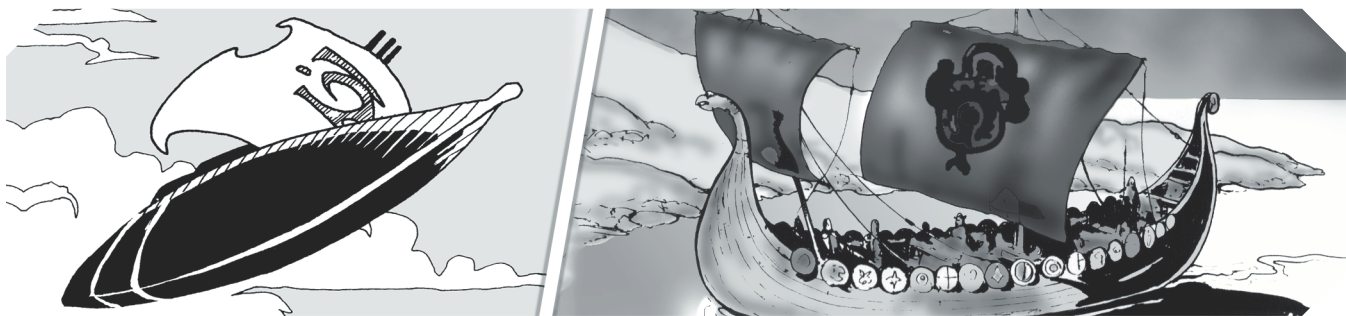


GURPS®

Fourth Edition

VEHICLES

TRANSPORTS OF FANTASY™



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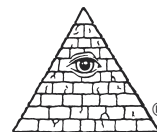
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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

INTRODUCTION

Most “fantasy” roleplaying-game settings are low-tech worlds, more or less loosely based on the real world’s history. Hence, when a *GURPS* fantasy game needs a vehicle, the first stop is often the historical vehicle materials in the *Basic Set*, followed by *GURPS Low-Tech* (the line’s historical-tech reference book) or one of its supplements – *GURPS Low-Tech Companion 2: Weapons and Warriors* has notes on chariots and military transportation, and game details for an assortment of military vehicles, while *GURPS Low-Tech Companion 3: Daily Life and Economics* has information on transport infrastructure and various cargo vehicles. In addition, *GURPS Fantasy* has a range of vehicle descriptions, mostly (but not entirely) based on historical examples.

However, fantasy can go well beyond history! After all, players are accustomed to the huge variety of land, sea, and air vehicles found in the modern world. They may find historical-style vehicles (restricted by low-tech engineering and the limitations of muscle and wind power) less than exciting – and fantasy is all about stretching plausibility for fun. *GURPS Fantasy-Tech 1: The Edge of Reality* devotes a chapter to imaginary transport technologies derived from legends or historical speculation, some of them marginally plausible as real-world ideas. *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Treasures 2: Epic Treasures* has a short chapter of weird and highly fantastical vehicles. Building on those options, this *GURPS Vehicles* volume is all about fantasy. It takes realism as its baseline, but goes further, applying genre-fantasy thinking to the subject. Of course, not every vehicle described here belongs in every fantasy setting, but most should be quite adaptable.

REFERENCED WORLDS

For convenience, and to illustrate the sort of fantasy assumptions involved with these vehicles, this volume makes frequent references to pre-existing *GURPS* fantasy settings. These include:

- Yrth, the world of *GURPS Banestorm*.
- Azoth-7, an “Alchemical Enlightenment” world described on pp. 112-113 of *GURPS Infinite Worlds*.
- *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*, which represents various ultra-generic high/heroic fantasy settings.
- *GURPS Thaumatology: Alchemical Baroque*, a fairytale setting known in *Infinite Worlds* games as “Marchen-1.”

Where a vehicle may be associated with one of these settings, the fact is noted in the heading. However, those references are intended to illustrate, not to restrict; nothing stops the GM from borrowing any of these vehicles for their own settings.

