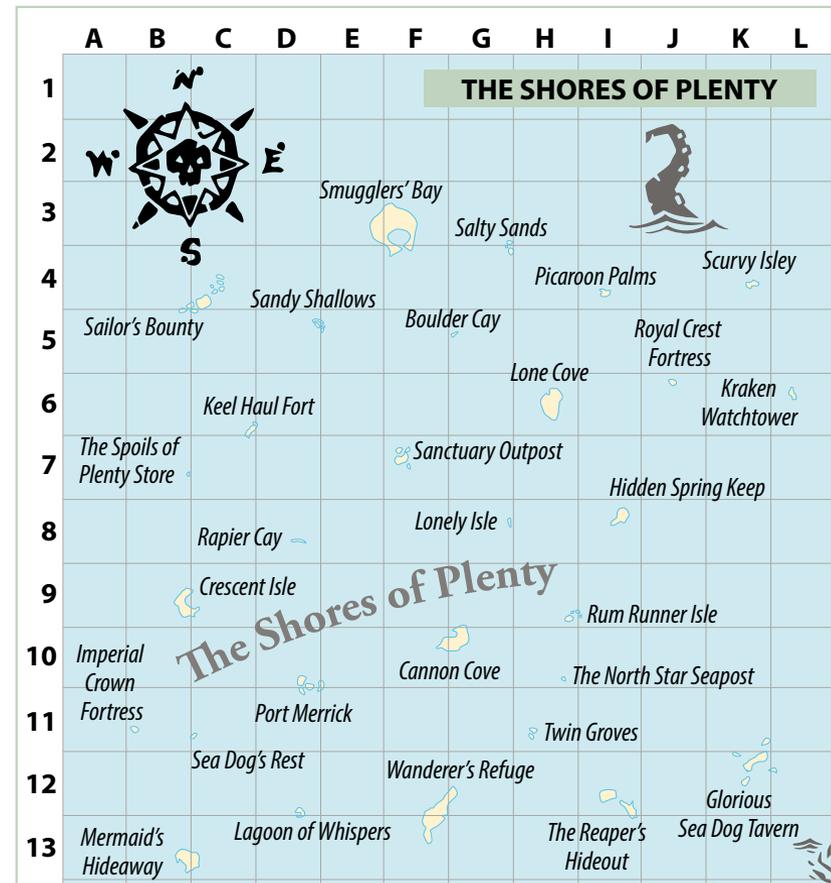
Then there's **Imperial Crown Fortress** and **Royal Crest Fortress**, the latter maintained by an elusive team of caretakers, who nonetheless do sterling work keeping the sea fort spick and span and free of the rampantly overgrown vegetation that obscures other such establishments in the Sea of Thieves.

Finally, The Shores of Plenty can lay claim to two of the most sacred places in all the Sea of Thieves: the **Shrine of Ocean's Fortune** and the **Shrine of the Coral Tomb**. If you only visit a handful of places on your trip to the region, be sure to include these.

## Port Merrick

A wonderful place to lift the spirits and rejuvenate the flesh of a voyage-weary seadog, **Port Merrick** is a tropical paradise of palm trees, eye-poppingly colourful fish and clear blue waters.

There's plenty to enjoy here, but we recommend the centre of town. Why? Because it's where you'll find the legendary tavern known as The Captain's Head. With its roaring fire and lively clientele, there's no finer place to seek shelter during a storm than humble Tina's fine establishment. Nor indeed is there a finer place to wait patiently for a storm to arrive and necessitate an even longer stay. In good weather, enjoy your grog alfresco at one of the tables outside.



## 1 Major islands of The Shores of Plenty

The turquoise waters of The Shores of Plenty are dotted with a smattering of islands, each with its own distinct appeal, depending on what you're in the mood for.

With its dilapidated, abandoned fishing village in the north of the island, the large **Wanderers Refuge** is something of an open-air museum of this region's past. History buffs will be intrigued to learn that the now-monolithic Wanderers Refuge was once in fact an archipelago of three islands. What formidable force of nature fused the original islands together – and when this happened – is unknown.

When visiting, do be mindful of a man-made force, however – at the time of writing, the cannons on the western coastline were unmanned, but we don't want any horrible accidents. We advise joining the sunseekers basking on the charming little beach at the island's cannon-free end. All the same, approach **Wanderers Refuge** with some caution.

Still retaining its archipelago status (unlike the clumped-together Wanderers Refuge), though clustered so tight as to feel like one island, **Sailors' Bounty** boasts a banana-like shape and a labyrinthine cave system – be sure to hold your lantern high, that's all we're saying.

From fruit to pastries: expansive **Crescent Isle** is a large island said to be shaped like a croissant – the resemblance is loose, unless you're hungry, in which case move right along as there's precious little to eat here. Or indeed to distract you at all, beyond a bay with a dock and a branching cave system.

Does art imitate life or, as Oscar Wilde had it, life imitate art? **Cannon Cove** contributes to the age-old debate by featuring a rock formation that uncannily resembles a cannon – in fact, a truly enormous cannon, which you'll be glad is made of granite rather than cast iron.

Practically begging you to sail into its beautiful embrace, meanwhile, is **Smugglers' Bay**, which features arguably the most monumental natural entrance you'll ever encounter: two large rock formations rearing up to create a stunning archway. There's a small gap between their tips, which is crossed by a wooden bridge – a great spot for a sundowner. The island's far northern location, set apart from the hubbub that characterises other regions in the Sea of Thieves, is likely one factor in its pretty chill atmosphere. The pace of life here is very relaxed – you can swim, do a little target practice, admire the views from the bridge or ogle the luminous blue mushrooms and lichen in the cave on the north side. You might even pay your respects at the grave of a drunken sailor (at least they died happy) and take in the island's bona fide 'walk the plank' plank. Otherwise, Smugglers' Bay is mostly gorgeous golden sand and palm trees. If you're departing or approaching at the right time, don't miss the sight of the sun setting cinematically behind the arch.

Solitary but proud, **Lone Cove** boasts a lovely big beach to the south and – more moodily – a somewhat sombre centrepiece feature in the form of a large, rambling pirates' graveyard. The island has a population of one – one particularly unfriendly resident, who may have something to do with the healthy size of and activity at that cemetery.

### PIRATE HOOK, LINE AND SINKER

Fishing is one of the Sea of Thieves' great pleasures. There aren't many places in the world where you're invited to fish wherever and whenever the fancy takes you – with no need for a permit – and you can bank on the fish stocks being in rude health. If you're inexperienced, the Sea of Thieves is as good a place as any to take up the sport, while fishing enthusiasts will be thrilled by all the new species that they'll never have encountered before, from Ancientscales to Islehoppers. If you're not planning on eating your catch, you'll be able to sell it locally, too. It's win-win (except for the fish).

### (DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER'S MARK

It crops up throughout the Sea of Thieves, but nobody seems to know quite what it means or who's behind it – we're talking, of course, about the Reaper's Mark. A stylised skull featuring silhouettes of galleons and pirates instead of eyes and teeth, the Reaper's Mark is endowed with a wild array of powers, according to whom you speak. (It wouldn't be a pirate yarn without multiple, conflicting versions, after all.) Some say the Reaper's Mark has immense power – if you know how to wield it – possibly even to defy death. Others swear that it is a portent of doom and that it will enmesh those who see it in a web of confusion (and, they say, a veil of red smoke). Others still believe that the Reaper's Mark turns the hunter into the hunted. Be on your guard, we say.

## Lesser islands of The Shores of Plenty

The region's smaller islands are more numerous, but only two are really worthy of your time. Some of the least prepossessing include **Sandy Shallows**, a small, splintered island that is strictly for the completists. (There is really nothing to see here. Nothing whatsoever.) The same goes for the inconsequential little **Salty Sands** triumvirate. We visited, so you don't have to. The four pitiful chunks of rock that constitute **Rum Runner Isle** really are not worthy of their romantic-sounding name – avoid. **Rapier Cay**, meanwhile, barely warrants a name at all – to call it a sandbank would be to overegg the matter, and skilled sailors can plough straight over the pathetic sandy nothing. Don't all rush at once to **Boulder Cay** either, which is, indeed, named for its large boulder. If you're looking for other diversions on the cay, the list is not long, although the wreck of a galleon, the good ship Morningstar, does lie off Boulder Cay's south coast. It's come to something when the best thing about an island – albeit a gorgeous, sunkissed island with perfect sand – is a wreck. And don't get us started on **Picaroon Palms**, **Lonely Isle** or **Twin Groves** – what a waste of sail fabric.

