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Game: **THROUGH THE DESERT**

Publisher: **Z-Man Games (2016)**

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Print on card (ensure you are printing at 100% scale) laminate and trim to size.

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Through The Desert

SETUP

Place the **game board** with whichever side you wish to use faceup (the river side is used in a variant).

In 2 and 3 player games, all the spaces to the right and below the **elevation line** are not used.

Each player chooses a player color and takes the 6 **leaders** (riders on camels) of that color. Place the leaders on gray camels in front of each player as a reminder of who plays which color.

In a 5 player game, each player returns one of their leaders to the box. Each must be riding a different pastel camel (all players keep their gray leader).

Place all camels without riders near the board, separated by color.

3 players: Return 4 camels of each color to the box.

2 players: Return 8 camels of each color to the box.

Arbitrarily place the 5 **palm trees**, one at a time, on any spaces on the board that show a large pool of water (limit 1 palm tree per space). Palm trees mark these spaces as **oases**.

Randomly place a **waterhole token** faceup on each space on the board marked with a small pool of water and on each large pool space that does not have a palm tree. Return any unused waterhole tokens to the box.

Place the remaining tokens near the board, separated by type.

The youngest player at the table is the **first player**.

Starting with the first player and going clockwise, each player places one of their leaders (excluding gray) on an empty space of the board. Continue until all of the leaders for all players (except gray) are placed.

Follow these restrictions when placing leaders:

A leader cannot be placed in a space containing a waterhole token, an oasis (large pool space with a palm tree), a mountain, or another leader.

A leader cannot be placed in a space next to an oasis or any leader.

The first leader that each player places cannot have the same colored camel as another leader who is already on the board.

2 Players

Setup: After creating the camel supply, return 8 camels of each color to the box.

Elevation line: The section beyond the elevation line is not used during setup or during the game.

Placing camels: During the first turn of the game, only the first player is limited to placing 1 camel during their first turn. The other player places 2 camels during their first turn of the game.

3 Players

Setup: After creating the camel supply, return 4 camels of each color to the box.

Elevation line: The section beyond the elevation line is not used during setup or during the game.

5 Players

Setup: When gathering leaders, each player returns 1 of their leaders to the box. Each of the returned leaders must be riding a different pastel camel (players keep their gray leader). Therefore, each player controls a different set of 4 caravans during the game.

PLAYING THE GAME

The game is a series of **turns** starting with the first player and going clockwise. On your turn, **you must take a 2 camels from among the 5 colors of camel supplies and place them on the board**. You can take 2 of the same color or 2 of different colors.

First Turn Placement

The first 2 players to take their turns place only 1 camel each during their first turn (in a 2 player game, this applies to the first player only). For the rest of the game, players always place 2 camels.

Placing Camels

A camel can be placed in any space that is next to your caravan of the same color, but you must follow these restrictions:

You cannot place a camel in a mountain range, a space that already contains a camel, an oasis (large pool space with a palm tree), or an enclosed area.

Your caravan does not have to form a single line; your caravans can 'fork'.

You can place a camel in a space next to a camel of a different color, regardless of whom the camel belongs to.

You cannot place a camel in a space next to another camel of the same color if that other camel belongs to another player (i.e. you cannot 'merge' two different caravans of the same camel color).

Waterholes

When you place a camel in a space with a **waterhole token**, take the token and place it facedown in front of you. It stays hidden from other players until the end of the game.

OASES

A space that contains a palm tree is an oasis. When you place a camel in a space next to an oasis, the matching caravan is linked to that oasis: **take a 5 point token** and place it faceup in front of you.

Each caravan can be linked to each oasis only once, but a single caravan can be linked to multiple oases.

If one of your caravans is linked to an oasis, you can still place camels from that caravan next to that oasis, but you do not score any additional points.

A single oasis can be linked to by any number of caravans belonging to any combination of players, including multiple caravans from the same player. This is limited only by the number of spaces next to the oasis (and camel placement rules).

ENCLOSED AREAS

When you place a camel that causes a single caravan to surround an area of the board, you have **enclosed** that area. The caravan must form an uninterrupted chain completely surrounding the area, either by itself or with the help of the edge of the board or the mountain in the middle of the board.

You cannot use caravans of other colors to enclose a single area, and an enclosed area cannot contain any other camels, regardless of whom they belong to.

When an area becomes enclosed, **take all the waterhole tokens in the enclosed area** and place them facedown in front of you.

Also, if there are any oases in the enclosed area that the enclosing caravan is not yet linked to, take one 5 point token for each of those oases.

After an area has been enclosed, players cannot place any camels inside it.

Additionally, at the end of the game, each enclosed area is worth 1 point for each empty space within it. These points are calculated during final scoring, so no point tokens are taken when an area is enclosed.

SCORING POINTS

Points are tracked by **point tokens** that players earn during the game, and are kept in front of them.

Most of the point tokens are kept faceup, except for waterhole tokens.

Even if the appropriate tokens have run out, players still score points; use another means to track scores.

TERRAIN

Desert and small pools Desert spaces show sand or cracked earth, but they can also have a small pool of water, which matters only during setup.

Large pools A large pool of water is either an oasis (if there is a palm tree on it) or a normal space containing a waterhole. If it is an oasis, camels cannot be placed there. If it is a waterhole, camels can be placed there.

Mountain ranges Mountains are not spaces, so camels cannot be placed there.

END OF THE GAME

The game ends at the end of a player's turn in which the last camel of any one color has been placed on the board.

When the game ends, players first determine who has the largest caravan of each color before each player's final score is calculated.

Largest Caravan

For each camel color, determine who among all players has the most camels in his or her caravan of that color. That player takes the **10 point caravan token** matching that color.

If 2 or more players are tied for most of a color, all tied players take a 5 point token, and no one takes the 10 point token.

Final Scoring

To calculate final scores:

Each player adds the values of all point tokens they have taken throughout the game.

Each player adds the value of their enclosed areas. An enclosed area is worth 1 point for each empty space within it, not counting oases.

The player with the most points wins. On a tie, the tied players share victory.

VARIANT RULES

River Board

The reverse side of the board shows the Niger river running through the southern Sahara. Aside from the different arrangement of land features, there are some special rules for the river board:

During setup, you may place leaders in spaces next to the river. All other leader placement rules are unchanged.

During the game, placement rules are the same, but the first time that each of your caravans 'crosses' the river, take a 5 point token.

Serpentine Leader Placement

During setup, players can use a serpentine order for leader placement. In a 4 player game, standard leader placement proceeds clockwise from the first player.

Serpentine leader placement begins like standard but then reverses the order, counter-clockwise from the last player.

Aquifers

During setup, place waterhole tokens as normal, but place them facedown instead of faceup, returning any remaining waterhole tokens to the box without looking at them.

Waterhole tokens taken during gameplay are still kept facedown until the end of the game. During the game, you may secretly look at any tokens you have taken without showing them to the other players.