

THE TRAVELER'S ALMANAC

OF THE

ALABAZ
ARCHIPELAGO

PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION

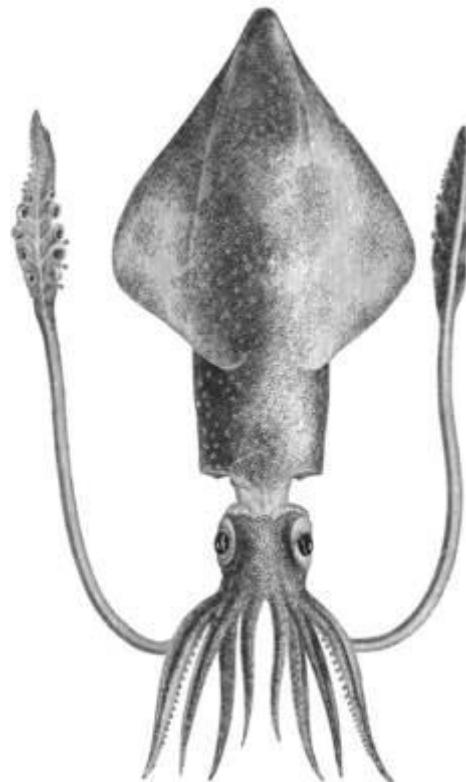
For many years, the *Traveler's Almanac* has been an indispensable resource for anyone wishing to know more about the Kingdom of Alabaz, from tourists visiting the archipelago for the first time, to native islanders who wish to learn more about their neighbors.

But the Almanac is not a monument of stone, eternal and never changing. Just as the history of Alabaz is a living, changing story, so does the Almanac grow and evolve in telling it. Four editions have been published before this, each one carefully updated to reflect changes in the politics, geography, and character of the islands.

This fifth edition is released on the first birthday of the twin siblings born to King Archimedeus, ruler of Alabaz. It has been fifty years since the fourth edition, and many changes great and small have come to the islands since in that time. From new technologies developed by REI, to the tragic death of one of our most beloved musicians—the fifth edition of the *Almanac* incorporates them all.

It is with great pleasure that I dedicate this edition of the *Almanac* to young Archibald and Alexandra, future King and Queen of Alabaz. Fifty years from now, what changes will have come our islands during their reign? What lies in store for the *Almanac's* next edition?

—Ed.

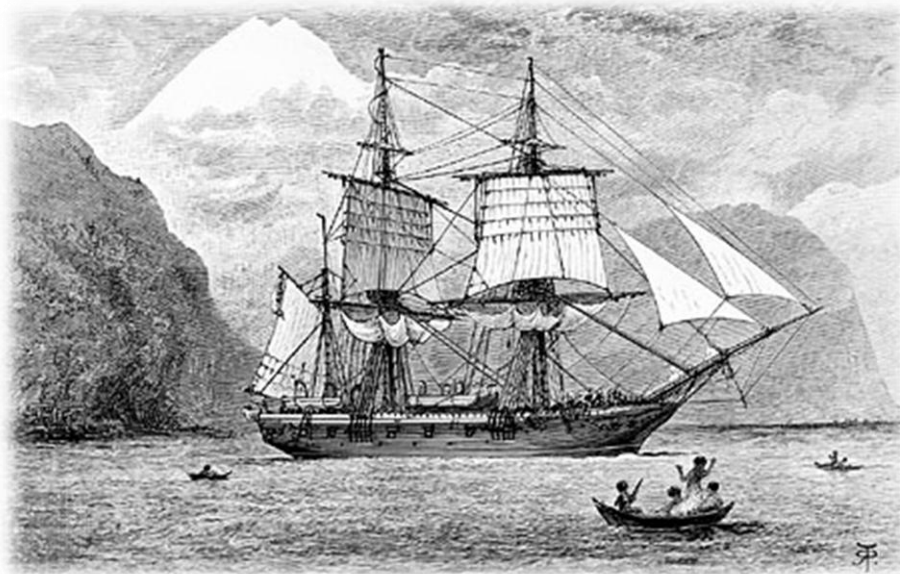


A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ARCHIPELAGO

The Alabaz Archipelago lies in the southern quadrant of the Chrysolite Sea, far from any major continents. Ocean currents bring a warm, pleasant climate to the region, and most of the islands (with notable exceptions) are home to a flourishing ecosystem of flora and fauna.

