

THE STOLEN LANDS

Places of Interest: The Greenbelt

Candlemere: Leaves from the Narlmarches collect year round within the clear depths of the Candlemere. In spring and summer, the lake reflects the colors trapped below in vibrant greens and rainbow bursts of flowering hues. By autumn, fiery reds, oranges, and yellows blaze through the water. In winter, the oft-frozen surface hides depthless blacks that make the lake appear as unfathomable as the night sky. Legends say that drinking from the Candlemere can, depending on the season, grant long life, cut a life short, intoxicate, or invigorate. In the middle of the lake lies a hilly island covered in mysterious willows, surrounding the ruins of an ancient, crumbling tower. Eerie witchlights glow above the tower on summer nights, and will-o'-wisps congregate here throughout the fall, perhaps holding eerie councils or plotting whatever motivates their inscrutable deeds.

The Kamelands: Rolling hills of brown and yellow grass sprawl across the eastern Stolen Lands, the patchy, sandcolored waves and dusky tarns broken by countless rocky mounds called kames. With grasses ranging in height from mere inches to lashing blades over 4 feet tall, and uneven rises rife with hidden rocks, the hill country poses a daunting barrier to travel and settlement, accounting for much of the region's continued wildness. Amid the hills and grass loom the mysterious kames. While most of these mounds of ancient stone and debris stand quiet and purposeless, in many corners of the region they display strange patterns, with mounds suggestive of waymarkers, ancient barrows, or even long-crumbled walls or foundations. Aside from a few small herds of wild horses and goats, few large animals inhabit the Kamelands, with wolves, foxes, hares, and multitudes of rodents and snakes being the primary occupants. Frequently, wyverns from the western tors wing over the region, seeking easy prey from above, while bears, boars, owlbears, and other savage creatures from the eastern forests regularly range into the hills. While the horses of the region are reputed for their vigor and surefootedness, those from the southern River Kingdoms who attempt to capture such mounts often run afoul of the trolls of the southern Narlmarches, making such attempts too dangerous to regularly risk.

The Narlmarches: Splitting the Stolen Lands in half, the Narlmarches—or Narlmarch Woods, as they are sometimes known—sprawl across the region's lowlands, hiding deep ravines, craggy hills, and languid streams beneath its boughs of oak, beech, and rushleaf. Within range proud herds of elk, rivercats (a mossy-furred breed of bobcat), black bears, boars, brush thylacines, and numerous breeds of especially large rodents (also sometimes referred to with a wink as Rodents Of Unusual Size). More unusual creatures also inhabit the forest, including giant owls, will-o'-wisps, various aggressive plant creatures, and a healthy owlbear population. Several small troll gangs also occupy the forest's southern reaches near the Candlemere, their seclusion affording them a simple life as hunters and scavengers, though, like most of their kind, they take eager sport in ambushing weaker humanoids. The ruins of numerous forgotten bandit hideaways also mold within the Narlmarches, leading to countless tales of lost riches and trap-laden tombs of fantastic treasures.

The Tuskwater: Cliffs and steep hills hide this brown, rocky lake from almost every direction, though following any river through the Kamelands or Narlmarches inevitably leads to its waters. Sounders of boars frequently visit its shores and favor the thick briars and berry tangles between its western shore and the forest, these beasts granting the great arching body its name. Swelling with the spring thaw, the Tuskwater floods seasonally, spilling into swampy ravines all along its length but mainly to the west. This creates muddy gullies and pits of standing water where fierce swarms of mosquitoes, stirges, fat snakes, and assassin vines prey upon whatever falls into the quicksandlike muck. At more significant depths, the Tuskwater proves bountiful, with pike, longnose gar, bluegill, and—more dangerously—fanged eels. While fanged eels are well known for their slippery skins and vicious, painful bites, elder eels in the lake are known to grow up to 8 feet long and can ably reverse the stakes on any fisherman who tries to make a meal of them. Nevertheless, Tuskwater fanged eels are a delicacy on the tables of New Stetven in Brevoy to the north, making the reward well worth the danger.