ENCOUNTER CHART FOR _____

Checking for encounters: Roll d6 four times a day: morning travel, afternoon travel, first night watch, second night watch. A roll of 6 means that you roll on the encounter chart.

Rolling on the encounter chart: roll d12 while traveling and d6 while stationary.

1: Plot advancing creature:

2: Intelligent creature:

3: Unintelligent creature:

4: Ambush creature:

5: Beneficial creature:

6: Weather:

7. Lair:

8. Survival Check or Hazard:

9. Path Choice:

10. Beneficial location:

11. Ruin:

12. Tracks:

EXPLANATIONS

1: Plot advancing creature: This means different things in different campaigns. If you're running a campaign about the rise of Tiamat, you might populate this slot with dragons or Tiamat cultists. In my open-ended game where the characters are pursuing their own goals, I fill this slot with people or groups related to characters, like the drow assassin that's chasing the noble. If you're running a totally plotless hex crawl, fill this slot with a high-level monster (it potentially advances the story by killing the party!)

2: Intelligent creature: Any locale-appropriate group or creature with tool-using intelligence or higher. At night, if the characters hide their camp and don't light a fire, treat this roll as no encounter (unless your intelligent monsters has darkvision or a sharp sense of smell). That's the advantage the PCs get for not lighting a fire.

3: Unintelligent creature: Beasts or unintelligent monsters. Most beasts shy away from fire. If the characters are resting and have a campfire lit, treat this roll as no encounter (unless they're fearless or fire-based beasts). That's the advantage the PCs get for lighting a fire.

4: Ambush creature: Use stealthy creatures or creatures with special movement modes (flying, burrowing, climbing, swimming, incorporeal). All of these creatures can typically take the party by surprise, so check for surprise against the party's Perception (rules for perception while traveling: PHB 182). If the PCs are currently using a special movement mode, populate this slot entirely with matching creatures (flying PCs may ignore almost all other encounters, but a 4 is always another flying creature.)

5: Beneficial creature: There are actually a few good monsters in D&D, along with friendly adventurers, kobold bands looking for a new king, and suspicious traders with valuable information to sell. You could roll d4 on this chart to find out what kind of beneficial encounter this is.

6: Weather: If you make the standard 4 random encounter checks per day, you have about an 8% to 12% daily chance to hit bad weather. (The DMG weather chart gives a 15% daily chance of heavy precipitation. Of course, this is probably lower in practice because few DMs roll on the weather chart every day.) Feel free to use any place- and season-appropriate weather that challenges or inconveniences the characters in some way, or use the official weather rules in the DMG p. 109. Possible weather inconveniences: while exposed to the weather, you can't benefit from a long rest; low visibility forces a Survival check to avoid becoming lost; fords and valleys are flooded.

7. Lair: Locale-appropriate bad guys (or beasts) live here. Usually lairs are where creatures keep their treasure. This could also be a dungeon entrance. No matter the level of the PCs, I make 1 in 6 lairs contain monsters with more than 10 HD/level/CR. Alert PCs shouldn't run into a cave without scouting first.

8. Survival Check or Hazard: The rules for getting lost (DMG 105) are vague: a Survival check is made "when you decide it's appropriate." Consider this encounter slot a reminder. Characters might get lost because of detours, low visibility, or hazards. Hazards include rockslides, quicksand, etc, all detailed in the DMG p. 110.

9. Path Choice: Take a forest shortcut? Ford the river or caulk the wagon? The tradeoff might be apparent (safe path vs. quick path), or a Survival check, or good reasoning, might be needed to reveal which choice is best.

10. Beneficial location: Typically, this means a friendly settlement or homestead (1 in 6 chance of being bigger than a village). Random settlement rules are on DMG 112. In the uncharted wilds, this might instead mean a treasure or natural resource, or a magic resource like a stand of healing herbs or a teleportation circle, or (valuable late in the day) a defensible place to camp.

11. Ruin: One cool thing about the 5e assumptions is that ruins seem to be about as common as civilized spots. A ruin might be a lair or the entrance to a dungeon, but it might just be an abandoned village or castle, an ancient monument (DMG 108), or a weird locale (DMG 109) that hints at lost history beyond the scope of the adventure.

12. Tracks: It's cool when the PCs gather information that lets them make informed decisions about their surroundings. Roll d12 on this table; there are tracks, noises, glimpses, or other signs that lead to (or let the PCs avoid) that encounter or location.

Examples at http://blogofholding.com/?p=6808