

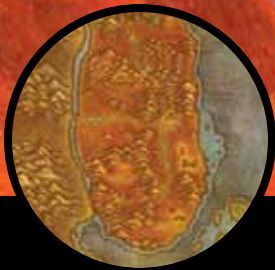


LAST CHANCE TO SEE

VISIT THE OLD WORLD BEFORE IT'S GONE!

By CODY BYE

A zeroth faces an impending *Cataclysm* and the return of Deathwing, and many original zones will be forever altered by the tumultuous event. With *World of Warcraft*'s doomsday clock just a few minutes from midnight, we take a look at the world as we know it and select some of the most iconic places to visit and quests to run before they're changed or disappear altogether, supplemented with comments from players and the community at Wowhead.com, an official *World of Warcraft* fansite, about what makes these sites and events so special.



ORGRIMMAR

While each capital city in Kalimdor and the Eastern Kingdoms will be receiving some architectural adjustments to account for flying mounts in Azeroth, Orgrimmar is set to see the biggest revision in *Cataclysm*. The black iron you've seen reinforcing the walls of Warsong Hold will now be coming to the stone structures of Orgrimmar, giving the city a menacing face-lift — but that's just a superficial representation of what's going on inside.

Don't be surprised to see the newly refurbished, war-ready Orgrimmar populated by a legion of new NPCs and lacking a few notable characters. Thrall is moving out of Orgrimmar and Garrosh Hellscream and his cohorts are moving in, while anyone who is not an orc or tauren will have to find somewhere else to hang out.

Orgrimmar will represent a new face for the orcs, and its warlike façade will show all of Azeroth that the orcs are prepared to face the threat of Deathwing head-on. So take a spin around Orgrimmar and take a few pictures. It won't look like this for long.



"Walking into Orgrimmar for the first time as my orc shaman and seeing all these other characters of varying levels and gear ready to defend against anything, along with the rugged splendor of the city itself, gave a sense that 'They have finally found a place to call home.'"

—Kilargo

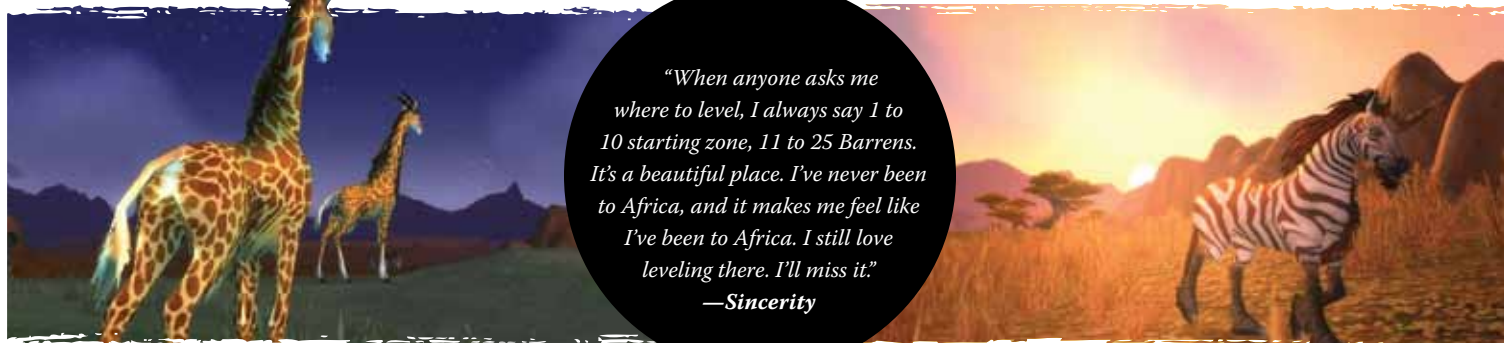


IT'S EASY TO IMAGINE YOURSELF AS A LONELY EXPLORER IN A BIG WORLD.

THE BARRENS

Even today, the Barrens is a splendid hub of activity. With three major settlements, a scattering of memorable quests, and three dungeons, the player population is active in the region. Raptors and centaurs are common sights, and the landscape is perhaps the vastest in the game. With sprawling plains nestled between soaring peaks, it's easy to imagine yourself as a lonely explorer in a big world.

The Barrens will be receiving one of the most dramatic face-lifts in Azeroth with *Cataclysm*, as an enormous rift in the ground brings violent changes to the region — as well as unexpected new life, growth, and fertility. Along with the transformation of the landscape, many quest lines will change or disappear. This could be your last chance to find Mankrik's Wife or to get that darn Samophlange fixed.



"When anyone asks me where to level, I always say 1 to 10 starting zone, 11 to 25 Barrens. It's a beautiful place. I've never been to Africa, and it makes me feel like I've been to Africa. I still love leveling there. I'll miss it."
—Sincerity



THOUSAND NEEDLES

Players who've been to Thousand Needles often have one of two memories in their minds. Either they spent a significant chunk of time killing the harpies (and other animals) and collecting the eggs (and other items) that littered the zone, or they remember the "Test of Faith" quest.