The islands were first discovered nearly 1,500 years ago by the famous explorer, Archimus Alabamundi. He landed on the largest island, founded a city there, and named it after himself. Settlers soon followed, and the tiny trading port of Alabazapolis soon grew into a whole series of settlements across half a dozen different islands. However, Alabaz did not become a true Kingdom until Alabamundi's granddaughter, Anastazia II, united all ten islands some 50 years later. Anastazia II is known today as the first Queen of Alabaz.

Today, the archipelago comprises ten distinct islands, of which eight are inhabited (Vulcan is generally considered too dangerous for settlement, and the tenth island is included purely for administrative purposes and does not merit further mention). Each one is unique, and each has shaped the character of the people living on it in surprising and often delightful ways. Although this book attempts to provide a complete picture of life on the islands, it is no substitute for actually visiting them.



ALABAZAPOLIS

Capital of the Kingdom

Alabazapolis is the name of the largest island in the Alabaz Archipelago. It is also the name of the largest city on that island, the capital of the entire Kingdom of Alabaz.

The island of Alabazapolis is a land of temperate forests and hills. Most of the population lives in the southern half of the island, with small fishing villages dotting the southern coast, and the great city of Alabazapolis straddling the mouth of the winding Quirt River.

It is sometimes said that the city of Alabazapolis has no flavor of its own. However, it would be more accurate to say that the true flavor of Alabazapolis is the flavor of all of the other islands combined. It is the center of trade and politics for the entire archipelago. People from the other islands converge and mingle in this city, creating a melting pot of cultures.

Most importantly, Alabazapolis is the home of the Royal Palace, where the Kings and Queens of Alabazapolis have ruled since the days of Queen Anastazia II.

THE LINE OF SUCCESSION

The Kingdom of Alabaz has been ruled by many rulers. Some of them were more popular than others, but all of them were wise and just. The dates below are given in Alabazian Reckoning, with Year 0 being the year that Archimus Alabamundi first landed on the island of Alabazapolis.

46-93	Anastazia II	741-792	Alabaxus
94-143	Alastrina	793-832	Adelienne III
144-190	Anatolus	833-868	Alabancezer III
191-233	Abdominus	867-912	Alessandra II
234-274	Ambrosius	913-952	Alastrina II
275-312	Adelienne	953-986	Abrianna
313-354	Abernathy	987-1038	Adelienne III
355-407	Alessandra	1039-1072	Ambrosius III
408-440	Adelienne II	1073-1108	Agamenmon
441-489	Abelard	1109-1151	Alabaxus II
490-534	Alabancezer	1152-1200	Abrianna II
535-585	Ambrosius II	1201-1246	Alabaxus III
586-630	Ambrosia	1247-1286	Alastrina III
631-664	Anabella	1287-1337	Ambrosius IV
665-699	Abigail	1338-1380	Abarastus
700-706	Bert (aka "the Aberrant")	1381-1433	Alabancezer IV
707-740	Alabancezer II	1434-present	Archimediis

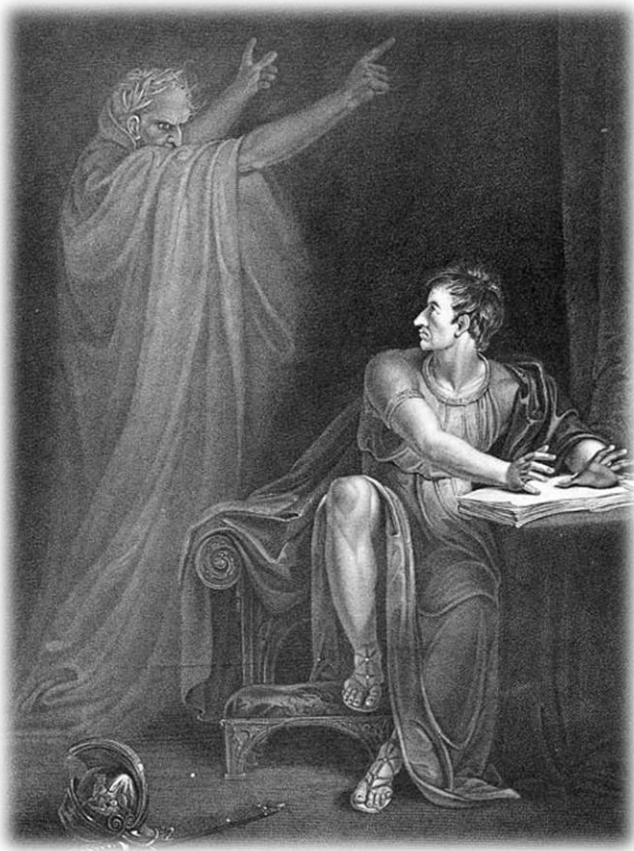
GROTTIS

Resting Place of Kings

Grottis is especially unique among the islands of Alabaz, because most of its inhabitants are dead. For centuries, the citizens of Alabaz have laid their departed loved ones to rest beneath this island's soil.