### Lagoon of Whispers

Now you're talking. The **Lagoon of Whispers** lays genuine claim to your time, not so much for its landscape – vegetation, boulders, impossibly beautiful beaches, blah blah blah – but for its culture. Outsider artist Umbra has turned this unpromising, isolated little chunk of rock into her own personal realm, drawing inspiration for her work – primarily a form of tattoo art – from the great, heroic deeds she catches wind of in the long, meditative years she spends here. The enigmatic artist inks these chronicles onto the skin of travellers fortunate enough to meet her. Those tattoos may then, she says, inspire further great deeds in turn – it's all very meta, and we love it.

### Sea Dog's Rest

Little **Sea Dog's Rest** is a curiosity. It looks like nothing at all and yet has known the most incredible drama – and this juxtaposition of the 'meh' with the monumental can be very affecting if you have the eyes to see it. Most travellers to these parts will be familiar with the story of DeMarco – well, folks, hold onto your hats, because this obscure islet is where the great man's skeletal remains are to be found. That the clothes clinging to his bones refuse to leave him is an especially poignant epilogue.





# The Ancient Isles

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# The Ancient Isles

A southern swathe of ocean peppered with enigmatic islands, the abandoned hideaways of long-forgotten pirate crews and two of the most memorable sacred sites on the planet, The Ancient Isles will put the wind in your sails like few other regions you'll encounter. With its riddle-laden ancient ruins, the adventures promised in these parts have a decidedly Indiana Jones flavour, too, so put down Polly, grab your fedora and your whip, and let's get cracking.

Less nobly, The Ancient Isles also promises some of the best boozing in all the Sea of Thieves. But don't go spending all your time cooped up inside a darkened tavern – many a backpacker knows the perils of wasting their trip by forgetting to leave their party hostel – as this southwestern region enjoys a balmy climate, rich landscapes and some intriguing wildlife, not least the bizarre Ancientscale fish. The spelunkers among us are also in for a treat. However, caves really are small fry when visiting The Ancient Isles. The shrines are the thing!

Before accepting the call of wild adventure, you may want a little company. All human (and pig and chicken) life is to be had at the unmissable oceanic Gomorrah that is **Ancient Spire Outpost**, while **Plunder Outpost** runs it a close second in the debauchery and dastardliness stakes. If you've not had your fill of your fellow travellers' foibles after visiting these two, make your way to **The Finest Trading Post** and **Stephen's Spoils** to see what you can see (and steal and sell). The former's worth stopping by, if only to admire the intricate ship's model displayed at the local shop. The model's miniature sails have been rendered exquisitely well.

## Ancient Spire Outpost

Shopping and drinking at The Unicorn tavern is the name of the game at **Ancient Spire Outpost**, a small community in The Ancient Isles that is a veritable hub of merchants, shops and Trading Companies. The settlement is spread across two spire-shaped islands that are separated by a narrow, bridged channel.

To clear the head after a good session at The Unicorn, a nice climb up the rocky 'spires' is just the ticket – the views are simply gorgeous (indeed, there are local photography contests to find the nicest). If that doesn't do the trick, you might consider a daredevil dive from the bridge.

Other than going out on the lash, splashing the cash and chucking yourself headlong into the deep, Ancient Spire Outpost offers an irresistible diversity of opportunities for exploration. There's a smaller, cunningly hidden dock you could seek out, for example, which leads to a network of crisscrossing tunnels. For those wishing to make a more discreet arrival at the outpost, land at the south side. There are no merchants or docks in this particular corner of the island, so you can drop anchor unnoticed – note, though, that the trek into town from this point is arduous.

The tavern is set apart from the rest of the community (for good reason, some might say), high up near the tip of the spire; several paths and ladders lead down from it to the rest of the settlement. Perhaps because of the bountiful grog promised by its rungs, one of these ladders has been dubbed 'The World's Best Ladder' by fans of the tavern. Rumours abound locally that a pirate by the name of 'Filthy Rich Semmens' ordered his crew to bury their treasure somewhere on the island. That said, as any pirate knows: talk is cheap.



## Plunder Outpost

Looking for all the world like a great incisor tooth – albeit one formed of improbably angled slabs of granite – **Plunder Outpost** is an unlikely spot for a thriving hub. But thriving hub it is, with lively joints huddled together in the shadow of the island's spectacular eruption of topography. The local tavern's commitment to revelry is evidenced by the proudly-displayed plaque dedicated to the winner of a particularly fierce drinking contest. Feats hereabouts aren't all alcohol-related, though dubious merit does seem to be a common trait: look out for the skeletal monument that remembers the one Plunder Outpost visitor whose prowess in cannon-powered self-propulsion was evidently deemed worthy of enduring commemoration.

Note that Plunder Outpost's main dock is out to the west. Don't make the mistake of attempting to gain access via the broken dock to the island's northeast. Many do.

## Forts and fortresses of The Ancient Isles

This part of the world isn't short of military presence, with **The Crow's Nest Fortress**, **Lost Gold Fort**, **Ancient Gold Fortress**, **Old Brinestone Fortress** and, most significantly, the enigmatic **Fort of the Damned** featuring in its citadel repertoire.

If all of these well-defended little bastions take some getting to, it's the last of them that will confound all but the very finest sailor. Previously known as Old Boot Fort, the name change to **Fort of the Damned** at least puts some of the more perceptive sea dogs on notice – expect your doom. So is it a case of abandoning all hope? Not quite – there's an element of bark versus bite here – but the thick, seemingly bewitched fog that perpetually entangles the fort, affording only the odd, troubling glimpse of eerie green lights and muscular chainwork, make this an especially daunting place to visit. However, if you do make landfall, it's certainly worth it – be sure to climb the west tower high up the island.

## Large islands of The Ancient Isles

The larger islands of The Ancient Isles region are stunningly varied in character – indeed, there's a sense of them being micro-regions with a region. Mountainous **Devil's Ridge** practically begs you to explore high, low and even inside: the island's labyrinthine cave system, which features some spectacular entranceways (not least the one obscured behind the curtain of a lofty waterfall), is a spelunker's dream. A note of caution: if you bump into a local who goes by 'Martha the Fierce', be aware that her nickname isn't a 'Little John'-style joke...

Also boasting some impressively mountainous terrain is **Discovery Ridge** island, though the main reason to visit this charming little corner of the world is to admire the paintings – of unknown origin – that some researchers have interpreted as indicative

### DRINKING IRRESPONSIBLY, PUKING VOLUMINOUSLY

The pirate life is synonymous with grog. Wherever you go in the Sea of Thieves, you'll encounter it in impressive quantities. Note that the local grog is powerful stuff, too: down one tankard and you'll already feel the effects; drink a few and you'll be three sheets. You probably shouldn't operate heavy machinery in this state. Or, indeed, a large ship. And put that cutlass down. Drinking *lots* of grog, meanwhile, can make you vomit – this is good news! You can use that puke as a sloppy weapon or even to put out fires. Don't let anyone tell you pirates aren't resourceful.

of an ancient 'merfolk' culture on the island. Their artistry lives long in the memory. Not to be outdone in the precipitousness stakes, plucky **Plunder Valley** offers peaks that spiral upwards as if the island was reaching up to touch the heavens. Its main hill – you can't miss it – is riddled with caves. One of the most interesting things about tripartite **Snake Island** is not the slab of granite itself but the waters surrounding it, which are invariably rough – oh, and its name. Unsettlingly enough, we have yet to work out why the island is associated with the serpent.

## Shark Bait Cove

You don't have to be Sherlock Holmes to surmise that the toothy apex predator was of great significance to the original settlers of **Shark Bait Cove**, a pretty puzzle of seven interlocking crescent-shaped islands. Did they worship them? It's hard to say, but you can reach your own conclusions after visiting the islands' most notable landmarks: a stone sculpture of a shark, jagged with stone teeth; and a large stone 'Shark Bait Altar' on the north side of the islands, complete with murals and skeletons, set in a shallow watery pit. There are murals galore here (aquatic beasts were obviously the mural artists' favourite subjects) plus plenty of wildlife, including chickens, pigs and, naturally, sharks. Sailing into the cove is ill-advised as the waters around it are very shallow and riddled with rocks, which means your ship will likely stick out like a sore thumb against the low elevation of the island rings.

If you get tired of mural-spotting, go for a dive. There is a fairly deep coral basin in the middle of the island worth checking out. It's especially beautiful on a sunny day, when all its vivid colours come to the fore. If you sail away at sunset, the red colours on the crystal blue water really make it feel like a tropical paradise.

