



YANMASS

“They call it the mercantile heart of Taldor, or the last point to step off into the east, or the northernmost bastion of civilization. Hogwash. I was glad to leave the gold-painted buildings and squalling markets of Yanmass behind. It seems like a fine place, decently civilized and so forth, but there’s a nastiness just under the surface. Everybody in Yanmass hates everybody else, but no one has the guts to act on it. The Taldan merchants hate the visiting Qadiran caravan masters, who hate the city’s tax collectors, who hate the extraordinary number of halflings underfoot. But because everyone’s prosperity relies on getting along—visitors with locals, servants with their betters, bureaucrats with everyone—there are more fake smiles than anywhere else in the empire.”

—Earl Valiento Hammdel

Yanmass is the northernmost sizable settlement in Taldor, situated on a pair of low hills alongside the wide Verduran Fork. The only city of significant size in Avin Prefecture, Yanmass is the center of trade coming west from the Padishah Empire of Kelesh north of the World's Edge Mountains. Constantly filled with merchants arriving from across the Whistling Plains with wares from distant markets and caravans loaded with Taldan goods for shipment east, Yanmass is always bustling and lively. The long-established nobility of Yanmass keeps the peace with its own city guard and the elite cavalry known as the Taldan Horse, both funded from taxes levied on trade.

Visitors to Yanmass first notice the sea of tents surrounding the city's weathered stone walls. In pleasant summer months, this tent town sprawls larger than the city within the walls. At the center of the city rise two low hills. The smaller hill has steeper sides and supports the bureaucratic center of Yanmass, including the manor of elderly Baron Mauston Kustios and the city's gilded Commerce Hall. The larger hill is covered with ancient trees surrounded by well-tended grounds — this is Hedge Hill, a well-known park. The roofs of a variety of opulent inns, ornate homes, and sturdy warehouses rise above the city walls, reminding visitors that civilization and hospitality are available even in this distant outpost — but for a price.

HISTORY

Before the arrival of humans to the area, the plains that would eventually see Yanmass built were covered with dense, primeval forests. The first humans in the area found the nearby Verduran Fork and Fog Creek to be deep and navigable, ideal for floating lumber downstream to larger cities on the coast. With halfling assistance — sometimes conscripted — loggers and trappers settled in the area, founding a small town with the halfling name of “Yanmass” near two hills. Soon, however, the forests dwindled. Gradual climate change did the rest of the work, transforming the forest into a sprawling, grassy plain as the Verduran Forest retreated to the west. The plains made excellent ranch lands, so the humans and halflings of the area shifted, over generations, from loggers to ranchers.

Yanmass continued to prosper, bringing trade up the Verduran Fork and then to the canal dug from the river to the town. Smaller communities dotted the landscape around the city, and imperial engineers built roads and canals connecting the settlements. Although many of those settlements have since been abandoned — destroyed in the wildfires that occasionally sweep the plains or attacked in inter-empire confrontations — Yanmass remained tall and proud upon its hills, protected by thick walls. When the surrounding lands were incorporated into the Taldan empire as the

YANMASS, CITY OF COMMERCE

LN small city

Corruption +2; Crime -1; Economy +4; Law +4; Lore +3; Society -2

Qualities prosperous, rumormongering citizens, strategic location, trade over politics

Danger +5

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government overlord (hereditary baron)

Population 6,995 (6,050 humans, 790 halflings, 85 half-elves, 70 other)

NOTABLE NPCs

Baron Mauston Kustios (LN male old human aristocrat 13)

Chief Enumerator Abrun Palliettor (LN male human cleric of Abadar 9)

Lady Amber Gewbell (NG female half-elf aristocrat 6)

Lady Carmellio Rauls (LE female human aristocrat 6/rogue 2)

Lord Rudig Autun (LN male human aristocrat 9)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 5,720 gp; **Purchase Limit** 37,500 gp;