TABLE FORMATS

The vehicle details tables in this book follow the format defined on pp. B462-463. Variations and complications are discussed in the table notes; in particular, many vehicles have different DR on different components.

TECH LEVELS

All of the vehicles detailed in this book are assigned a tech level, as per p. B22 and p. B27. Quite a few of them are from divergent technology paths or involve a sort of superscience, all as described on p. B513. (Actually, “superscience” on fantasy worlds is usually supernatural, involving quasi-scientific ideas such as alchemy.) However, it’s fair to say that not all fantasy settings pay a lot of attention to this subject. Genre fantasy tends to be set in a version of the technological “olden times,” casually blending equipment from TL0 to TL4 or sometimes beyond. Its treatment of vehicles is especially prone to this, particularly at sea; expect a fantasy port’s harbor to be bustling with TL1 galleys, TL2 longships, and TL4 galleons. This isn’t entirely ahistorical – cultures of different levels of technological sophistication historically came into collision quite frequently – but fantasy heroes might not notice the contrast. Moreover, some *GURPS*-based fantasy games, such as *Dungeon Fantasy*, ignore the TL rules entirely. Even in games which use tech levels for some purposes, the GM may choose to ignore TL qualifiers on vehicle skills (and not sweat issues of familiarity too much either), so that, for example, heroic sailor PCs can crew coracles, dhows, and advanced junks, all with equal competence.

Additional Art Acknowledgments

P. 13: L. Le Breton (1846) *Cases de natures*. Paris, 1846. [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/2014649303.

P. 17: “Fleet of Galleys Escorted by a Caravel from The Sailing Vessels,” by After Pieter Bruegel the Elder. From the Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1928, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, [metmuseum.org](https://www.metmuseum.org).

P. 21: “Okitsu,” by Utagawa Hiroshige. From The Francis Lathrop Collection, Purchase, Frederick C. Hewitt Fund, 1911, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, [metmuseum.org](https://www.metmuseum.org).

PUBLICATION HISTORY

This is the first edition of *GURPS Vehicles: Transports of Fantasy*. A few of these vehicles have previously been discussed in various Third or Fourth Edition *GURPS* books. In some cases, game statistics have been borrowed from those previous books, as noted where appropriate in the text.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Masters is the author of numerous *GURPS* books, including *GURPS Banestorm*, *GURPS Thaumatology*, and the Fourth Edition *GURPS Steampunk* line – as well as of several books for other games and a roleplaying game of his own creation, *The Small Folk*, which can be found at warehouse23.com/products/the-small-folk. He is qualified to operate a horseless carriage of TL8 construction, but prefers that it not be subject to supernatural influences.

A command platform is usually a heavy chariot, carrying a driver, the commander, and an aide or bodyguard. In fantasy worlds, “battle wizards” might use chariots similarly. The vehicles grant mobility and a better view of the battlefield, allow more free movement of hands and feet than is possible on horseback, and can carry a box or two of magical “material components.”