## Thieves' Haven

As islands go, **Thieves' Haven**, in The Ancient Isles, is the big city. It features three inlets into an inner bay, with two stone arches so enormous that you can sail a galleon beneath. When planning a visit, you should know that Thieves' Haven doesn't give up its shelter cheaply: you'll have to contend with narrow entrances to moor your ship in the cove, so do not attempt to get there on your own – you'll need at least one other crewmate to man the sails and plug the holes in the hull.

Once you make it in, Thieves' Haven is – as its name suggests – a place to really kick back and explore at leisure, with countless nooks and crannies to dig around in. You'll undoubtedly get the uncanny feeling that your pirate predecessors have used this place for just that since time immemorial – legend has it that Thieves' Haven was one of the very first islands discovered in the Sea of Thieves. So take a hike into the mountains to check out the cave paintings, have a dip in the water, search for treasure, gaze upon the tropical flowers and think of your loved ones back home...

Climbing up inside the shipwreck (there's always a shipwreck, isn't there?) will afford gorgeous views of the bay, while on the eastern mountain awaits a pretty little waterfall. Go higher and you might be able to find the two stone Easter Island-esque heads.

## Crook's Hollow

Craggy, sloping **Crook's Hollow** is one of The Ancient Isles' undoubted Instagram hotspots. From the moment you sail into the bay on the island's west flank, the photo opportunities come thick, fast and fabulous. So, cameras at the ready, now's your time to shine: which is your best side? You might head for the higher ground to the island's southeast, the accessible beaches to the north and west or the gorgeous waterfall out east – note that this feature is not just a pretty face, acting as a portal to a whole wealth of caving japes.

## OH PLOUGH, WHERE ART THOU?

If you're fond of stargazing, you'll be gobsmacked when you look into the skies above the Sea of Thieves. Forget everything you thought you knew about the empyrean constellations: there's a whole new panoply of star formations to get familiar with in these parts. It's out with the likes of Ursa Major, Orion and Perseus and in with the Great Kraken, Obsidian Arrow and Patient Turtle. You'll pick up much fascinating, rich local lore tied to the constellations as you make your way around the Sea of Thieves, and indeed the constellations can *help* you make your way around since they're useful navigational tools – at least for those with eyes (and a certain special spyglass) to read the signs.

Should you get carried away seeking that perfect shot and stay longer on Crook's Hollow than you intended, beware that something very queer happens late at night here: for a couple of hours from around midnight, travellers have reported strange sounds wafting eerily around Crook's Hollow. Thankfully, they are harmless, which surely puts one in mind of Caliban in *The Tempest*: 'The isle is full of noises, Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.' If it's good enough for Shakespeare, it's good enough for us.

## Smaller islands of The Ancient Isles

More gentle misshapen mounds than land masses of any note, the smaller islands of The Ancient Isles region need not divert you for long from the juicier opportunities for adventure in these parts. The likes of **Barnacle Cay**, **Fools Lagoon**, **Chicken Isle** and **Booty Isle** – grassy, boulder-sprinkled little numbers – are typical. Still, at the very least, they offer the chance to still the sails and take a weight off a while – something that is barely possible at **Mutineer Rock**, with its jagged arrangement of inhospitable boulders. Offering some minor but charming points of difference are potential moorings such as **Castaway Isle** – which harbours a small stone shrine at its centre – and **Lookout Point**, whose elevated western section allows for, well, looking out. The four-part **Old Salts Atoll** joins in the single-point-of-interest fun courtesy of the impressive chunks of shipwrecked galleon scattered across its beaches.

If you're familiar with Dubai's Palm Jumeirah, you'll know that just because a place looks interesting from above – in Palm Jumeirah's case, its delicate 'fronds' design, discernible only from a helicopter – does not mean it is interesting at ground level. Albeit on a much smaller scale, the same certainly goes for **Cutlass Cay** – it *is* shaped like the blade of a sword, hence its name, but you wouldn't know it from walking the wee island's unremarkable length. Brought your drone camera?

The most worthwhile of the smaller offerings in The Ancient Isles is the aptly named **Paradise Spring**. With its lush, concentrated patch of forested terrain, the flora factor means Paradise Spring already has a little more going for it than some of its island siblings, but it's the eponymous water feature that sets this place apart. The island's north end is blessed with a delicate – some say sacred – spring that the local faithful keep bedecked with candles. It is a truly spiritual spot.







# The Wilds

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# The Wilds

At Rough Guides, we're sufficiently well travelled to know that sunshine does not make or break a destination – but The Wilds sure could do with the odd spell of nice weather. The climate of this harsh northeastern region is relentlessly, oppressively grim. The silver lining is that you won't miss any precious beach days, as golden stretches are few and far between in The Wilds. Indeed, it's as if even the sand, sick of the sight of overcast skies, has packed up and gone on holiday, leaving the islands as sad, craggy hopeless cases.

So why would anyone come to this miserable land of parched, mournful fauna and skeletal remains? (Insert awkward silence.) Well, if you're a fan of ferociously mean, uninteresting fish, you'll simply love the local Wildsplashes. And there's always grog to be had. And fights. And (evidence of) mass murder.

As fabulously drab as the region is, certain things have retained the spark of life. Enduring despite the misery are, for instance, The Wilds' trading posts. **Three Paces East Seapost** and **The Wild Treasures Store** are as active as any others in the Sea of Thieves – proof, perhaps, that the human will to wheel and deal will not be dimmed. Then there are the outposts, fortified sites, shrines and islands big and small – the locals who keep these places vibrant, viable destinations truly are a credit to the human (and monster) spirit.

## Galleon's Grave Outpost

*How did that thing get there?* People may well have said the same about you over the years, but on this occasion they don't deserve a cutlass thrust for posing the question. For truly it is a marvel that a ruined galleon has found its way to the top of two precipitously tall rock formations. This bizarre, spectacular phenomenon is what makes **Galleon's Grave Outpost** the place it is.

But it's not the only unusual sight at Galleon's Grave Outpost. The place is also stuffed full of skeletons and even tusks, some of which have been put to architectural use, in an especially macabre turn of events.

You never need an excuse for a session at the tavern, but if you're feeling bashful, you might claim you're only at Galleon's Grave Outpost's boozier to view the huge skull above its entrance. The docks in the southeastern part of the island, meanwhile, are decorated with the aforementioned giant tusks, possibly once attached to an ancient sea creature. In cuter wildlife news, keep an eye out for the dog bowl near the island's peak, which is dedicated to Kato, the goodest of good boys. It might not have the tearjerking

### BARRELS OF FUN

When travelling around the Sea of Thieves, engaging with the existence of gunpowder barrels is a necessary evil. You can sell them, detonate them or simply admire the craftsmanship of the anonymous coopers who made them. You'll find them lying about the place – hazardingly enough – but they're also carried by skeletons. Now, you'd think skeletons would lack the muscular oomph to lug barrels around, but they manage it somehow. If you don't want to end up a skeleton yourself (and possibly one that's scattered over quite a large distance) then store your gunpowder barrels up in the crow's nest. What could possibly go wrong?

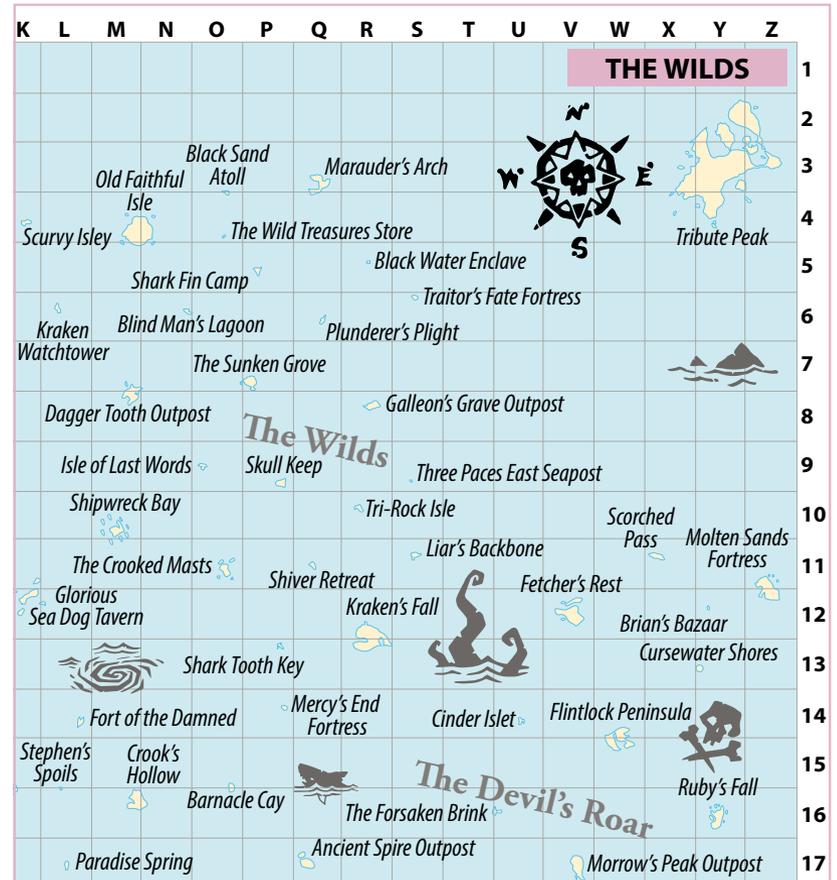
backstory of the bronze statue of Hachikō the dog at Tokyo's Shibuya station, but it's worth a look nonetheless.