Spellcasting 6th

Minor Items 4d4; **Medium Items** 3d4; **Major Items** 1d6

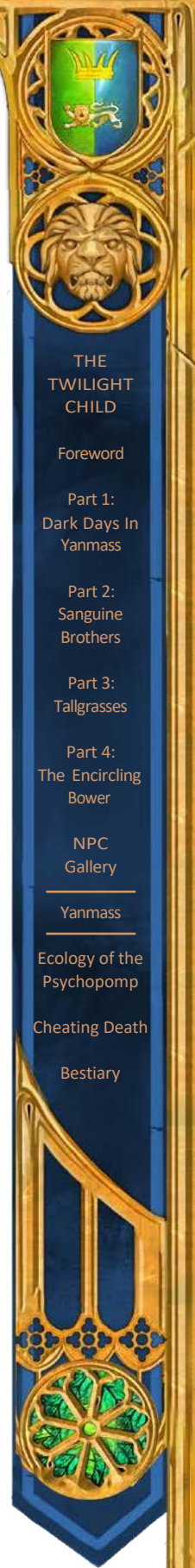
SETTLEMENT QUALITIES

Trade Over Politics Yanmass's government and citizens usually remain politically neutral to avoid disrupting the city's vibrant economy. (*Corruption -1, Economy +1*)

prefecture of Avin, Yanmass was the best locale for the prefecture's administrative heart.

When Keleshite traders realized the scope of the markets to the west, they sought the best passages over and around the World's Edge Mountains. The vast Whistling Plains to the east of Yanmass are mostly level, but they are rarely safe; the plain is home to bulettes, worgs, and stranger monsters lurking in the tall grass. Still, brave scouts established the safest paths through the grassland, enabling trade across the Whistling Plains to Yanmass. Today, bandits pose as much a problem to travelers as beasts. Maps of the Whistling Plains showing secret paths, sheltered watering holes, and abandoned but safe shelters circulate in Yanmass. Although most of these are either minor variations on known routes or outright fabrications, they feed the hopes of finding a genuine map that leads across the plains safely and swiftly.

Although hostilities between Taldor and the satrapies of the Padishah Empire of Kelesh flare up from time to time, Yanmass has never closed its gates to merchants; trade to and from the east is too vital to the city's survival to ever have its markets close. The various barons and baronesses who have ruled



YANMASS

- 1. YAN MANOR
- 2. COMMERCE HALL
- 3. AUTUN'S IMPORTS
- 4. GILDED BALDACHIN
- 5. TEMPLE OF ABADAR
- 6. WENDER MANOR
- 7. CLOVER REST
- 8. FIREWATCH HEADQUARTERS
- 9. THE WASH
- 10. HEDGE HILL
- 11. WEALWIND PAVILION
- 12. GRAVA'S ENTERTAINMENTS
- 13. WHISTLING WYVERN
- 14. AZIZA'S HOUSE



Avin Prefecture over the past several generations have held differing opinions on open trade, but no leader has dared to oppose the merchant lords in the city. Over time, these merchant lords have assumed a stronger role in civil administration, writing the very laws applicable to themselves and to their competitors. Operating out of the ornate Commerce Hall, Yanmass's Mercantile Council has risen from a group of like-minded wealthy traders to the city's most influential arm of government.

YANMASS AT A GLANCE

The people of Yanmass are proud and hardworking. Although opinions about the distant Taldan government in Oppara vary among Yanmass's residents, most citizens display a strong civic pride in their wealthy city on the distant frontier. The town's long history also contributes to this sense of community pride. Many Yanmass residents occupy homes built by distant ancestors and work in business carefully tended and expanded over generations. Although Taldane is the official language of the city and by far the most commonly used, many residents also speak a smattering of Kelish—particularly those who deal with traders from across the plains to the east, such as innkeepers, merchants, and stable hands.

Yanmass's inhabitants are inveterate deal makers, and the Kelishite custom of haggling has influenced nearly all walks of life in Yanmass. Haggling over prices for meals or lodging is common, even between native Taldans, and large crowds gather when talented negotiators compete. This tendency to haggle doesn't extend to the city's bureaucracy, however, which rigorously enforces taxes to support the city's government and defense. In Yanmass, the phrase "bargain like a tax collector" means to refuse to negotiate or to otherwise be inflexible on a topic.

Buildings in Yanmass are predominantly stone, obtained from quarries in the World's Edge Mountains to the south. Upper stories and roofs are made of wood. Because forests have retreated over past generations and the city prohibits cutting in Hedge Hill at the city's center, wood has become increasingly expensive. As a result, residents and businesses are much more likely to renovate existing buildings rather than fund new construction. Outside the city walls, tents and thatch dwellings predominate. Usually these are temporary residences used by traders, although many are well constructed and festooned with so many pillows and tapestries that they are more luxurious than the most solid buildings within Yanmass's walls.

Two different forces keep the peace in and around Yanmass. The Firewatch is personally funded by the baron of Avin and reports to his household. Although originally established to combat fires in the city and on the nearby plains, the Firewatch also serves as the

police force in the city. Members of the Firewatch are distinctive in their red uniforms. The Taldan Horse is the elite cavalry arm of the Taldan military. Headquartered outside of Yanmass in various fast-response stations, the Taldan Horse primarily patrols the roads and plains around the city. Although the Taldan Horse has just as much jurisdiction within the city as outside it, members generally enter the city on official business only when requested by the baron or the Firewatch.