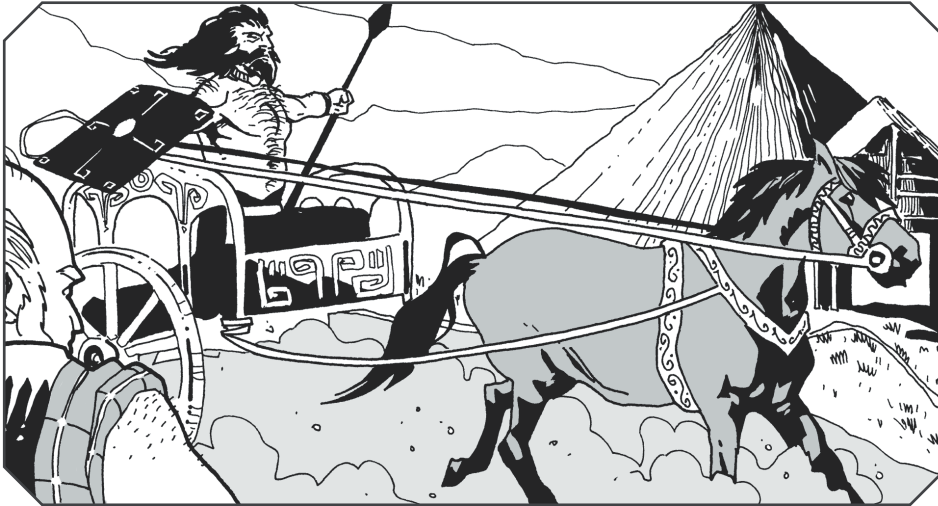
Magic and Chariots

Wizards who cast spells on chariots or on their crews or horses should keep a few things in mind. When casting Area spells, two yards of radius suffices to cover the *body* of a heavy

chariot, and one yard of radius just covers a light chariot or battle car. Either case excludes the chariot pole and the horses. Covering those separately or with the chariot body included requires at least three yards of radius in all cases, and four yards might be needed for a heavy chariot with three horses with breathing space between them. When casting Regular spells, a wizard needs to affect the chariot body (SM as on the table) or each horse (SM +1) as separate targets. Casters expecting to magically reinforce their chariots might therefore prefer light vehicles (SM +1, double casting cost) instead of heavy (SM +2, triple cost).

WAR WAGONS

War wagons were probably inspired by experience of using farming wagons (pp. 4-5) as improvised mobile barricades. In the late Middle Ages, the Hussite peasant rebels of Central Europe developed the concept into purpose-built mobile fortresses with wooden armor and firing slits for crossbows or early firearms. (See *GURPS Low-Tech*, p. 136, for more on the historical version.) Resourceful fantasy heroes might come up with something similar, adding magical spells or devices to a war wagon force’s defenses and firepower.



Historical Military Ground Vehicle Table

TL	Vehicle	ST/HP	Hnd/SR	HT	Move	LWt.	Load	SM	Occ.	DR	Range	Cost	Loc.
TEAMSTER (IQ-5, Animal Handling (same)-4, Riding (same)-2)													
1	Heavy Chariot	23†	0/2	11c	3/7*	0.39	0.3	+2	1+2	2	F	\$660	4DE2W
1	Light Chariot	16†	+1/1	11c	4/9*	0.23	0.2	+1	1+1	1	F	\$330	2DE2W
2	Battle Car	14†	+2/1	11c	4/10*	0.22	0.2	+1	1+1	1	F	\$250	2DE2W
3	War Wagon	50†	-4/5	12c	3/6*	3	2	+4	2+18	5	F	\$2K	4DE4W

FANTASTICAL LAND VEHICLES

In fantasy settings, even if they seem to resemble historical settings, land vehicles can get a little strange. Nonhuman construction, magical materials, supernatural or anachronistic propulsion systems, or unusual requirements can all lead to designs never seen in the real world.

VARIANT AND FANCIFUL CARTS, WAGONS, AND CHARIOTS

For exotic effect, the chariots, coaches, and carriages described on pp. 5-6 might be constructed from unusual materials, decorated very strangely, or drawn by animals which are simply imaginary or which always resisted domestication historically, such as wolves or tigers. (In the latter case, for

a degree of realism, note that a tiger is almost as strong as a pony, whereas three wolves are needed to match a single pony’s strength.) Apply the *Styling* rules from *GURPS Low-Tech*, p. 14, to create embellished vehicles. Also, the simplest vehicles can look a little unusual if they’re intended for very large, small, or nonhumanoid beings.

Examples

Monowheel Chariot: This ultra-lightweight and very cinematic vehicle might be built for racing, or used for courier, scouting, or skirmishing duty in a setting where the available fast draft animals can’t carry a rider on their backs. It consists of one outsize wheel and a cycle seat, and is pulled by a single creature.