Of course, the standout thing to do at Galleon's Grave Outpost is to sink a few grogs before going to check out the galleon up close. It's something of a tourist attraction in these parts, and someone has kindly left three stools in its vicinity, so you can rest your weary bones while contemplating the spectacle. Note that the approach is a little bit precarious – all planks and wooden bridges, albeit relatively well lit – but it's worth it. Once you've got up there, make your way along the ship's bowsprit for a giddy view of the island, the galleon's planks creaking all around you – not recommended after one grog too many.

A strange sort of graveyard, then – both of ship and beast. Try to make sure it doesn't end up being yours, too.

## Dagger Tooth Outpost

It doesn't have the same bells-and-whistles visual wow factor as its sister outpost, Galleon's Grave, but **Dagger Tooth Outpost** certainly enjoys a character all its own.



## NICK AND TUCK

Wheeler dealers duck and dive – the pirate equivalent *tucks*. If you want to get by in this world, you need to know how to get down and, *shhhhh*, stay down. Tucking comes in many forms – all of which involve keeping a low profile – and has an interesting origin story. It's thought that the original tuckers simply fell asleep (grog'll do that) or sat somewhere quietly for long enough that something massive dawned on them: staying quiet was like donning an invisibility cloak (pirates aren't known for their quietness, after all). This in turn opened up opportunities to plunder, pilfer or simply hitch a free ride under the nose of rival seadogs. These rudimentary tucking techniques have since evolved into something of a pirate art form, with certain travellers in the Sea of Thieves doing more tucking than not-tucking – and some even carrying specially adapted barrels to hide in. Tucking, then: it's not big, but it's quite clever – and can be very profitable.

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Don't be tempted to try and sail into the bay on the outpost's west flank – there's a shipwreck that way that will thwart your best efforts, and only two of Dagger Tooth's three docks are actually usable. If that's not enough to put you off, a splintered, angry-looking topography awaits once you make landfall. If the outpost's aesthetics put you on edge as you make your way about the place, that may not be such a bad thing – it pays to be on your guard round here.

Perhaps the clearest indicator of the outpost's history of violence is the startling wanted poster you'll encounter if (or rather – let's face it – when) you pop into the Drowned Rat tavern. What was the scoundrel's crime? An armed robbery? A crime of passion, perhaps? Oh no: Fizzy Foxy is wanted for the wholesale slaughter of 37 (that's thirty-seven) other souls.

Mass murder aside, Dagger Tooth Outpost is great for retail therapy. Shopaholic travellers will adore the outpost's range of independent boutiques offering everything from weapons and ship's parts to the choicest maritime fashions and kit.

## Kraken Watchtower

Imagine: you're sailing in The Wilds. You're already feeling a little nervous – this is The Wilds, after all – when, in the distance, a shape gradually starts to form on the horizon. You're getting closer. Closer. The magnitude of what you're looking at is beginning to dawn on you – and with it, a chill, then a shudder. For you've finally grasped what you're looking at: an enormous, grotesque skull. And it is leering at you with glowing eyes as it hovers horribly over the surface of the ocean.

But what's this? A few seconds later and the feeling is gone – what you see now is a rickety, jagged fortress. Then another. And they're part of a sprawling wooden defence system protecting a rocky, uninviting island surrounded by a wooden wall, from which project sharp spikes. That's the thing with these places – their bark is often worse than their bite, and Kraken Watchtower is a classic example. So don't let yourself be rattled or bewitched by Kraken Watchtower and its sister forts. Just keep your eyes peeled for the large torch lit with a flame – this can be seen from afar. As you draw nearer, you'll see skulls with flames burning inside them and bats circling the island.

Of course, Kraken Watchtower is not somewhere you want to crash into willy-nilly, but we really do encourage you to give the place a chance. Why on Earth is that? Many reasons. 'Why not?' is one. You're an adventurer: go adventure. But there's also great architectural appeal here. Just strolling around and looking at all the different details of the place is a pleasure. The watchtower itself is also a great place to watch the sun set, if you're feeling gooey (which many don't, in The Wilds). You might also take the opportunity for some cannon-firing practice – just remember to bring

some extra cannonballs. Not the most inviting of places, then, but not something to blubber about. In fact, we'd encourage you to embrace the vibe and visit at night for a thoroughly atmospheric, pleasingly Hallowe'en-ish experience. Can't get enough of this kind of excitement? Just head on over to **Skull Keep** and **Shark Fin Camp** for more in the same vein.

## Large islands of The Wilds

In keeping with some of The Wilds' other sites, the region's larger islands often feature quite spectacular topography, with improbable steeples of rock, hazardous ledges, moody caves and shipwrecks galore. **The Crooked Masts** is a typical example, while cannon-rich **Marauder's Arch** forges the spire for the impressive formation that gives the island its name.

## Kraken's Fall

The grotesque skeletons scattered across **Kraken's Fall** look for all the world like they could well belong to the legendary sea creature. How whatever beast they once held up did 'fall' is anyone's guess – but it's not impossible the critter lost its footing (tentacled?), for this is one seriously rugged, precipitous and downright twist-turny hunk of rock. You'll be glad, then, that the island does have a relative wealth of light sources. Best of all is the beacon that sits atop a cliff to the island's northeast. Glowing atmospherically, meanwhile – and not to be relied on for guiding your path, of course – are the island's four campfires. One of these cockle-warming spots is tended by a sticky-fingered but friendly local who goes by the name of Lootin' Penelope. Another of the campfires sits, less happily, next to a horrible skull.

## Shipwreck Bay

Is it foolhardy to willingly visit an island named **Shipwreck Bay**? Quite probably, given your means of transport. And most decidedly, when you consider that the island's resident skeletons will welcome any approaching ship with a barrage of cannon fire.

This large, rocky, palm-strewn island, surrounded by smaller rock formations, has brought many a fine vessel to her knees: there are shipwrecks littered all around and the skulls of sailors forming unnerving piles. The most intact of the shipwrecks is called *Blackwyche* (whose captain was the legendary Sir Arthur Pendragon, a portrait of whom hangs in the wreck's Captain's Quarters), while clambering up the largest wreck will afford fine views of your surroundings.

Look for loot and treasures among the shipwrecks and keep an eye out, too, for the gunpowder barrels – they might just come in handy (wink, wink). Grogsoaked Ed is not, unfortunately, the island's only local. As will often be the case as you make your way around the Sea of Thieves, you're highly likely to encounter skeletons here – and not just of the traditional, stationary kind. No, these skeletons will be fixing for a fight and you need to be ready to kill them... again.

## DON'T GO THERE

Mariners of yore feared that it was possible to sail off the edge of the world. How silly! Everyone knows that if you sail off the edge of the map, you enter the Devil's Shroud, a deadly fog that will annihilate your ship. Do not go there. A further complication is that the Shroud's precise geographical identity is beyond the wit of cartographers to chart – its borders ebb and shift – so it's best to steer well clear.

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### YOU'RE GONNA NEED A BIGGER TEACUP

Storms in the Sea of Thieves are not to be taken lightly. On their outer edges, they might appear relatively harmless – merely a patch of heavy rainfall; nothing to worry about. But the further you progress into a storm, buffeted by waves and battered by sleet, your ship filling with water at an alarming rate, your bell clanging frantically in the wind and your compass spinning wildly, you quickly realise you're in serious trouble. Keep a tight grip on your wheel and pray to the gods that you don't have any gunpowder on board – if lightning strikes and hits a barrel, it's Davy Jones' locker for you. The only upside of these terrible tempests is that they seem to attract a rare fish species – the Stormfish. If you can bag one (top tip: they're a sucker for leeches) while simultaneously keeping your ship intact, you'll have an impressive, if slippery, memento of your storm experience.

### Old Faithful Isle

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Sailors once believed that if you ventured too far you could sail off the end of the Earth to your doom. Certainly if you venture too far on sheer-faced **Old Faithful Isle**, you'll fall off it – whether that's to your doom, we recommend you don't find out. Definitely don't bother with your beach towel here.

