

Bellgard Country

BELLGARD

The city of Bellgard began its life as a castle built on the ruins of another castle to protect refugees and migrants after the Fall. As people found safety there, it grew from a castle to a town, and then to a city that became larger with every year. More and more towns throughout the South pledged their fealty to Bellgard, which could send companies of armored knights on horseback out to protect them.

It is said that Bellgard was not always ruled by a Prince, but it is not said loudly, because the Florac family has ruled Bellgard for hundreds of years. As the city grew, the feudal system of government took hold across the South, with the Prince of Bellgard atop a hierarchy of dukes, earls, and knights.

The economy of Bellgard can be summarized in one word: agriculture. All across Bellgard Country, crops are grown, animals are raised, and a majority of it is sent on to Bellgard City. From there, more than half the realm's produce is picked up by the Callentan Fleets and shipped around the world. While most people of Bellgard Country are peasants, bound to the land and without rights, Bellgard the city has become extremely rich, crowded, and decadent. The city has also long been tightly in the grip of the Church of Helios, which dominates most of the realm's nobility, as well.

Recently, a terrible calamity struck Bellgard City: the Royal Citadel, a huge hill in the middle of the city which held the Royal Palace and the "city estates" of all the nobles of the realm, collapsed. Everyone on the Citadel at the time is presumed dead, including the Prince, almost the entire Royal Family, and most of the realm's Dukes and Earls, along with hundreds of Helios Priests and thousands of Crusaders. The city is now in chaos, with neighborhoods turning against each other and street warfare rampant. The rest of Bellgard Country holds its breath to see who or what will assume control, and the rest of the Known World trembles in fear to think that their breadbasket has been ruined.

A few notes about Bellgard the city:

Sometimes called The Flower of the South.

Population: 170,000 during ordinary times, rising to 225,000 during Market Seasons.

Earth architectural reference: Carcassonne.

Earth cultural reference: Languedoc France late medieval.

Language: Westrud.

Heraldry: White city on a green hill before a blue sky.

Bellgard cultural notes:

This is a feudal, medieval culture. Peasants, women, non-humans, and foreigners have few rights, if any, depending on the duchy in which they find themselves. There is no system of public education. Law enforcement is provided by the armed agents and appointed judges of the nobility, and it acts in their interest. The Church of Helios, the chosen faith of most of the aristocracy, is by default the official religion of the realm.

Despite all this, many people in Bellgard live relatively comfortable lives. Bellgard has been at peace for over three hundred years, aside from petty banditry. Most of the nobles and aristocrats spend as much time

as possible in Bellgard, as close to the Prince as possible, and so their subjects are left alone most of the time. In a country with thriving, abundant agriculture, few go hungry. Because most families have lived in the same spot for centuries, there is a musical culture kept alive by troubadours and a body of lore and stories preserved in an oral tradition.

Bellgard military notes:

Knights are drawn from the sons of the aristocracy and the occasional (rare) Warden who proves himself in heroic combat (or blackmails the right person). They are expected to provide their own arms, armor, horses, and squires.

Wardens are recruited from the peasantry, lightly trained, and equipped with simple arms and armor. They are deployed to guard gates, keep order in the markets, and (in theory) patrol the roads.

Levies are conscripted from the peasantry in times of need, though this has not happened to any great degree for centuries. In theory, they would be provided with spears and wooden shields.

Bellgard mints its own coins, as follows:

- Gold Piece: Bellgard Royal (Royals)
- Silver Piece: Bellgard Noble (Nobles)
- Copper Piece: Bellgard Towers (Towers)
- Platinum Piece: Royal Prince (Princes). These coins are very rare, minted by command of the Prince or by request from a Duke, who must pay the Royal Mint for the privilege, usually to commemorate some special occasion.

Bellgard is subdivided into Duchies and Earldoms. Please see below for more detail.

Duchy	Royal Domain of Bellgard
Location	The area immediately surrounding the City itself, including the City.
Ruler	The Royal Domain is a Duchal possession of the Royal Family, traditionally Florac.