YANMASS GAZETTEER

Yanmass stands approximately 12 miles from the banks of the wide river called Brokenbridge and is protected by an ancient, crumbling stone wall known as the Avin Wall. A broad canal brings water to the city and connects with the river, enabling flat-bottomed barges to bring goods to and from the city. The plain outside the Avin Wall is almost always covered with tents and makeshift shops of visiting traders, particularly near the wall's three large gates. The hilly land within the Avin Wall is considered Yanmass proper and is divided into several districts. Hedge Hill, the forested eastern hill, is ringed with parks and amphitheaters. Backhill is a sleepy middle-class residential district east of Hedge Hill but within the city walls. Yanmass's other hill has no formal name, but residents often call it Gentry Hill because it is surrounded by upscale businesses and topped with the baronial manor and Commerce Hall. In Churchside, the area between the two hills and north of the temple of Abadar, several venerable establishments stand in outdated majesty. The neighborhood along the canal is known as Coinside; whereas many cities' dockside districts are low rent, Coinside is fairly pleasant, and trading houses headquartered here keep violent crime low. East of Coinside is a stagnant inlet called the Wash, surrounded by the Washfield neighborhood where the city's lower class lives. The newest district of Yanmass—relatively speaking, as many of the buildings there are at least a century old—is the large southern neighborhood of Bountiful. Lively and boisterous, Bountiful contains several inns and markets as well as less savory businesses such as tanneries and breweries.

The following section presents information on key locations found throughout Yanmass, although many other sites of interest exist in the city.

1. Yan Manor: The seat of the barony of Yanmass is an elegant manor built several centuries ago and tastefully maintained by generations of barons and baronesses. Baron Mauston Kustios is rarely seen in public, preferring the private life his manor affords him. Yan Manor shares the top of Yanmass's lower hill with Commerce Hall and is the more dignified, if smaller, of the two buildings. The wide lawn around Yan Manor

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is well tended but, by tradition, includes only flowers and grasses transplanted from the Whistling Plains so that the baron lives amid a reminder of the land he oversees.



2. Commerce Hall: Resembling an opulent manor house rather than a city-administration building, Commerce Hall has elaborate stained-glass windows, enormous chandeliers, and gold accoutrements throughout. Yanmass's Mercantile Council conducts its business in Commerce Hall on most days, although the council meets here in its entirety with Baron Kustios only once every few weeks. Commoners of Yanmass frequently grumble that Commerce Hall is closed to anyone but the wealthy and influential, and they whisper of secret decadent feasts and wild displays of excess, romanticizing the dull business of civic administration that actually occurs within the ostentatious building.

3. Autun's Imports: The largest and wealthiest of the many trading houses vying for influence in Yanmass, Autun's Imports occupies a large compound of offices, warehouses, and stables in the Coinside neighborhood. Lord Rudig Autun currently heads Autun's Imports, which has been in his family for several generations. Rumor holds that Lord Autun is amassing his fortunes in a bid for a significant title, something he does not outright deny.

4. Gilded Baldachin: One of Yanmass's most opulent inns, the Gilded Baldachin is best known

for the fact that each of its beds is an enormous, thickly padded affair draped in silken canopies, providing the most comfortable rest in northern Taldor. Less well known are the intense security measures that the inn's owner, **Mirissin Halvelor** takes to keep her guests safe and undisturbed.

5. Temple of Abadar: Although located in the low valley between Yanmass's two hills, the soaring roofs of the city's temple of Abadar tower over all others in the city. Designed by a renowned Taldan architect in an airy, elegant style, the temple took nearly a generation to build and almost emptied an entire quarry in the Fog Peaks of its rare, gold-hued stone. Acolytes ring the key-shaped chimes in the temple's tallest towers to signify holy celebrations, and the temple's canny high priest, Chief Enumerator Abrun Palliettor, is a popular figure and member of the city's influential Mercantile Council.



6. Wender Manor: A magic item shop popular with traders as well as traveling adventurers, Wender Manor was constructed as the private residence for an obsessive art collector. Custom built to protect the owner's extensive collection, the manor contains several secure vaults and hidden rooms. Several years ago, **Savina Onio** purchased the manor and converted it into a shop



catering to high-end purchasers of magic items. Onio's refined staff welcomes prescreened guests into one of several sitting-rooms-turned-showrooms with wine and hors d'oeuvres, where Onio haggles tenaciously over prices. Although Wender Manor undoubtedly contains a fortune in magic items, no thieves have yet successfully overcome Onio's expensive defenses.

