

Bright Lights, Big City!

How to keep your character busy in a large town or city.

While in a small town or thorp, there might not be a lot of options when the Dungeon Master asks how you pass the time, but in a big city the possibilities are endless. Depending on how your games play out, a DM might simply gloss over the visit to the city for characters who have to wait a few days while the cleric pays homage or the wizard scribes a few scrolls. But for those that wish to enrich their campaigns by asking “you have 5 days to spend in the city, what do you do?” that can be a catalyst for adventure, campaign growth, and good times. Here is a selection of 50 pastimes that your character can pursue when confronted with this very situation.

How to use the article.

Scan the listing below. If it's been a busy week or you are uninspired or want a challenge, roll percentile dice and go for it! Perhaps you like responsibility. Make a list of a handful of things your PC would always do so you have your PC's interests at hand. The 'leader' of the party could assign a few to each member of the party as their duty to the party. Or you could choose one based on circumstance, like visit the shrine to Corellon Larethian because of the timely healing your party received by the elves a few sessions back.

Example of use in play.

Let's assume that Owen the Paladin, Tallia the Rogue, Moondown the Wizard and Garreth the Fighter enter a city because their Cleric Equilina has to scribe a few scrolls and make some holy water. For surprises for all, the DM asks everyone to roll percentile and interpret their actions.

- Owen the Paladin rolls a 74, Moderator. He begins to inquire with the city guard and another local adventuring crew about enemies of the city. Soon he learns that the town of Rit-tenour to the north has been ignoring and jeering the local patrols of the king. It seems the town does not feel their taxes are at work protecting them after their 3rd bandit attack in a month and are restless and steer travelers and merchants away from the city.
- Tallia the Rogue rolls a 92, Entrepreneur. She searches out the noble who was supposed to receive a bolt of fine silk the party liberated from some gnoll bandits recently. She learns the item is imported and that it's all the rage among the well-to-do. She makes her way to the market, offers a merchant some gold to increase his space and draws up plans to take a part of the profits from sales, as she will be sending back silk bolts from her adventures to sell.
- Moondown the Wizard rolls a 19, Student. She seeks out a teacher to help her learn two spells that have evaded her. Inquiring at the local guild, she is eventually lead to Belthesma the Oracle, who insists for exchange of not two but three spells allows her to experiment with a new magical tattoo, placed on Moondown herself!
- Garreth the Fighter rolls an 8, Actor. Within the same tavern he introduces himself as Ry-gard Plumm, scourge of the Snow Goblins; Teargin Raal, guild master of Viridistan; and Komley Merd of House Merd of the infamous swamplands of Turnbull. All at once someone asks his Teargin Raal persona if he's related to Feathus Raal. Thinking it could be fun, he responds positively, only to learn that Feathus Raal somehow greatly offended this person, and suddenly Garreth has a sticky situation on his hands.

With a little ingenuity and a DM good at improvisation, an adventure itself could be worked into the circumstances above to include all the players and their new interests. Enjoy!

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1-2: Collector. Increase your collection or work with merchants to help appraise others collections. Your interest could be anything from ancient weapons, to gem-encrusted jewelry or old outdated game pieces. Collect a unique item as a souvenir.

3-4: Citizen. Check local laws to be sure the party's interests or habits are within the legal limits.

5-6: Rumor mill. Collect information regarding the city. Learn news from the roads leading to the city or neighboring lands or the current Lords and Ladies gossip.

7-8: Fellowship. Win friends and influence people. Buy the house a round of drinks, help a young person with their chores. Make a friend who you can visit or call upon in need at a later date.

9-10: Merchant. Once you discover the cities imports and exports, determine the party's direction and purchase accordingly to sell a few items at your next stop.

11-12: Alchemist. Research spells, and magic item creation formulas and procedures and search out components. With luck you could even get down to actually working on the item.

13-14: Brawler. Pick a fight in a tavern or inn to test your mettle and gain a few new scars.

15-16: Actor. Present yourself as a different person to everyone you meet during your stay in the city and watch the fun! Using a different name, title and accent can lead to many unexpected adventures.