Notes	Other nobles compete for honorary titles of vassalage within the Royal Domain. Only the oldest of old Bellgard noble families possess actual estates within the Royal Domain, which they guard fiercely. The principal roads through the Royal Domain, including the Great Western, the Old Eastern, and the Red River Road, along with the Red River itself, are legally not within the Royal Domain, but lie within the Prince's personal Crown Estate. Notably, it is illegal to trespass within the Royal Domain, meaning that for a person without "business before the Prince or his Companions", it is illegal to leave a road or the river and set foot upon the Royal Domain. The Royal Domain is an extremely conservative place, where worship of Helios is mandatory and the peasants are permanently bound to the land, forbidden to travel more than ten miles from the village green of the town of their birth. Since the recent deaths of so many of Bellgard's people of quality, control of the Royal Domain has become a fraught question.
Earldoms	Gaultier, ruled by Johannus II Gaultier. Brunel-The-River, ruled by Vicens IV Brunel. Morel Cross, ruled by Philip, the Morel. First Bridge, ruled by Guydone III Meur. Picharte Fountain Green, ruled by Stephan, the Picharte. Derval Close, ruled by Alain II Derval. Stag Park, ruled by Geffre IV Rouillart.
Other	Prominent quasi-autonomous estates include Phillibert, Vesque, Bucard, Valesi. Crime in the city of Bellgard was dominated by the Quiet Men for many years, but the recent calamity may have damaged them beyond repair.

Duchy	Copper Coast
Location	Southwest of the Royal Domain, along the Copper Sea.
Ruler	Duke Alain IV Jehan, one of the only Dukes not in Bellgard City during the recent catastrophe.
Notes	Copper Coast is a beautiful coastal country with a western Mediterranean climate. It is known for fishing villages, olive groves, and vineyards. The earldoms are pie-slices, each beginning with a coastal town (the earl's seat) and stretching out inland to the west. The farthest inland reaches are the cherished hunting grounds of many Bellgard nobles, but as the region destabilizes these woods have become much more dangerous.

Earldoms	Southreach , formerly ruled by Victor Serere, now a protectorate of the Order Of The White Sun of Laeth. 2. <i>Ben is reworking this one</i> 3. <i>Ben is reworking this one</i> 4. <i>Ben is reworking this one</i>
Other	The Duke's seat, and largest town in Copper Coast, is Southwatch-by-the-Sea. Other notable towns include Pinebough and Winerunnel. The town of Verger lies mostly in ruins.

Duchy	Western Marches (Westmarch)
Location	The westernmost part of Bellgard, touching the Old Wilderness in the west and the Blackwall Mountains in the south.
Ruler	Duke Baltasar II Faure, who probably died in Bellgard.
Notes	A couple market towns, scattered small towns and villages, many hamlets. Westmarch is mostly about farming. Most nobles live in old castles and keeps at the heart of their domains. Duke Faure has not excelled in his duty to keep the land safe. The wilderness has encroached and things are falling into disrepair, even along the Great Western Road. The Faure family have kept Westmarch conservative and repressed, almost as much as the Royal Domain. Most inhabitants are peasants, bound to the land where they live and work.

Earldoms	Faure: Home of the Duke's castle and family seat, and the town of Faurecastle, capital and largest town in the duchy. Farming and some mining. Controls trade with the rest of Bellgard. The domain of Duke Baltasar II Faure. Corkwoods: A sparsely-populated land primarily occupied with subsistence farming and maintenance of the cork oak orchards. Beautiful country, surprisingly dangerous. Coldstream is its only town. The domain of Loys Loulet III, Coldstream. Lowlands: Marshy and damp country primarily subsisting on fishing and the production of oats and wheat, mostly for export for use as livestock feed in Faure. At the edge of a great marshy lake is its only large town, Oarlock. The domain of Menjon IV Oarlock. Green River: The Earl's seat is the town of Alamant, second largest in Westmarch, at a bridge over the actual Green River. Disorganized farming and herding. Alamant is the central market town for the earldom. People have been living at the site of Alamant for a very long time indeed, and there are many stories and rumors about it - mysterious ruins, hidden crypts of ancient kings, etc. The domain of Dalmas VIII, Alamant.
Other	Westmarch has been gradually failing for decades, and with the collapse of Bellgard's central hierarchy it is anyone's guess who will end up in charge here.

Duchy	Broadgarden
Location	Eastern Bellgard between the mountains and the Copper Sea.
Ruler	Duke Bernard III Peyrot, who probably died in Bellgard.
Notes	Incredibly fertile agricultural land - lots of sun, lots of rain, rolling countryside split up by canals and streams. Religious strife is brewing between the Voll and Varda worshiping peasants and the increasing Helios worship among the nobles.