CHAPTER TWO

WATERCRAFT

The great hulk was remarkably intact, considering that it had been adrift on the open ocean for an unknown period, and then wedged against the sandbank, battered by waves and tides, for at least the last five days. The skipper of the small merchant cutter didn't like it. It was not only bigger than anything that could sail had any right to be, it had to be tougher than he could believe of anything that big and made of wood. However, he was being paid well, so he took his craft within a hundred feet. Then the wizard twirled his fingers and rose straight up in the air, high enough to scan the hulk's deck. He called down that it was clear, and then drifted closer and hurled a grapnel over to lodge on the deck-rail while the skipper carefully took his cutter alongside. The shady-looking half-elf in the leather armor swarmed up the rope and then fixed a rope ladder, and the other three adventurers climbed up that.

With the strangers safely aboard the hulk, the skipper put back out to the open sea, holding off a half-mile or so, and dropped anchor. He'd sworn before the village priest to wait a full day for a signal to pick the strangers up again. The whole business was too weird for his tastes, but the strangers' gold was good.

On board the hulk, the five strangers looked around the deck. Then the dwarf warrior shouldered his axe so he could take a deep swig from his ale-flask. "I agree with that sailor," he declared, "I don't like this."

"What's the problem?" the human bard who acted as their leader, or at least spokesperson, asked cheerfully. "Think of this as just another ruin. We've cleared out bigger castles than this in half a day."

"The damned sea is the damned problem," the dwarf said. "It's no place for sensible folk. And none of those castles rocked and shook like this."

"That one up on the mountains east of the Burning Fells did," the party's cleric observed. The dwarf just grunted.

"Come on," the bard said. "Let's go find out what happened to those salvage parties. I'll wager they just fell through some rotten stairs."

"All eight of them?" the cleric asked. But before the bard could think of a clever answer, the half-elf, who'd been turning and watching the whole time, blade in hand, gave a yell of warning and scuttled backward to the dwarf's side.

"Perhaps that's our answer," the cleric suggested, as a dozen slimy green tentacles erupted from a cargo hatch and began flailing toward the group.

In a world of medieval-style roads or worse and no mechanical engines, the most efficient way to get around over any significant distance is by water when that's conveniently located. Indeed, maritime cultures may refer to the sea as a road or a highway. Even river travel can be the most efficient option in many circumstances, though

going downstream is frequently much easier than heading upstream.

Naval warfare is also a common feature of fantasy worlds. In a pre-gunpowder setting, that tends to mean mostly ramming and boarding. Cinematic assumptions notwithstanding, pre-gunpowder artillery lacks the speed of fire and accuracy to be used effectively at sea.

For more on naval combat, see *GURPS Low-Tech Companion 2: Weapons and Warriors*, pp. 34-36. Sailing Move rates given in this chapter assume a favorable wind; other conditions can complicate matters (see *Water Travel*, p. B466).

MARITIME TECH LEVELS IN FANTASY

Many people think of "generic fantasy" worlds as TL3 in *GURPS* terms. After all, they have castles and knights in armor, but no gunpowder. In other words, they are "medieval," and the Middle Ages define TL3. On that basis, ships and sea travel in those worlds may seem anachronistically advanced – or rather, a wild mixture of outdated and advanced, but with many at TL4. The point is that romantic notions of "olden times" may focus on castles and knights, but look to the fully rigged galleons of the later "Age of Sail" and the golden age of piracy for images of seafaring, rather than to smaller, inelegant medieval cogs.

However, it might be more accurate to say that those fantasy worlds are really early TL4 throughout, with the big anachronism being the absence of gunpowder rather than the presence of galleons. After all, the heaviest fantasy plate armor present resembles Renaissance jousting plate, and castles survived for a while historically and would remain useful in any world in the absence of cannon. Either way, those outdated nautical exceptions may include classical-style (TL2) galleys (which did last well into the Age of Sail on the Mediterranean, albeit with significant changes; see pp. 15-18), medieval Viking ships, and the ageless Arab dhow. This anachronistic admixture is justified by setting design on parts of Marchen-1 and Yrth and in backward corners of Azoth-7.

