

THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

“Bretonnia is fair and peaceful because everyone knows their place. Yours is with the truffle hounds.”

- LORD THEDERIC OF MARONZ,
TO A CAPTURED OUTLAW.



Short-term visitors to Bretonnia see a land of fertile farms, rolling hills, starkly beautiful mountains, and airy forests. The population consists of noble and courteous knights, fair ladies, and contented and deferential peasants. Bretonnian chefs are famous for their culinary skill, and the wine produced in the vineyards of the country is renowned throughout the Old World. This is the image Bretonnians want to project, and it is not entirely false.

It does, however, conceal problems. The mountains are home to Greenskins, the forests to foul creatures. Many peasants are starving, and knights who use courtesy to cloak brutality are found throughout the land. Even the superb flavours of the food often mask rotten ingredients. The cynical say Bretonnia wears a fair mask over deep corruption; the more generous lament the gap often found between its ideals and reality. No one who knows the country at all can ignore the contrast, however.

— THE LAND —

Anyone travelling through Bretonnia, outside the blighted land of Mousillon, sees a country that looks fair and prosperous. The forbidding forests and frowning mountains of the Empire are nowhere to be seen. This does not mean Bretonnia is completely safe, however. Behind the facade, peril lurks.

Bretonnia's landscape can be divided into six main types: arable land, where crops are grown; pastoral land, where animals are grazed; forests; mountains; the coast; and the great rivers. This section discusses the types in general terms, as specific areas are covered in **Chapter V: A Tour of Bretonnia**. The exceptions are the great rivers, which form the borders between Duchies and thus are treated individually here.

The dominant arable crop in Bretonnia is wheat, though oats, barley, and green vegetables are also grown. Fields are very large and divided into strips. Peasant families are responsible for one strip each, and differences in treatment mean many fields look somewhat stripy. Fruit Orchards and vineyards are common in the hills, on land that is too steep for easy farming. Sheep are often grazed under fruit trees.

Peasants work the fields almost constantly. In fine weather, this adds to the charm of the scene, and most peasants seem cheerful. In bad weather, they hunch over against the wind and rain and can almost vanish as they are covered with mud, making them the same colour as the fields. At such times, there are few to see them.

Most of Bretonnia's hills are devoted to pastoral farming, whilst the plains and valleys are arable. The grazing animals keep the grass short, and the view of green hills dotted with white sheep or typically Bretonnian russet cattle is a common one. The flocks and herds are tended by shepherds and herdsmen. Shepherdesses are common in the south of Bretonnia, where it is the only occupation that allows women to travel by themselves. In the north, the idea of letting women go into the hills alone is frowned upon.

Flocks of sheep are attractive to predators, starting from wolves and climbing through Goblins, Orcs, Beastmen, and the like. As a result, the life of a shepherd is much more dangerous than it looks. Shepherdesses, in particular, have a reputation as tough and dangerous fighters and generally cannot find husbands. Most of them do not particularly care. Many

shepherds carry the Bretonnian Crook, a spear with a hook at the end of the handle, and are skilled in its use.

The outer edges of Bretonnia's forests are thoroughly exploited by the people. Pigs forage in the leaf litter, trees are felled for building, and others are coppiced or pollarded. These are techniques that ensure a tree produces a lot of long, thin branches, useful for wattle and daub or for firewood. It involves cutting the branches right back every year, almost to the ground in the case of a coppice, or further up the trunk for a pollard. In Bretonnia, pollards are more common, so that pigs and sheep cannot eat the shoots of new branches. As a result, the trees in these areas are spaced out for easy access, and there is little undergrowth.

Further in, however, the forests become as dark and tangled as anything in the Empire. There are no Elves in the forests of Arden or Châlons (Athel-Loren is outside Bretonnia proper), and no Humans live beyond the tamed borders. As a result, they are a haven for Beastmen and similar foul creatures, or for cultists of the Ruinous Powers. Human outlaws often lair near the edge of forests, and provide an important defence for local communities, keeping worse creatures back in the depths of the woods. There are stories of whole cities of Beastmen in the depths of the Arden, and whilst there is no evidence for this implausible idea, it is not impossible; no one knows enough about the forest interior to say the cities are not there.

The mountains surrounding Bretonnia, and the Massif Orcal in its heart, are notable for their spectacular scenery. Soaring cliffs and thundering waterfalls mark the outer edges of mountain ranges, and on clear days, the peaks seem to shine from the snow on them. Farming and mining communities dot the edges of the mountain ranges, renowned for the extremely steep roofs of their houses, designed to shed snowfall quickly.

Some of these communities are cut off from the rest of Bretonnia for months at a time in winter and have developed their own customs, in some cases involving the worship of the Dark Ones. Further in, Orc and Goblin tribes make their homes. When the snows melt in spring, at least one mountain community is found reduced to charred rubble. It has, however, been many years since these Orcs dared to raid outside their mountain strongholds; some fear they have been building their strength.

Bretonnia's coasts are marked by many cliffs and broad beaches of golden sand at their base. Around the great river deltas, the approach is gentler, and there are a number of safe harbours. Small islands dot the waters off much of Bretonnia. A few of these are home to villages or even small towns. A number of coastal villages are built up the sides of cliffs and other rugged coastal areas, with staircases or even ladders connecting streets running parallel to the slope of the land. These villages typically rely on fishing for their official income.

However, the waters around Bretonnia are notoriously difficult to navigate. Currents, winds, and tides shift rapidly, and many sea monsters live in caves in the more rugged areas of the coast. As a result, there are many shipwrecks. This situation is exacerbated by the inhabitants of certain villages who lure ships onto rocks and then pillage the wreckage. The form of the land also makes