### The Sunken Grove

Grim, rocky and inhospitable, **The Sunken Grove** is not somewhere you'll be wanting to send postcards home from. It's tricky to access from the water and its terrain does not exactly lend itself to butterfly-spotting nature rambles. In fact, its most prominent wildlife comes in the form of purple-venom-spitting snakes.

The terrain itself has something of the serpentine and the slippery about it, too, with cave systems crisscrossing its entirety. The 'Hangman's Tree' seals the rather unappetising deal. But it's not all bad here. There's an impressive stone arch that's fun to swim beneath; the cave is worth poking around in; gunpowder barrels are in abundance; there's a pretty grove with a waterfall; and the three small islands just offshore have 'treasure' written all over them.

## Small islands of The Wilds

With its ghoulish, grey-tinged palm trees, so unprepossessing is **Black Sand Atoll**, you can imagine the Addams Family going on holiday there one year. And perhaps to **Black Water Enclave** the next. With the occasional jaunt to **Scurvy Isley** to mix it up a bit. The puddle plop of a lagoon that gives **Blind Man's Lagoon** its name makes you wonder if the sailor who named it could indeed do with an eye test – or perhaps they simply need to see a bit more of the world. One traveller's mountain is another's molehill. As for the **Isle of Last Words**, well, you really wouldn't want this to be where you utter yours. What trouble could befall you at **Plunderer's Plight**, we can't imagine – unless it's chronic boredom, while **Shark Tooth Key** can't even be bothered to do what it says on the tin: it actually looks much more like an anchor than a shark's tooth. Unremarkable **Shiver Retreat** and **Tri-Rock Isle** complete the roll call. Except, that is, for the most interesting of The Wilds' smaller islands: **Liar's Backbone**. This otherwise nondescript little spot is where you can pay your respects at the remains of the Sea of Thieves legend Stitcher Jim's old hideout. Yes, that classic shanty 'Stitcher's Sorrow' *is* about him.







# The Devil's Roar

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# The Devil's Roar

In our forty years of publishing travel guides, we have (ironically) exercised extreme caution around the use of safety warnings. Our thinking goes that if you keep your wits about you and do some additional due diligence – by consulting locals and other travellers, for instance – you'll keep yourself in one piece and your belongings will live another day as your belongings. We don't want to weigh in with undue, overblown fearmongering.

But know this: **The Devil's Roar** is incredibly, ridiculously dangerous. And there you have the first Rough Guides advisory in our long history of travel positivity. We're not sure if that's a good or bad thing.

It's not just cannon fire you need to beware of in the southeastern The Devil's Roar region. The volcanoes in these parts will give you more than a shot across the bows: they'll burn you to a crisp given half the chance, while the waters themselves will boil a swimmer alive, and don't get us started on the deadly geysers (that's geysers as in skin-threshing steam, not geezers, though there are plenty of dangerous men around here, too). Even in a sturdy ship, these are truly deadly waters, with the islands hereabouts covered in partly incinerated plant life and strange crystalline growths. There are caves dotted around the area that offer a little protection, but with steam vents and falling rocks, nowhere is truly safe. In this strange, treacherous place, the world itself is your enemy. Battening down the hatches won't save you here. The region's one fortified development, **Molten Sands Fortress**, is said to be as unpredictable as The Devil's Roar as a whole, with some travellers reporting eerie happenings. There really is no let-up.

Indeed, sailing into this southeastern region of angry volcanoes and cowering islands is tantamount to downing a flagon of grog and wandering naked into a field of dancing firecrackers. But here's the thing: for some travellers, those *strange* crystalline growths are *strangely* beautiful. As are the pools of spluttering lava and belching, boiling geysers.

And testament to the capricious nature of taste, The Devil's Roar does, improbably, have a history of inhabitation. Its census records – if they've not gone up in flames – would surely feature one of the world's motlier casts of characters, but it goes to show that there's a life to be led in this lawless land. Rumour has it, too, that if you *can* eke out an existence, there's a good chance that you'll be richly rewarded for your efforts. With the region's reputation preceding it and so few daring to set sail in these waters or foot on their shores, there is some truly exquisite flotsam to be had.

On second thoughts, can we take back that advisory? Let's have it.

## WHO WOULD LIVE IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?

Making even the most isolated, misanthropic lighthouse keepers on the planet look like attention-seeking neeppants, we give you the good people of **Morrow's Peak Outpost**. They're a hardy, idiosyncratic bunch who've seen fit to undertake the thankless task of ensuring The Devil's Roar ticks over with the essentials day after hellish day. Built as it is around a shipwreck and regularly subject to the fiercest lashes of Mother Nature's tongue, the outpost's appearance certainly befits its environment. Why the population hasn't fled is a mystery, but they sure have some tales to tell. There's nowt so queer as folk, as they say. If you can't find what you're looking for at Morrow's Peak, it's worth looking in at **Brian's Bazaar** or **Roaring Traders**. Their stock is less reliable, but you may get lucky.

## YOU SAY VOLCANO, WE SAY... HELL NO

The godforsaken tectonic plate underpinning The Devil's Roar is blistered with volcanoes like an acne of terrible fire-belching pustules. But it's not just volcanoes you'll need to contend with in these parts. No, complementing these hell holes is a cast of seriously unfriendly and warlike – oh, and skeletal – local thugs. Enjoy!

## Major islands of The Devil's Roar

The bigger they are, the nicer they burn. The Devil's Roar's larger targets – er, islands – include oblong **Ashen Reaches**, which has its own in-house tormenter in the form of a volcano at its south end. Brave bookworms should sniff around the northernmost cliff for an unusual outdoor library. Tripartite **Flintlock Peninsula** features a fetching, claw-shaped formation as one of its stand-out characteristics – oh, and a volcano, but presumably you assumed that.

If you've chatted to Grace at **Morrow's Peak Outpost**, she'll no doubt have bent your ear about her old crewmate 'Fetcher' Farley – **Fetcher's Rest** is where he laid his bones. Head out to the western point of the island to pay your respects and gain some (Grace and) favour points. Otherwise, the island is made up of two chunks. The southernmost is the larger of the two and is home to its friendly local volcano. That the northern section of Fetcher's Rest is shaped like a tear is a strange form of pathetic fallacy.

Most iconic of all The Devil's Roar's larger islands, though, is undoubtedly **The Devil's Thirst**.

## The Devil's Thirst

Hell on earth. There are no two ways about it: **The Devil's Thirst** is a volcano-ravaged lava pit and you'd have to be mad to visit. What's that you say? Ah, then we'll continue. It's best to visit when the volcano is not active. If you want to watch the eruption, do it from a safe distance, the flying balls of fire producing a spectacular pyrotechnics display. While visiting in the day makes it easier to see where you're going, at night the perilous lava and burning plants are more obvious. Incredibly, there *is* a little vegetation on the island, mostly where rocks have protected patches of the ground from flying debris and lava. So what can you do for fun in these parts? Why,



### A VERITABLE FEAST OF EAST

Are you the kind of traveller who keeps a tally of how many countries and continents you've visited? Who squeezes that tally into your social media profiles? Do you enjoy flicking the stamp-thronged pages of your passport at the person sitting next to you on a flight in the hope of a half-hearted 'Wow'? Then **Glowstone Cay** is for you! This is the *easternmost* point of the Sea of Thieves – huge traveller kudos right there.

stand on the geysers of course! You'll fly through the air with the greatest of ease. Be sure to land in the water...

## Small islands of The Devil's Roar

An island's small size won't save it from a scorching – the volcanoes' output is so prolific and scattergun that there's more than enough hellfire and lava to go around. Smaller islands hereabouts include crescent-shaped **Brimstone Rock**, the tripartite **Cinder Islet**, (over)dramatically monikered **Roaring Sands** and the pathway-laced **Magma's Tide**. Then there's **Ruby's Fall**, shaped like a splatted stag beetle, the oblong **Scorched Pass** and the intimidatingly named trio of **Cursewater Shores**, **Flame's End** and **The Forsaken Brink**. The last of these is said to be the final resting place of local character Hepzibah Jones, who, some claim, was a core member of the esteemed party that first discovered The Devil's Roar – we can only imagine what a tizzy that must have created in the crow's nest.







# The Sunken Kingdom

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## 5 The Sunken Kingdom

The Sea of Thieves isn't just for sailing on, you know. There's a whole world of wonder down there under the ocean's dappled surface. This is the Sunken Kingdom, where sailors can swim like a (leaky-gilled) fish among shipwrecks and sea life.

### Shrines of The Shores of Plenty

The **Shrine of Ocean's Fortune** is a real holy of holies kind of place, to which generation after generation of travelling pilgrims have wended their worshipful way.