If GMs or setting designers want to use the TL rules in detail, they can classify their fantasy worlds as either "TL3, advanced in shipbuilding and navigation" or "TL4, delayed in firearms." Either way, the resulting TL4 galleons lack cannon, possibly leading to some detail variations from historical patterns; see pp. 20-21.

GLIDERS

Gliders are another type of flying vehicle which it seems fairly easy to imagine a low-tech society inventing. They're relatively simple constructions, don't require any sort of engine, and could surely be inspired by observing birds or playing with kites.

In reality, this isn't as simple as it sounds. As **GURPS Vehicles: Steampunk Conveyances** explains, experiments have shown that it's *possible* to build a simple hang-glider with TL4 materials, but the result would likely be horribly unstable. Even if one could be built and developed to a usable state without killing too many test pilots, it would lose altitude rather quickly in regular flight. However, low-tech fantasy gliders aren't actually inherently crazy. The vehicles in this section are cinematic rather than super-scientific; that is to say, they are better than could plausibly be expected to exist at their TL, but don't actually violate the laws of physics.

Note that gliders are listed as having an Acceleration of 0. Without engines, they can only gain velocity from launch mechanisms, being towed, or tailwinds, or by diving.

STICKS AND STRING

Early low-tech gliders, with frames made of wood (or, if dungeon-fantasy dwarves are involved, amazing super-light silver-grey metal) and coverings of plant-fiber cloth, would likely be hang-gliders, which require less material and fewer complex connections to control surfaces. They would lack the carrying capacity to be useful transports or warcraft or the range to serve as fast couriers, but they might be employed for reconnaissance and the occasional clandestine assault, if a way could be found to launch them to an adequate altitude and range.

Mountain-Folk Glider (Dungeon Fantasy): "Mountain folk" are tribal peoples occupying certain remote mountain ranges. They are generally regarded as barbarians, and are certainly hardy and individualistic enough that PC adventurers from this background often use the barbarian template. Like many "low tech" peoples from specific environments, they have developed some remarkably sophisticated technologies to solve particular problems – including these hang-gliders. They resemble the clockpunk hang-glider in **Steampunk Conveyances**, but benefit from years or centuries of development, giving them greater stability and useful range (their "glide ratio" can be set as high as the GM thinks will make for a good story). They are usually launched from stations on the highest accessible peaks, using clever weight-and-pulley mechanisms.

NONHUMANS AND GLIDERS

Fantasy nonhuman races might also have uses for gliders, even if they are rather fragile and vulnerable to flying monsters. The following is one example.

Pixie Throne-Kite (Dungeon Fantasy): This contraption is manufactured for the leaders of friendly pixie clans by

gnome artisans and then embellished by pixie artists. It looks like an oversized toy, just under 3' long and with a similar wingspan. However, it is in fact a fully functional two-seat sailplane, with a complex aerodynamic control system – just sized for pixies, who use it as a prestige transport in clan gatherings and migrations. Gnome craftsmanship and the innate pixie grasp of the principles of flight make it an efficient, agile flyer. It has an open double cockpit; the passenger (always a pixie clan chief or someone equally important) sits in a very comfortable seat behind and slightly above the pilot. The conveyance is decorated beautifully enough to receive +2 reactions from anyone who appreciates such work.

SAHUDESE MANNED KITES (YRTH)

Historically, kites may go back to TL1. They were probably invented in Asia, where silk and bamboo – excellent kite-making materials – were widely available. Once kites existed, using one to lift a human being was a simple matter of scale; the problem was lowering the unfortunate individual safely to the ground afterward. (Stories tell of a TL2 Chinese monarch using the technology as a sadistic form of execution.) So, despite other stories from various lands, useful, *reliable* person-lifting kites weren't actually developed until TL6, in the West. Powered aircraft then quickly superseded them.