Earldoms	Peyrot, bordered by the Royal Domain in the west, the Copper Sea to the south, and the Pey River on the north and east. The Duke's home domain, ruled from the port town of Peywash, at the mouth of the Pey. An enormous amount of fruit is grown throughout the orchards of Peyrot. The Duke personally controls huge vineyards known as the Peygarden. Rainsea, between the mountains to the north and west, the Pey River to the south, and the Rushwater river to the east. Great cloudbanks heavy with warm wet air blow in from the Copper Sea, slam into the cold air of the mountains, and become great rainstorms that regularly flood the region. This creates ideal conditions for growing barley, rye, and wheat, all of which are known for their Rainsea varietals. Rushford, a prosperous town where the Rushwater meets the Pey, is the Earl's seat. The domain of Earl Gallmau III, Rushford. Founderwheat lies between the Rushwater and Pey in the west, the Stonewater in the east, the mountains to the north, and the Copper Sea. It is a very ancient place of human habitation, and the local tradition is that this is where humans first cultivated wheat. To this day, vast quantities of wheat and other grains are produced here annually. Arches, a very old town built around ancient human ruins, lies in the middle of the Earldom, nearly halfway between the Rushwater and the Stonewater, and is the Earl's seat. The domain of Felix Francis II, Archworthy. Eastmarches runs from the Stonewater east to the Running Moors, the borderlands between Bellgard and Kirenar and Stillwater. It is extremely productive, black-earth agricultural land, and the locals focus on cash crops that can survive long voyages: root vegetables, gourds, potatoes, and onions. They also grow crops which can be fermented, and then ferment them in barrels over the long journey to market, like cabbage, cucumbers and beets. Finally, the signature product of Eastmarches is mead. Stonewash, at the mouth of the Stonewater, is a port town and the seat of the Earl. It is in many ways a rival of Peywash. The Earl Roland III, Eastamar.
Other	Sharing a border with disorganized, isolated Stillwater and peaceful, prosperous Kirenar has allowed Broadgarden to pay little attention to defense or security for many years.

Duchy	Great Red River
Location	Due north of the Royal Domain, on the east bank of the river that flows south from Redpath to the Copper Sea.
Ruler	Duke Petrus IV Dauhan, another Duke who survived Bellgard Citadel's collapse.

Notes	Rolling, densely-wooded hills give way to vineyards and pastureland along the River. Great Red River produces a great quantity of wine and cheese of all qualities. There is no serfdom in Great Red River, and the peasants have had more rights than in any other duchy for a long time. Towns and larger villages have Mayors, Eldermen, or Councils which share some of the local Earl's power. Duke Petrus IV took the throne just months ago and has already demonstrated a taste for radical reform, including formal abolition of serfdom and moves to fully liberate the peasants. He has also formally recognized the various farming, ranching, and craft guilds, and has made great efforts to welcome non-humans to the duchy. Worst of all, though, is that he publicly rejected worship of Helios, and announced himself as a devotee of the Mother.
Earldoms	All of the Earls of Great Red River were conservatives, and all were in attendance to the Prince when Bellgard Citadel collapsed. The new Duke took the opportunity to elevate younger heirs to the Earlships, including two women, the first Countesses in Bellgard for over 150 years. Oakhouse is the smallest Earldom in Great Red River, but relatively rich thanks to the town of Greatoak, which is the Duke's seat and the central market town for the whole duchy. The domain of the Duke. Home also to the Stonehouse, one of the largest temples to Fusorin in all of Bellgard. Tunwater is home to a small town of the same name as its Earldom, with a huge cooperage, making barrels and shipping them around Great Red River to store wine, cheese, and whatever else fits in barrels. Newly the domain of Countess Bren, the Tunover, just 20 years old. Fouques-the-Bend is nestled in a huge curve of the Great Red River which was thoroughly deforested centuries ago and has been pastureland for cattle ever since. Called "Sunny Fouques" by many because so much of the rest of the duchy is heavily tree-shaded. Newly the domain of Godefroy, the Fouques. Whiterock is hill country in the northeast of Great Red River, rising up towards the mountains. It is also wine country, home to wineries that are centuries old. The wineries age and store their wines in caves dug into the sides of chalky limestone hills, which give the Earldom its name. The Earl - now, the Countess - rules from the town of Gladhall. Newly the domain of Sanceline, the Gladhead.
Other	The new Duke is making great efforts to invite non-humans and other foreigners to visit Great Red River, and a small but growing number are choosing to settle there.