The architecture alone would make it an unmissable stop on any exploration of The Shores of Plenty. With its stunning integration of naturally growing coral, allied to a masterfully rendered spire, not to mention a gigantic ribcage innovatively repurposed as an entranceway, the Shrine of Ocean's Fortune is a world-class example of what's sometimes termed the 'Biophilic' school of design.

And you could leave it at that: the opportunity to admire one of the most magnificent structures you'll ever have the pleasure to encounter. Stroke your chin, nod appreciatively and be on your way. It's still bucket list stuff.

But the Shrine of Ocean's Fortune is so much more than just an architectural masterpiece. Its interior, a first-of-its-kind development that straddles the boundaries between labyrinth, obstacle course and old-school platform game – but in real life! – offers an experience like no other.

Astonishingly enough there's no entrance fee to pay for this new world wonder, but go in with your eyes open: the challenge within will take its toll on most. For starters, to make a go of things inside, you'll need more than the average levels of fitness, a keen focus and plenty of grit. Your biceps will bulge yanking on pulleys, your knees jar as you leap between platforms, your spirit wilt as the challenges mount. More than anything, your brain will ache as you endeavour to determine the route through this mazy puzzle of a place, strewn with cunningly arranged shipwreck salvage. But we can assure you of this: you'll come away absolutely buzzing.

As for the site's sacred status, why it's called a 'shrine', we have yet to ascertain. As with similar spots strewn around the Sea of Thieves, local rumours abound of supernatural forces. Clearly codswallop! Enjoy it for what it is – an enigmatic funhouse of unknown, probably philanthropic, origin.

The second of The Shores of Plenty's such sites, the **Shrine of the Coral Tomb**, is just as impressive, albeit with a simpler, more rugged aesthetic. Again, in spite of the 'shrine' tag, the focus here is more on amusement than veneration – and be assured that there is much amusement to be had.

If the Shrine of Ocean's Fortune played on an irresistibly tacky shipwreck conceit, here the thing would appear to be 'waterfalls as waterpark' – and, yes, it's as good as that sounds. You won't get out of here dry!

#### ASCEND THE (SKELETON) THRONE

It's not often you get to sit on a real-life throne – but the Sea of Thieves has a wealth of them practically begging you to perch atop. There's room for more than just a little one on the larger of the thrones, so why not pile on with your pals? What a photo opportunity! A word of caution: they're not the prettiest throne specimens in the world, but beggars can't be choosers.

#### BEAUTIES SPIT IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

Enough of the old warlike blokes on horses, what the world needs is more mermaid statues. The Sea of Thieves is a shining example in this regard, though it'd be nice if some of the statues weren't so darned spiky. There's no two ways about it: the Cursed Mermaid Statues you'll encounter in the Sea of Thieves (specifically in the waters around islands) are to be regarded as deadly hazards. As you approach, they do at least let you know what they're about by emitting a cry of ever-increasing shrillness. This is a warning, duh. Should you be of an iconoclastic bent and decide to get your own back on these inanimate objects with a display of brute piratical force, you may, we hesitate to admit, be rewarded for your dubious efforts.

The same attention to detail has been brought to bear at this shrine as at its cousin – check out that array of ancient ornamentation and statuary! – but whoever is behind this superb attraction has not allowed the design to distract from the sheer unbridled fun of breathless exploration. Quite simply, the **Shrine of the Coral Tomb** offers one of the most rewarding travel experiences you'll ever have.

### Shrines of The Ancient Isles

The Ancient Isles region boasts two superb shrines – and of such venerable age that they alone could put the 'ancient' into The Ancient Isles. What's more, there are few places in the world where a traveller can interact so intimately with precious sites of such awe-inspiring antiquity. Imagine having VIP access to the Great Pyramid's passageways and chambers – and being encouraged to interact with its intricate mechanics. A visit to either of the **Shrine of Ancient Tears** and the **Shrine of Tribute** is truly an experience of immersive travel par excellence.

Even more amazing is that when we say 'immersive', we mean it in both senses of the word – not only will you be fully hands-on when visiting these remarkable sites, you'll also be *underwater*. Whichever ancient people created the masterful aquatic-biophilic engineering of these shrines, their expertise is far beyond the ken of anyone living on the planet today.

Indeed, determining the provenance of the shrines has proven beyond the academics who have studied them. The prevalent school of thought today proposes that the shrines were originally on land – and, indeed, statues do litter the sites, some depicting human figures, others with marked similarities to the sirens of Greek mythology. But this corner of the planet is decidedly not Greece, so the resemblance baffles – could ancient Greek sailors have brought their legend to these faraway waters?

On the subject of Greece – it's true that a traveller to that country and its panoply of storied islands can walk on the very soil that gave rise to some of the world's best-known myths. You can visit Delos, birthplace of Apollo himself, or climb Mount Olympus, home of the gods – and to do so can certainly fire the imagination. In the case of the **Shrine of Ancient Tears** and the **Shrine of Tribute**, though, you have the opportunity to actually enter the cradle of myth and *live within it* for a short while, embroidering an already rich heroic tapestry with your own exploits.

### Shrines of The Wilds

In the underwater, coral-encrusted **Shrine of Hungering** and **Shrine of Flooded Embrace**, The Wilds has two of the most remarkable destinations in all the Sea of Thieves. Remarkable – and remarkably dangerous. You'll need strong lungs and quite possibly strong skin, for there are sharks aplenty who regard these shrine sites as their habitat.

### SHIPWRECKS: RUBBERNECK OR RAID?

In the Sea of Thieves, shipwrecks are, sadly, plentiful. But they serve as much more than a mere memento mori to hubristic pirates – they are a superb source of loot, from actual treasure to resource-stuffed barrels, plus a particular fish that, morbidly enough, takes wrecks as its habitat. The name of this ghoulish species? You'll be amazed to hear that it is known as the 'Wrecker' fish. Something to bear in mind is that certain shipwrecks peek out above the water's surface, but some don't. You can always bank on large flocks of gulls circling above a wreck site, though, whether or not it is underwater. A word of warning: sharks are also known to frequent wrecks, while it is said locally that the sites are coveted by sirens, who used wreck debris to build and ornament their shrines.

The two shrines have a spire-like exterior in common – but that's where the aesthetic similarities end. Aptly enough, you'll enter the Shrine of Hungering first through the gaping skeletal maw of an ancient Megalodon and then via the XXL rib cage of some other long-dead sea monster. You'll need to keep your wits about you to avoid seeing the insides of another oceanic nasty in the cave that follows, for this is where the shrine's family of sharks will first make their presence felt. It's also where the fun starts. Let the games commence!

There are similar wild shenanigans to look forward to at the Shrine of Flooded Embrace – just with added sirens and less dentistry at the entrance. Instead, you'll enter this truly wondrous place via a far more conventional route: by stealing your way through the Captain's Cabin of the shipwrecked galleon that is such a memorable feature of this site. Make for the rear window of the cabin to gain access.

While there's no shark cage – or indeed any personal protective equipment at all – that you can call on when visiting the two shrines, there is, perhaps improbably, a cloakroom-cum-safe service on offer in both – you are invited to store your valuables in the lock-ups charmingly designed as mermaid statues.