However, Sahudese culture has incorporated a lot from its Chinese antecedents, including a fondness for kites of all sizes. In this field, Sahud has gone one better than its inspiration. Sahud has a few person-lifting kites serving various purposes. Along with military reconnaissance and cartography, they are sometimes used to insert ninja into hostile cities or castles without triggering magic-detecting alarms. (This requires a dark night, a black kite with a black cable, a well-lubricated and hence quiet winch, a crew with good night vision, and an acrobatic and lucky ninja.) A typical set-up consists of a one-person basket suspended from an *array* of kites, all together weighing 50 lbs.; if necessary, treat it as a vehicle with ST/HP 15, HT 10c, SM +2, DR 1, and Loc OWi. A cable to a winch mechanism (which weighs another 200 lbs.) connects it. The complete assembly costs \$1,500.

The kite can be launched in moderate to strong winds, ascending 100' per minute to a maximum height of 600', always somewhere downwind of the winch. Controlling it is largely the task of the four-person ground crew. The crew must include and be supervised by someone with the IQ-based Professional Skill "Kite Operator"; roll against that to, for example, bring the kite level with a castle tower, or keep it under control if the wind changes suddenly. This is a mature technology; dangerous crashes are only likely to happen on critical failures on the skill roll, or during very tricky missions.

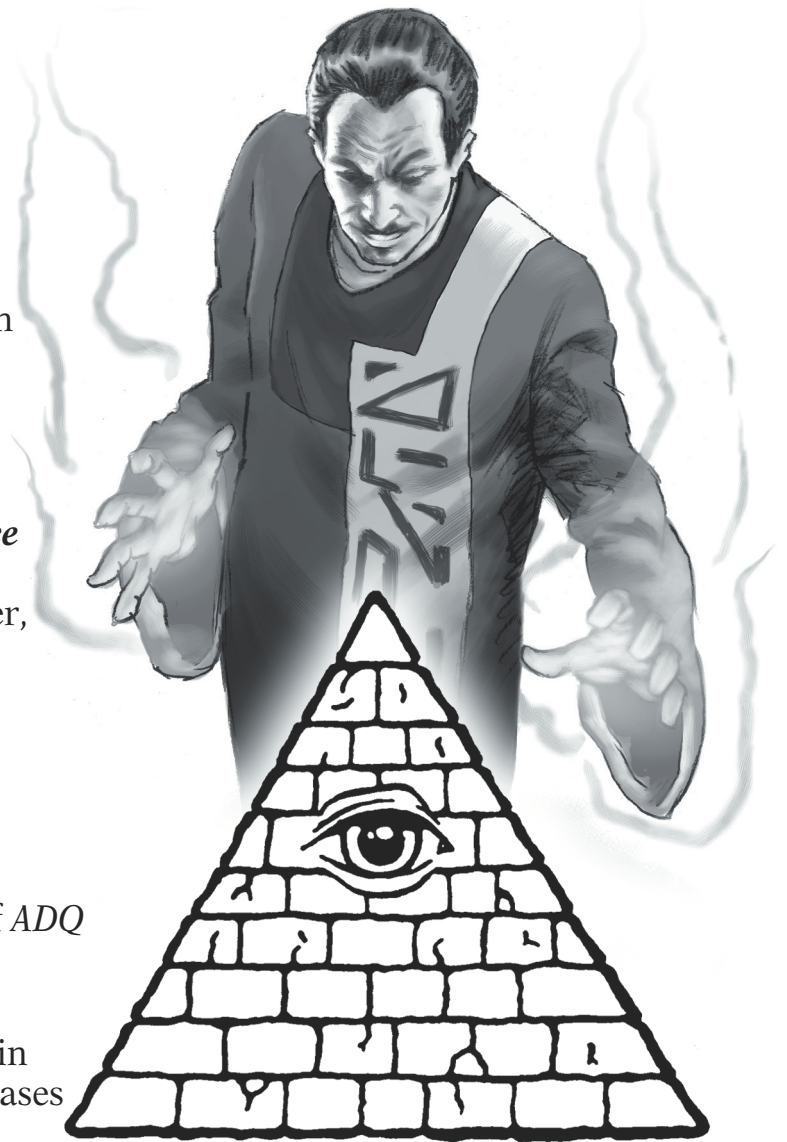
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