17-18: Vanity. Update your PC's looks with grooming or an upgrade in clothing and equipment for visual, not functional reasons. Pamper yourself with baths and massages.

19-20: Student. Search out a local teacher or trainer to help you hone or learn a skill or talent.

21-22: Palate. Sample the best of the local cuisine and drink.

23-24: Paladin. Upgrade your armor and /or weapons with better materials to enhance their aesthetic and functional capabilities.

25-26: Pen-pal. If the campaign allows it, write letters or otherwise correspond with someone in another city with whom you keep in touch.

27-28: Moneychanger. Cash in the party's art objects, gems and jewelry or vice-versa to aid everyone.

29-30: Bard. Set up a place or seek out a business where you can ply your skills for pay or respect.

31-32: Artisan. Set up a place or seek out a business to ply your trade for pay.

33-34: Boy Scout. Prepare for the trip ahead by getting supplies, survival gear, maps, food and drink, etc.

35-36: Cartographer. Update and compare you recent maps with local copies or knowledge to ensure accuracy or to add new discoveries.

37-38: Piety. Check in with the local church of your deity to pay homage and make offerings.

39-40: Romantic. Sneak into high society parties and charm the lords and ladies with your dance, wit and wily ways.

41-42: Ranger. Travel the lands just outside the city to ply your forester skills or stay in tune with nature.

43-44: Amorous. You go looking for love in all the wrong places. A visit to the brothel or seducing the local lord is not out of the question.

45-46: Gambler. Get involved in local games of chance or

skill for a wager.

47-48: Journal. Update the party journal (in the game, in real life at the game, or both).

49-50: Politician. Check on local rulers and law enforcement and the cogs of the government's wheels. Aggressively research the true movers and shakers of the city and arrange a meeting and chances to further the party's goals.

51-52: Gamer. Enter local contest or competition for reward and respect.

53-54: Party. Check on upcoming local festivals and holiday celebrations to attend or large parties to crash.

55-56: Animal Friend. Stable and care for the party's mounts and beasts of burden. Collect feed for mounts, animal companions and familiars if any.

57-58: Injured. Seek healing, rest and rejuvenation.

59-60: Guard. Find other travelers going your way next so you can arrange to travel together, perhaps even offer the party's services as guards.

61-62: Spy. Seek out information on local secret societies and power party's and what they are up to.

63-64: Race Seeker. Look for others of your race not otherwise well represented to visit with and exchange information and lore.

65-66: Family Tree. Research local bloodlines and genealogy to map your characters background and history.

67-68: Employer. Hire and/or fire henchmen and hirelings for the party's next adventure.

69-70: Sightseer. Look for local famous landmarks and sights just to say you saw them. Perhaps even keep a sketchbook of your views.

71-72: Innkeeper. Secure lodgings to match the party's needs and affordability.

73-74: Moderator. Research foes and friends of the city to aid with future encounters and dealings with them.

75-76: Hobbyist. Find supplies for your hobby and secure a place to work at it (coat of arms, art, music, etc.)

77-78: Saint. Seek out worthy causes and donate your time or money (orphanage, under-funded city watch, recently damaged church).

79-80: Troublemaker. Crash parties in an overwhelming way, pick pockets, play practical jokes.

81-82: Librarian. Search out local library and read for knowledge and fun.

83-84: Respectful. Visit the tomb or grave of a local hero or ruler or family member or friend.

85-86: Bounty Hunter. Check for rewards posted for the capture or killing of criminals or monsters.

87-88: Streetwise. Learn the local layout of alleys, streets and sewers around the party's dwellings to aid in quick escape or chases.

89-90: Passport. Register name(s) with local rulers/guilds/law enforcement as the customs apply.

91-92: Entrepreneur. Start a business. Purchase a cart, building, or land, hire folks to run the business, and see how it develops over time.

93-94: Culture. Take in a show at the theatre, or a gladiatorial fight at the local arena.

95-96: Slumming. Visit the seedy, law-skirting section of town.

97-98: Braggart. Tell tales of all the parties deeds for respect or free drinks.

99-100: Dependents. Send some of your extra loot to family or friends. Perhaps your parents, the old master who raised you, or the orphanage or church where you grew up.