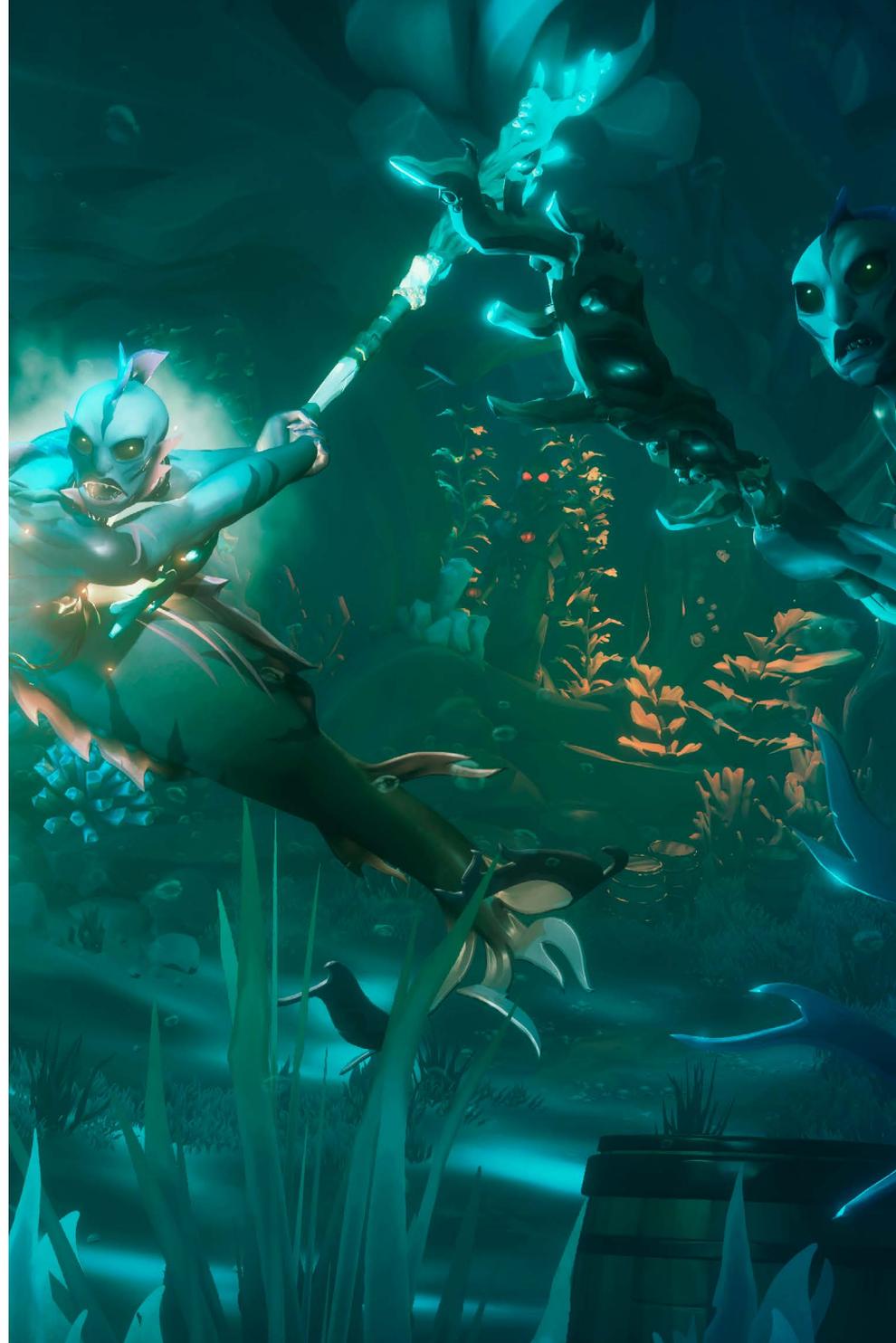
## Siren Treasuries of the Sea of Thieves

Running from tranquil through capricious to downright tempestuous – with plenty of weird goings-on in between – the waters of the Sea of Thieves could hardly have a more variable character. One of the strangest phenomena you'll experience when steering your merry Sea of Thieves way is at Siren Treasuries like The Wilds' **Treasury of the Secret Wilds**, The Shores of Plenty's **Treasury of Sunken Shores** and the **Treasury of the Lost Ancients** in The Ancient Isles.

The most astonishing thing happens when you leave your vessel and enter treasury waters – something that makes floating in the Dead Sea seem utterly pedestrian. Get this: in the seemingly enchanted environment in which you now find yourself, you'll be able to *swim underwater as if you have gills* (leaky gills, mind, since you won't last forever, but gills nonetheless). It's an experience you're never going to forget.

When you start seeing stars, pop your head into a passing air bubble – it's the coral you have to thank for those – and take a good long gulp of oxygen like it's your first grog of the morning. That said, don't visit a treasury expecting some airy-fairy therapeutic experience, where you'll explore your aquatic side, flouncing around like a mermaid admiring her moves in her mermirror – you'll be sorely disabused of any such notion.

It's worth bearing in mind that the treasuries do not exactly advertise their presence. Keep your eyes peeled for a certain bewitching purple glow above the sea's surface – then dive right in.







# The Sea of the Damned

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# The Sea of the Damned

One person's damned is another's damned good – and we rather like the ethereal atmosphere of this region. The Sea of the Damned is just spooky enough to keep you on your toes, but it's not so terrifying that your flight instinct will propel you right out of there like a human cannonball.

Of course, it's not the most straightforward swathe of ocean to get to, while the local transport is idiosyncratic, to say the least – eerie tunnels and a so-called Ferry of the Damned, anyone? – but you're guaranteed a memorable time of it here if you do make the effort to visit.

Something else that's firmly in this region's favour is its populace. When travelling in far-flung, unfamiliar territory, it's a priceless gift when the people you encounter are straightforward and transparent – so it's a pleasure to report that you can invariably see right through the guileless locals who take the Sea of the Damned as their haunt.

## Sailor's Grave

The bad news: **Sailor's Grave** appears, irrefutably, to be a ghost town. And not in the sense that it's full of pale, ghoulish locals tramping mournfully along beleaguered streets. No, we mean an *actual* ghost town, whose locals are indeed pale and *do* tramp mournfully hither and thither but are – key distinction – literal ghouls.

The good news: a volunteer guide is on hand to show visitors around! And boy does Sailor's Grave offer plenty to see – albeit largely in greyscale – and countless fun things to do.

It's never a bad idea, upon arriving in a new destination, to head on up to the highest spot around, be it a skyscraper viewing deck, a breezy little hill or – as is the case at Sailor's Grave – a **lighthouse**. Now, this isn't your cute, candy-striped variety. Sailor's Grave's lighthouse leans like Pisa's famous tower, while its spiral staircase is rickety at best and derelict at worst. Other than the views of the town that the lighthouse affords, the really exciting thing is that you can get hands-on and actually light its beacon, before aiming it at different spots on the ground, sometimes even setting them alight. The power! Try the particularly challenging feat of aiming the beam right through the rigging of a wrecked galleon to light a brazier on the vessel's far side. (You may need to make some adjustments on the wreck to achieve the trick.)

Another must at Sailor's Grave is **The Last Stand Tavern**, a sympathetic conversion of a wrecked galleon that hosts legendary sea shanty sessions. Don't come expecting choir of angels stuff – ragtag band of the undead is more the vibe – but these very special musical events engender a heartwarming sense of camaraderie among pirates of all singing ability and aliveness levels. A little tip: lowering the tavern's chandelier has been

### WHY CAN'T WE HAVE NICE THINGS?

You'd think that coming across a handsome, oaken, brass-clasped, antique-looking chest is an absolute jackpot moment. Not necessarily. In the Sea of Thieves, a lot of chests do contain riches, but some do very strange things instead, and it's important that you can identify these tricky ones. Featuring an angry-looking, orange-and-black face, the Chest of Rage is a ticking bomb. Some locals will pay good money for these chests, though, so – if you can keep it from exploding – it might be worth the trouble of taking on board. The Chest of a Thousand Grogs, meanwhile, is like the pirate version of the magic porridge pot – it'll make you drunk when you have it in your hands and it can be used to refill your own booze supply. Look for the face of a golden-bearded man on its lid. You can easily identify a Chest of Sorrow, finally, because the blooming thing hardly stops crying – and the sheer volume of its tears has been known to sink a ship.

known to produce unexpected results. And if you're still good and thirsty after a stint at The Last Stand Tavern, be reassured that the Sea of the Damned has the makings of a mini pub crawl: next stop, the flag-adorned Tavern of the Damned, whose landlord is a fine fellow named Teddy. It's an unusual sort of boozer, with a ghostly clientele, an upturned capstan for a chandelier and an interior waterwheel.

A word on that volunteer guide. He has proven himself time and again to be a good egg, but know that he's a little lonely and may invite you back to his home, *The Golden Hare*, a fine, red-sailed vessel. It's an unusual arrangement to be sure, but you'll be perfectly safe.

Other worthwhile stops at Sailor's Grave include the curious sight of a wreck that has been converted into nothing other than a skeleton's bedroom, and a gambling den in which two bags o' bones are locked in an eternal game of chess.

## Tunnels of the Damned

The enigmatic **Tunnels of the Damned** can only be reached by sailing through mysterious archways out at sea. You'll be surrounded by strange voices, eerie lights and mysterious silhouettes while you're in the tunnels – not so different from a party hostel then, really.

### FERRY OF THE DAMNED

If you wind up on the strange **Ferry of the Damned**, then it's fair to say things might not have gone quite as you planned. It's an unusual ferry for unusual circumstances. Don't arrive expecting a dirty white hulking thing with weak tea served in plastic cups, running to a regular timetable. With its splintered masts and beyond-repair sails, the Ferry of the Damned is more akin to a wrecked galleon, while its candle-lighting, below-decks sarcophagi and enigmatic 'Well of Fates' make voyages an otherworldly blast. The vessel's captain, the Ferryman, is as peculiar as his vessel. Don't expect scintillating conversation from him.