It is commonly believed that Grottis is nothing but a huge, creepy graveyard, but in fact this is far from the truth. Grottis is primarily a *peaceful* place. Its quiet and somewhat dim atmosphere encourages solitude and introspection—precisely the qualities that drew people to bury their dead here in the first place.

The cemeteries of Grottis hold the remains of commoners and nobles alike. Over the centuries, various "districts" have arisen, each one housing a particular class or profession. Of particular interest is the so-called "Musician's Quarter," in which the greatest musical artists in the history of Alabaz are buried. The Kings and Queens of Alabaz are buried in the Royal Tombs, although these are not open to the public.



DO YOU BELIEVE IN GHOSTS?

Many people believe that Grottis is inhabited by ghosts. This is a silly superstition, of course. Walking through the necropolis by moonlight, you might bump into one of the island's living groundskeepers on a nightly inspection, or hear the haunting sound of a double-tailed marsh owl calling for its dinner. But you will not see any ghosts, because ghosts do not exist.

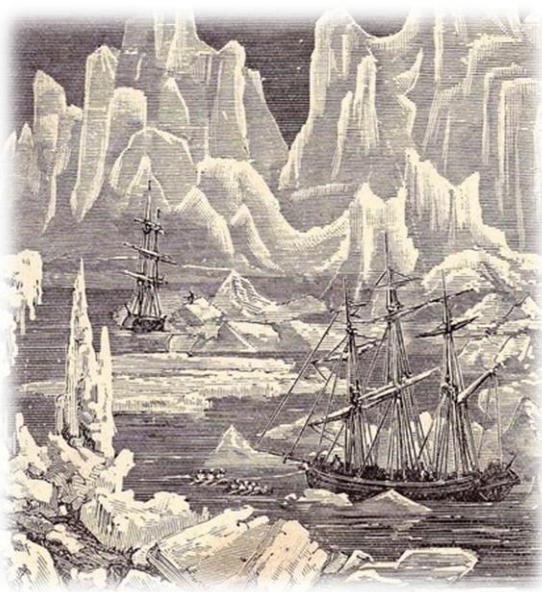
KORAL

Duchy of Ice and Snow

Although it is part of the Kingdom of Alabaz, the island of Koral is actually a semi-independent Duchy, ruled by a pair of siblings who call themselves Lord Cumulus and Lady Cirrus.

The origins of these Lord Cumulus and Lady Cirrus are a mystery. Ancient records show that they were alive to greet Archimus Alabamundi when he first set foot on their island in the year 3 A.R., and they do not seem to have aged a single day since. When Queen Anastazia II asked if they would be willing to join her Kingdom in 45 A.R., the Duke and Duchess readily agreed, as long as they were allowed to continue enforcing their own laws (chief among them, the prohibition of any open flame within the boundaries of the island). Anastazia II felt this was reasonable, and today the island of Koral is open to all citizens of Alabaz.

Koral's climate is best described as "arctic," a fact that cannot be explained by meteorological science. Many believe that the Duke and Duchess themselves somehow cause this strange weather. However, despite the freezing winds and constant snow, Koral is far from inhospitable. Many inhabitants of the warmer isles enjoy taking vacations on Koral, and sports such as skiing, yodeling, and ice-sculpture carving are very popular.



FOCUS ON WILDLIFE

Because of its unique climate, Koral is home to many kinds of animals not found anywhere else in Alabaz.

Speckled Spirebird: This bird builds its nest out of ice and grows special, puffball-like feathers in order to stay warm. Its mating call is so high that the human ear cannot hear it!

Arctovex: The savage arctovex tends to make its lair amongst the caves and tunnels at the foot of the Vaporous Peaks. It is said that the only thing that can frighten an arctovex is the sight of another arctovex. However, this has never been confirmed, since no one has ever seen even a single arctovex and lived to tell of it.