7. Clover Rest: A stately cemetery just inside the Avin Wall, Clover Rest has a tall wrought-iron fence and is filled with ornate mausoleums covered with clover and climbing ivy. Normally empty of anyone other than mourners or gravediggers, Clover Rest is a peaceful spot inside a bustling city. Rumors persist that a series of underground tunnels connects the larger mausoleums to nearby basements, creating a large network of smugglers' tunnels.

8. Firewatch Headquarters: A combination of city watch and firefighter brigade, the Firewatch patrols the streets of Yanmass from this solid building covered in striking red paint. The headquarters not only acts as a jail and barracks but also contains stables and quarters set aside for members of the Taldan Horse to use while in town. The current chief of the Firewatch, **Milxena Ospher** is a skilled administrator but also an unabashed racist. Chief Ospher minimizes

patrols in the Kelesh neighborhoods outside the city walls and often drops cases where Keleshite citizens have been victimized. Despite increasing public outcry for Chief Ospher's removal, her noble Taldan family connections have thus far preserved her position.

9. The Wash: Water from the termination of the canal that connects to the Verduran Fork fills a small channel between Yanmass's two hills. Too shallow for docks and too silty for any construction heavier than wood and thatch shanties, the surrounding marshy area is generally seen as an unsightly sump fit only for lower-class residences. Known colloquially as the Wash, this area also has a tendency to flood when heavy rains fall on the region. Attempts to drain or dam the Wash have never been successful; this enterprise is considered a thorny engineering challenge. A popular local figure in the Wash is the River Mother, an elderly druid whose race and powers are unknown, as she keeps her heavy hood over her face even when providing magical aid to the downtrodden of the surrounding poor neighborhood of Washfield.

10. Hedge Hill: The larger of Yanmass's two hills has long been considered the least defensible because of its gently sloping sides. The crown of the hill is a dense copse of tangled trees—one of the region's last vestiges of the primeval forest that once covered the landscape. The slopes of Hedge Hill have been gradually cleared and turned into a ring of popular public parks and outdoor amphitheatres, but the knot of trees on

the hilltop remains an island of wilderness in a sea of civilization. Rumors hold that a powerful, immortal dryad protects this forest at the top of Hedge Hill, but only the very young or very inebriated ever claim to see her and the sightings might be attributable to the occasional lover meeting a partner for a tryst.

11. Wealwind Pavilion: By far the largest amphitheater on Hedge Hill, the Wealwind Pavilion has a frame of metal that supports an enormous canvas canopy that protects the structure from ill weather. Because it is sheltered from rain and harsh sun, the Wealwind Pavilion is a favorite venue of Yanmass's elite. Performers there can command exorbitant rates, and infighting for prominent positions is intense. Attempts to start a "Common Concerts" series open to all residents of Yanmass for an entry fee of a single silver piece has met with only moderate success due to machinations of the city's aristocracy, who detest the lower classes moving in on their preferred venue.

12. Grava's Entertainments: To outside appearances, Grava's sells puzzles and toys in a small shop abutting a large, abandoned warehouse. The foppish and gregarious **Drusilla Grava** is good with children, quick to dole out sweets, and seemingly unconcerned that her toy shop doesn't get a lot of business.



13. Whistling Wyvern: A large tavern and inn popular with mercenaries and hired guards, the Whistling Wyvern gains its name from an enormous fluted weather vane resembling a wyvern atop the building's highest spire. One of the tavern's regulars is a gregarious and massive storyteller named **Conson Vatherial**

Vatherialis an elf with a keen mind for who in the city is hiring and which of his acquaintances needs employment, and he enjoys suggesting good matches for work.

14. Aziza's House: One of the few stone structures outside of the Avin Wall, Aziza's House is a restaurant and coffeehouse run by the boisterous Keleshite merchant prince **Rashaid Beyamara**. He named the house in honor of his deceased daughter, and he is unfailingly polite to all guests. It is an open secret that Beyamara, a self-proclaimed "humble coffee pourer," orchestrates a staggering number of the caravans coming and going across the Whistling Plains. Beyamara commands enough wealth and influence to warrant a position on the Mercantile Council, if he were a citizen of Yanmass, but he embraces his outsider status. He prides himself on never setting foot within the city, due to a promise made to his daughter before she died, and instead relies on proxies to transact business in town.

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