THE KRAKEN

## Contexts

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## History

Few regions of the world have such a sense of history unfolding as the Sea of Thieves. From the earliest days of the Pirate Lord and his crew to mermaids, Krakens and Megalodons, story and legend abound in these waters.

Before your trip, it's definitely worth familiarising yourself with some of the lore around the first inhabitants of the Sea of Thieves, the Ancients, who left behind not just enigmatic cave paintings but traps that nobody has seen fit to disable – perhaps out of reverence, or perhaps because the skills required to do so are lost in the mists of time – and items of cursed treasure that only a fool would lay hands on. But aren't we all fools?

A wonderful, timeworn Sea of Thieves tradition that persists to this day is that of the 'Tall Tale', a sort of large-scale treasure hunt quest that'll see you solving old riddles and learning about Sea of Thieves greats of the past. With these epic Tall Tales, you have the opportunity to become a part of Sea of Thieves history, legend and lore the moment you set sail. Only you can decide if it will be a bit part or a starring role.

## Music

There's nothing like a good old **sea shanty session** with your hearties, is there? Of course, if your hearties have drunk too much grog, it really will be nothing like a good old sea shanty session. But either way there are plenty of opportunities to join in and play sweet music together.

One of the most popular instruments on the high seas is the **concertina** – you'll already have one of these among your equipment, no doubt, but fancier ones can be bought from any shop.

No high-seas sailor worth their salt goes anywhere without a **hurdy-gurdy**. As with the concertina, you can upgrade your tatty specimen in local shops. While all the **drums** you'll encounter have a similar sound, not all are created equal in terms of looks. Indeed, the drum you choose to play is something of a statement of individuality in these parts. Your drum is thought to say something about your character and standing. So will you be making a racket with a 'Rogue Sea Dog' drum, setting the rhythm with a 'Ceremonial Admiral' or battering out beats with a 'Bone Crusher'?

## Books

It is perhaps not such a surprise in this region of fluid ethical standards, but the Sea of Thieves has a peculiar literary tradition that many visitors judge to be of dubious moral merit: the reading of others' **journals**. It's not clear whether or not the many diaries doing the rounds in the Sea of Thieves were intended for others' eyes, but the reading of them is a central part of local culture. You may feel uncomfortable joining in but, as with embracing the ritual of the barter in Moroccan souks, to shrink from doing so risks looking foolish. And they're really rather good, we have to say, affording priceless insights into the history and lore of this miraculous part of the world.

## Wildlife

Let's start with the cute stuff. Many a travel provider would have you stow your beloved **pet** out of sight and out of mind in the hold of an aircraft or, at best, in the cramped confines of a cage. Not so on this voyage, for here your darling can roam free! Whether you're bringing along a **dog** or **cat**, or even a pirate-appropriate **monkey** or **parrot**,

they'll have the run of your vessel. This being the 21st century, you can naturally purchase all manner of fetching outfits for your pet – and are encouraged to do so.

Also making themselves very much at home on your ship will be humankind's old friend *Rattus rattus*. But don't go squealing at the thought, for in the Sea of Thieves, the **rat** is a very useful companion, indicating by the franticness of its behaviour how badly your ship is taking on water.

There's a lot of swine around in the Sea of Thieves. And some are of the animal variety. You'll encounter four breeds of **pig** which, once captured, can be sold for gold. They're found on islands and have to be captured in pig crates, which you can get from the Merchant Alliance or sometimes find washed up on islands. Note that it's very important to keep your pigs well fed – they'll certainly let you know about it if they're not.

**Chickens** also come in four varieties, as do **snakes**, both of which can be sold for gold. Snakes – surprise, surprise – are invariably hostile and can hiss and spit venom. Not so different from many of the humans you'll encounter, then. It's worth polishing your snake-charming skills ahead of the trip.

The **Kraken** is a large, tentacled sea creature that can randomly appear and attack innocent ships. But what are you worrying about? Before it appears, the Kraken conveniently announces your impending doom with a deep noise that can be heard both above and below water. Should your ears prick up to this, get your cannons charged and give the blighter a peppering of lead. If you miss, you can expect a broadside slap or suffocating squeeze from one of the Kraken's mighty tentacles. And watch out for squirting ink should you manage to make an incision in the beast's flesh – it's hard to aim with Kraken ink in your eyes. Smart pirates might consider simply running away from Krakens – easy enough, if you have sufficient planks to patch up your tentacle-damaged ship.

**Sharks** are commonly found in open water. The good news is that they're fairly easy to kill; the bad news is that they'd say the same about you. An entirely different kettle of piranhas is the **Megalodon** – a type of shark that even sharks are scared of. Happily, there are five types of Megalodon, of which the rarest is the Shrouded Ghost. Collect 'em all.

## Language

You'd certainly best *watch* your language, lest someone take umbrage. It happens ever so easily in the Sea of Thieves. People are terribly quick to anger in these parts.

In terms of languages spoken, **English** – invariably garbled and grog-soaked, though sometimes quite poetically delivered – is the Sea of Thieves lingua franca. The pirate lingo spoken by crews in the Sea of Thieves is sometimes highly personalised. With each crew spending a long time in each other's company – with very little outside influence – their language begins to reflect this closed environment. The ship becomes

an echo chamber. It's actually one of the pleasures of the Sea of Thieves – to play with language in this way with your crewmates and hear how other crews do the same.

Body language speaks volumes in the Sea of Thieves. You thought there was just one way to wave or fold your arms? Not so. And subtle differences can have big consequences, so get a grip on your gesticulations or you'll be all at sea.

Dedicated linguists will be intrigued by the appearance in the Sea of Thieves of intriguing glyphs known locally as '**Skeleton Runes**', perhaps owing to their white, bone-like appearance. The runes crop up right across the Sea of Thieves, frequently on tablets, and it is said that familiarity with their meaning lends the experience of sailing in these parts an extra dimension. Note, though, that Skeleton Runes are unlikely to facilitate lighthearted, flirtatious chat with locals, for their vocabulary is decidedly narrow. That said, we shouldn't jump to conclusions. Knowing the Sea of Thieves, it's not impossible that words like 'Kraken', 'Death' and 'Ashen' – some of the known rune translations – are central elements in the love language of certain eccentric locals.

### RIP GPS: TIME FOR SOME GOOD OLD 'X MARKS THE SPOT'

When you get your hands on some lovely treasure, it's a good idea to stash at least some of it somewhere secret – you don't want your ship getting a reputation as a mobile sweetie shop for any passing pirate to gorge on. Since you're embracing the local culture and acting pirate while travelling around the Sea of Thieves, stashing treasure naturally means burying it. The problem with burying your loot, of course, is that you might forget *where* you buried it. No matter how many grogs you've had, the trick is to always, *always* make yourself a little 'X marks the spot' map once you've deposited your goodies. You'll kick yourself if you can't find them later.

# Small print and index

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## Rough Guide credits

**Editor:** Matthew Pearson  
**Senior editor:** Rachel Lawrence  
**Cartography:** Katie Bennett  
**Picture editor:** Tom Smyth

**Layout:** Pradeep Thapliyal  
**Head of DTP and Pre-Press:** Rebeka Davies  
**Head of Publishing:** Sarah Clark

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## A ROUGH GUIDE TO ROUGH GUIDES

Published in 1982, the first Rough Guide – to Greece – was a student scheme that became a publishing phenomenon. Mark Ellingham, a recent graduate in English from Bristol University, had been travelling in Greece the previous summer and couldn't find the right guidebook. With a small group of friends he wrote his own guide, combining a contemporary, journalistic style with a thoroughly practical approach to travellers' needs.

The immediate success of the book spawned a series that rapidly covered dozens of destinations. And, in addition to impecunious backpackers, Rough Guides soon acquired a much broader readership that relished the guides' wit and inquisitiveness as much as their enthusiastic, critical approach and value-for-money ethos. These days, Rough Guides include recommendations from budget to luxury and cover more than 120 destinations around the globe, from Amsterdam to Zanzibar, all regularly updated by our team of roaming writers.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Neil McQuillan** has authored, updated and edited a variety of Rough Guides titles since 2008. He'd like to thank Rachel Lawrence, Agnieszka Mizak and Chris Allcock for making this project such a pleasure to work on.

**WITH ITS ANCIENT MONUMENTS**, enigmatic shrines, furious volcanoes and formidable monsters, the Sea of Thieves is a destination like no other. This comprehensive guide to Rare's shared-world pirate game covers everything from where to find the greasiest grog and the lowdown on trading companies to the rich panoply of characters you will encounter – with Rough Guides' signature "tell it like it is" style. Let us be your guide on a once-in-a-lifetime journey.