Duchy	Elkwoods
Location	North of the Royal Domain, on the west bank of the Great Red River.
Ruler	Duke Fortho Coran, who probably died in Bellgard.
Notes	The duchy of Elkwoods consists of a long stretch of cleared land along the Great Red River, and then mile after mile of dense forest. The forest is pierced by Coran's Roads: wide roads kept free of tree growth by roving bands of loggers. Islands of cleared land are found here and there, where human towns are built. Along the river, Elkwoods raises a great quantity of wheat. Inland, the serf-like peasants clear-cut woodlands for timber, trap and hunt animals for fur and meat, and operate two large iron mines. The Coran family has always been very conservative, and the various heirs of Duke Fortho are fighting over who will inherit the right to raise the alarm about Dauhan's reforms in Great Red River. Meanwhile, they have inherited Duke Fortho's push to increase logging throughout the duchy, which is spurring conflict with local druids.
Earldoms	Corandom: The entirety of Elkwoods' Great Red River shorefront lies within the Coran domain. The peasants, bound to the land, raise wheat and live short, difficult lives. The Corans live at Coran Hall, their keep in the town of Ironfort, named for the iron mining that made the Coran fortune. Non-humans, with the exception of Runini, are forbidden from entering Ironfort, and even Runini are not permitted to walk the town's streets after dark. Hornwood: The first earldom west of Corandom. Huge stretches of the forest here are kept as game preserves for the nobility. The peasants of Hornwood either serve the ruling Edwulf earls, or eke out a living as subsistence farmers. The domain of Fritigern III, Edwulf. Twohills: The next earldom to the west brags of not one but two separate iron mines. Both are primitive, even ramshackle affairs, deadly to the miners and inefficient in their production, but compared to lumber they are profitable. The mines are owned by Coran, and the local Retemer earls merely keep them in trust. Everyone who isn't a miner toils in vast logging camps and struggles to farm enough to survive the winter. The domain of Valin IX, Retemer. Beremud: The saddest of Elkwoods' domains and the most dangerous. Decades of poor management by the absentee Andagis earls have resulted in over-logging, crop failures, and a growing swamp that has begun to engulf Augiston, the only substantial town in the domain. The local druid has had enough, and has begun ambushing lumberjacks with packs of wolves and bears. The domain of Aorid II, Andagis, who died in Bellgard without a clear heir.

	Other	A very conservative land, Elkwoods is generally unfriendly to non-humans and other foreigners, and women or youths traveling alone risk being claimed by a local strongman.
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Duchy		Northern Reach (Northreach)
	Location	North of Elkwoods and northwest of Great Red River, Northreach marks the very northern edge of Bellgard country, giving way to wilderness and eventually the Cantons of Parashkanan.
	Ruler	Duke Galhard II Lonsat, who died in Bellgard. His son Sarus has yet to claim the crown.
	Notes	Northreach is built on herding. The Elk Forest thins out across Northreach as it stretches towards the Eagle Moors, leaving vast open meadows through which the locals rotate herds of sheep and cows. Northreach exports salted mutton and beef, wool, and leather. Settlements in this duchy are built around vast pens, huge, old slaughterhouses, and vast, ramshackle tanneries.

Earldoms	Eagle's Range: The most northerly of the earldoms is claimed by the Duke, and it sprawls around the fortified town of Eagle's Watch, originally a fort built to protect Bellgard from Parashi incursion. Now, the town boasts a large Parashi community, which includes one of the largest populations of Graditeli in all of Bellgard country. Eagle's Watch has evolved from an isolated fortress to an important market town, and thanks to merchants from Parashkanan the people there enjoy a higher-than-average standard of living. The Duke's personal fiefdom, but the first Duke Galhard elevated his Marshal to the rank of Earl and gave him authority over "the Range" and part of the rents. Thus, Sarus will share this domain with Hachulf Thorismud, Ranger (his created name, not a class or profession.) Elkwander: The domain bordering Elkwoods, lightly populated, with most citizens living in the roadhouse town of Wanderway. Wanderway, originally a dirt track and a barn, had the good sense to build an inn fifty years ago. This made it a useful stopover for Parashi travelers headed south, who welcomed the chance for a comfortable bed and decent meal before heading into Elkwoods. Wanderway now boasts temples of Elenath Wayfinder, Fusorin the Measurer, Varda the Keeper, and the seasonal gods, who are favorites of many Parashi. Domain of Clement III, Waywander. Broadfields: The largest domain by land area, a vast stretch of meadows and grasslands broken up by small forests. The herders of Broadfields consider the forests in their land sacred, and will not cut them or allow them to be cut, except when trees grow well into the grazing lands. Little happens in Broadfields that isn't devoted to the sheep, cows, and goats. The one town, Tanner's Hill, is dedicated to tanning leather and salting meat. It does not smell good. Domain of Radulf III, Stonefence.
Other	The Dukes of Northreach have been absentee rulers for two generations, but the officials they left behind to govern on their behalf wisely faced the reality of their position. They embraced the merchants from Parashkanan, they opened their doors to non-humans, and they downplayed the Church of Helios in favor of the churches that helped to keep their populations healthy and (relatively) thriving. It is yet to be seen whether Sarus will embrace this "progressive" approach or command a return to the "traditional" Bellgard ways.