

Skeletonia

Underground - but not *too* underground - in caves not known to man or elf or dwarf or even orc, you will find... Skeletonia. The Bone Kingdom. The Land of the Dead Who Walk. You will likely walk right past their first set of sentries; after all, who notices the bones buried in dirt walls. But they notice **you**; oh, yes, they do. Once you have passed them, some of the sentries will dig themselves out of the dirt to follow. Hear that slight scrabbling sound from behind? That's them, creeping in the forever night of the underground. But by the time you notice, it'll be too late: you'll have come to the first obvious sentries, and by now the Bone-people will have you covered from a dozen different angles. There is no escape.

The good news is, you're only in trouble if a majority of your party registers as 'evil.' If not... come on in! Sell things! Buy things! Hope you like alcohol made from fungi, because the selection is pretty limited.

The exact 'population' of Skeletonia is kind of hard to pin down, but there's at least a couple of hundred thousand of them. They're all skeletons of various humanoid races

that got reanimated somehow via the backlash of various area effect spells cast too near a graveyard. Fortunately, the spirits that animate them are generally not 'evil;' the newly-raised skeleton has no particular animus towards the living. In fact, if it wasn't for the notoriously bad reputation non-free willed skeletons have on the surface, most Free Skeletons would probably just wander over to the nearest town and try to keep busy.

But *there* is that notoriously bad reputation, and most newly-formed Free Skeletons seem to dimly remember that (as well as the local language). So, they dig down, instead of up: eventually they break through to a tunnel or cave below; and from there it's just a matter of listening to local Deep Dark tall tales looking for that rumoured underground city where skeletons wander around freely. Once they get there, they discover that Skeletonia is not so much a city as it is a collection of hobby clubs and debating societies. After all, Free Skeletons don't eat, drink, sleep, fornicate, breathe, get hot, get cold, or almost anything else that might require a living sentient creature to gather resources. There's not much to do except talk, read what's available, and, well, arts and crafts. With a **lot** of swapping around.

And *that's* why they love to see adventuring parties. Particularly ones with those fancy magical bags with infinite cargo capacity. Adventuring parties carry around the most eclectic piles of junk, and it turns out that a Free Skeleton will buy *anything*, secure in the knowledge that it will eventually find another Free Skeleton who actually wants it. Free Skeletons particularly crave tools, finished metal products, wood products of any kind, art supplies, the chance to transcribe the party's spell books, any *other* books that they don't want... and they're willing to pay for them, too. Skeletonia has quite a bit more gold ore and gemstones than it actually needs; and, of course, its main library has by now a rather impressive library of spells and magic.

And then there's the beer (and rations) made from fungi. Admittedly, those are all a bit of an acquired taste. On the other hand, the stuff lasts forever and you can sterilize water with the alcohol, so they've got their own value as trade goods.

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