FUN FACTS ABOUT ICE

Did you know:

- ❧ Ice is less dense than water.
That's why it floats!
- ❧ When water freezes into ice, it expands. If it gets into a crack and freezes, a little bit of water can split open solid rock!
- ❧ Salt melts ice by lowering the freezing temperature of water!
- ❧ No one knows exactly why ice is slippery. It just is!

LUGUBRIA

Harbor in a Storm

Lugubria is a difficult island to reach by ship. Its shores are all craggy cliffs, and the waters surrounding it are filled with dangerous coral reefs. There is only one natural harbor on Lugubria, and it is marked with a great lighthouse that can be seen for miles around.

Despite this, Lugubria remains a very popular island, especially among scientists. The coral reefs surrounding the island are teeming with many varieties of undersea life. Marine biologists and oceanologists have built a network of underwater laboratories so that they can study the reefs without disturbing their ecosystems. The laboratories are kept dry with special pumps built by Rodor Electrodynamic Industries.

Lovers of fine cuisine have another reason to come to Lugubria! The underwater caves beneath Lugubria's cliffs are home to the largest colony of squids in the Chrysolite Sea—and where you find squids, you are sure to also find delicious squidishes. However, squidish-divers hoping to steal a few of these spicy delicacies must do so at their own risk. Squids are notoriously bad-tempered animals and tend to resent people digging up their gardens.



HIGH TIDE RECORDS

<i>Year</i>	<i>Height</i>
1360	9.7
1370	9.9
1380	10.1
1390	10.7
1400	10.8
1410	11.0
1420	11.1
1430	11.7
1440	12.3
1450	13.1

RAZZ

Fun and Games

Sports, games, and gambling are at the center of daily life on Razz. It is said that the only thing that the people of Razz enjoy more than playing sports is watching sports, and the only thing they enjoy more than watching sports is betting on sports. An unwary tourist can win a fortune and go flat broke three times each, all in one night. On the other islands of Alabaz, this makes Razz very popular with some people, and very *un*popular with others.

On Razz, fads can come and go very quickly. Sports that were very popular last year might be hardly mentioned next year. As of this *Almanac's* publication, the sports of Ping-challa, Runcible Thumpball, and Table Tennis are at the height of popularity. Elbow Rugby and Triangle Ball are on their way out and rarely played. On some parts of the island, zeppelipede racing has become a popular pastime, but it is not widespread, and the fad will most likely die out within the year.



FOCUS ON WILDLIFE

Although the interior of Razz is mostly arid desert, it is still home to many interesting animals.

Cactalope: Although hundreds are captured every year, the wily cactalope has never been domesticated. Many wicker farmers on Razz use electric fences to keep these voracious herbivores away from their crops.

Jorbils: These small rodents can swell to nearly ten times their normal size by storing water in pouches underneath their skin! However, they are only dangerous when a herd of them stampedes.

Zeppelipedes: These good-natured beasts travel in small herds, and are usually docile unless their young are threatened or they are fed spicy foods. Although they do not enjoy being ridden on, their ability to float over any sort of terrain makes them excellent pack animals. A grown zeppelipede can pull almost five times its own weight!

RODOR

Agriculture and Industry

Rodor is an island of contrasts. Most of the island is settled by simple farmers, growing grains and vegetables provide food for the rest of the archipelago. The fertile soil and wide, open plains make Rodor the true "breadbasket" of the Kingdom of Alabaz

On the other hand, Rodor is also the home of Rodor Electrodynamic Industries (also known as "REI"), the largest producer of technological innovation in all of Alabaz, if not the entire world. REI has developed much of the tools and machinery that make modern life possible on all of the other islands, including transportation systems, irrigation, and running water. The giant, golden windmills that provide electricity to the central power plant can be seen from all over the Rodor. Although the employees of REI tend to keep to themselves and rarely leave the island, the company is always ready to share their latest inventions with the rest of the Kingdom.

Recently, REI has made great advances in the fields of robotics and artificial intelligence. Although early prototypes had to be scrapped due to obsessive hoarding behavior and a predilection for pastries, further breakthroughs are surely not far off.



SHADDHAR

Heart of the Jungle

The jungles of Shaddhar have never been fully explored. Cartographers, scientists, and adventurous tourists come from all over the world to brave the island's interior, and some of them never come out again. Many become lost in the maze-like tangle of jungle trails, and certain species of plants are known to be quite hostile to hikers. The Alabaz Bureau of Tourism strongly recommends hiring an experienced guide.

In 1040 A.R., King Ambrosius IV sent a team of botanists along with a group of engineers from Rodor Electrodynamic Industries to study the incredible variety of plant life on Shaddhar. In the first year alone, they classified over 1,000 new species! Their research outpost is still there today, and scientists continue to discover new plants with useful applications in medicine, agriculture, and industry.

There are few settlements on Shaddhar, and nearly all of them are on the coast. The jungle interior is simply too dense and overgrown to make room for cities.

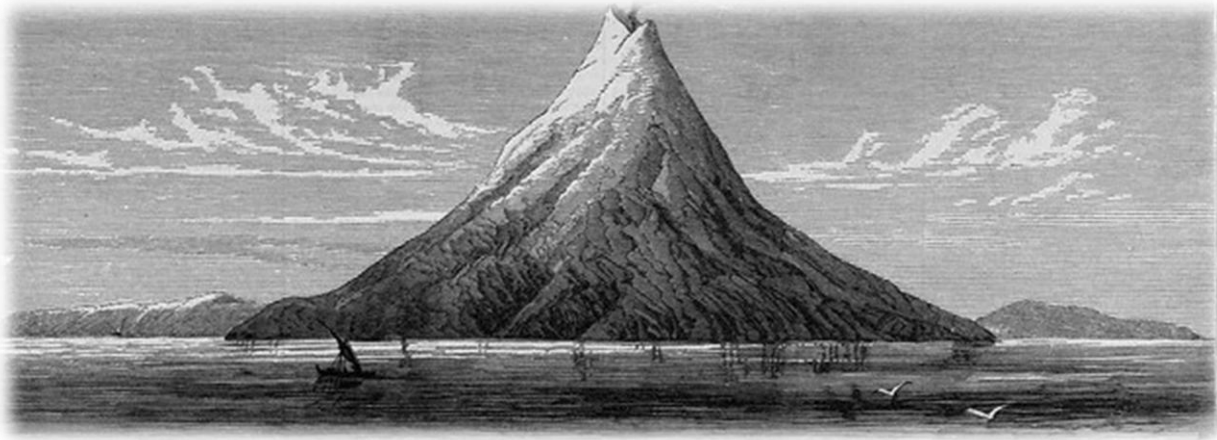


VULCAN

The Smoldering Lands

Vulcan is the home of Mount Moribund, the only active volcano in the Alabaz Archipelago. Moribund has erupted countless times since it was first discovered, and it shows no signs of ever stopping. Even during its quiet periods, the mountain constantly spews ash and smoke into the sky. Sparks and hot cinders rain down all over the island. Only animals that need little food and can resist the constant heat, such as rust crows and rockbiters, can survive there.

At one time, Rodor Electrodynamic Industries had an outpost on Vulcan in order to explore the possibility of harnessing the energy in Mount Moribund to convert to steam power. The project was eventually deemed a failure, however, and the outpost was abandoned. Since then, there have been no settlements on Vulcan.



MYTHS AND LEGENDS: DRAGONS

Although dragons are extinct today, their fossilized remains can still be found on many islands in the archipelago, including Vulcan. Archaeologists who study these fossils believe that dragons spent most of their lives hibernating.

Dragons enjoyed sleeping in warm, dark places, so Vulcan would have been perfect for a long nap. A full-grown dragon could sleep for hundreds of years at a time. They must have been pretty cranky when they woke up!

WOODWIND

Land of Endless Music

Woodwind is a land of towering cliffs and deep canyons. The wind blows constantly through these canyons, playing eerie music as it whistles and moans through caves and crevices in the rock. The first settlers heard this music and were inspired to make their own. Woodwind has been the home of musicians and artisans of all kinds ever since.

Woodwind's chief industry is the construction of musical instruments. Although instruments of all sorts are built here, the island is most famous for its wind instruments, which are said to capture the essence of the winds that howl through Woodwind itself. Some of the more famous musicians who played genuine Woodwind instruments include the late, great blagh-piper Fergis MacFeezie, and the legendary composer Wolfram Strotus Gorginski, whose steam-powered Triharmonic Infernonium (pictured below) has been scandalizing opera-goers since the 1200's.

Travel is difficult on Woodwind due to the sheer verticality of the landscape, although the bask-o-vator system installed by Rodor Electrodynamic Industries has made it easier in recent decades.