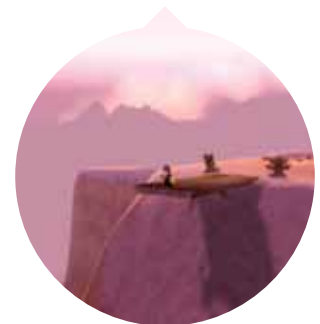
Before *Cataclysm*, players will definitely want to take a tour around this zone to give it a final look before everything changes. When Deathwing returns, the zone will be flooded, and almost every portion of the area will be rearranged and altered — from the Mirage Raceway on the Shimmering Flats to the silithid-infested Rustmaul Dig Site to the centaur encampments dotting the canyon floor. Anything in those low-lying areas will simply cease to exist the way they were before. Some of the NPCs may even be caught in the floodwaters, never to be seen on the face of Azeroth again.


"'Test of Faith' is a very simple quest in Thousand Needles. Simple after you've done it, I should say. Just jump off this mesa. What? Are you kidding me? Wow, that's a long way down. Oh, this is gonna hurt."

—Torkle

"I had never seen anything beyond the edge of the Barrens before, and when I got my Ghost Wolf form I decided to remedy that. I had no idea what lay beyond, so I followed the trails I could and did my best to dodge the local wildlife. I found a path winding its way up the side of a cliff and decided to see where it would lead me. Coming around a bend near the top, I had to stop and take in the view. The sun was just disappearing over the edge of the rock towers, all light above and shadow in the canyons below. That was the first time I looked around and just thought to myself, 'You know, this game is really beautiful.'"

—Kalisha





IT SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE IF THE GOBLINS DISMANTLE OR DESTROY PARTS OF THE REGION.



AZSHARA

Out of all the zones listed in our tribute to the old Azeroth, an area that's receiving one of the largest face-lifts is Azshara. The release of *Cataclysm* will spell the complete metamorphosis of the region, thanks to the immigration of the Bilgewater Cartel goblins and their efforts to shape the region into their new home.

Originally, Azshara existed as a mid- to high-level zone that sported a different sort of atmosphere from most of Azeroth. Its fall-like colors and interesting assortment of natural inhabitants made it a refreshing change from the colors of most zones, but its location and relative shortage of quest lines caused this area to be among the least populated in the entire game — making it a great candidate for a cataclysmic overhaul.

One of the most popular NPCs in the zone is the elemental lord, Duke Hydraxis, who was one of the original quest givers surrounding Ragnaros and the Molten Core. Over at the Azshara Tower, you can have a chat with Archmage Xylem, who assists mages and rogues. Lord Arkkoroc, Lorumus Thalipedes, and Ogtinc also inhabit the area, so players may wish to spend a few moments collecting and completing all of their quests in case they disappear from the world forever.

The goblins are notorious for bending nature to their will, and the geography of Azshara will be no exception. After building their city into an Azsharan cliffside, the goblins will carve out a new quarry for their raw resources over in the Azshara Crater, and it should come as no surprise if the goblins decide to dismantle or destroy other parts of Azshara, as well.

"If you've never done it, start off every morning for four weeks straight by waking up at dawn to run around Azshara plucking Dreamfoil. The serenity will take you away, even if a few random bear-men do start chasing you. This large zone has so much to find, it could take a very, very long time before you discover everything. But that's good, because the fall colors are just beautiful to watch roll past; you can almost feel the gentle breeze."

—Echuir



"I only loved a small part of it: the Ravencrest monument. If the goblins touch this piece of art, I will personally kill every last one of them and raid their towns on a daily basis. I spent many hours just sitting on the statue's eyebrow."

—Ultimaz

SOME OF THE GREATEST STORIES OF AZEROTH WIND THROUGH THE GLOOMY PLAGUELANDS.



PLAGUELANDS

The Western and Eastern Plaguelands have always been zones of note due to their initial high-end level range and gloomy atmosphere, but anyone who cares a whit about *Warcraft's* lore will find the Plaguelands steeped with ruins, vanquished dreams, and heroes that are tied into significant moments in Azeroth's history.

But with so much of the Plaguelands populated by heroes who would eventually make a run on Icecrown Citadel in Northrend, it's almost inevitable that a solid chunk of them will be moving — and with them, their epic quest lines. Perhaps the most notable example would be the Alliance's Tirion

Fordring, who seeks to wipe the Scourge from the face of Azeroth. In pursuit of this goal, he eventually rose to meet the challenge of Icecrown Citadel and played a key role in the fall of the Lich King. With Tirion's quest seemingly at an end — and the Scourge forces under a degree of control — will he continue to patrol the areas in the Plaguelands, or will he turn his attention elsewhere, perhaps to quell the threat of Deathwing?

There are a number of other NPCs, locations, and quest lines throughout the Plaguelands that players may want to check out before the cataclysmic expansion. High on our list: the bronze dragon Chronormu (aka Chromie) and the associated time-bending quests at Andorhal, aiding Commander Ashlam Valorlist in his fight against the Scourge, and Caretaker Alen, if only for some comic relief.

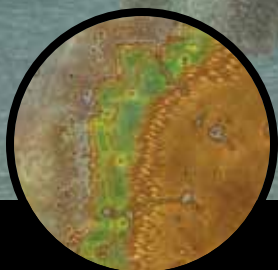
"'The Battle of Darrowshire' is, bar none, the most epic in-game event still available. Regardless of how useful the end rewards are in-game, it's one of the few chains that actually has a good chunk of lore and involves you in the history of the game and what went down during the time of the Scourge taking the Plaguelands."

— *Wingsofscion*

"Seeing how devastated Andorhal and Stratholme had become from the events in Warcraft III to World of Warcraft was jaw-dropping. Also, the questlines — notably the ones dealing with the Fordrings and the Redpaths — were rich with lore and backstory."

— *RastaOkana*





AUBERDINE

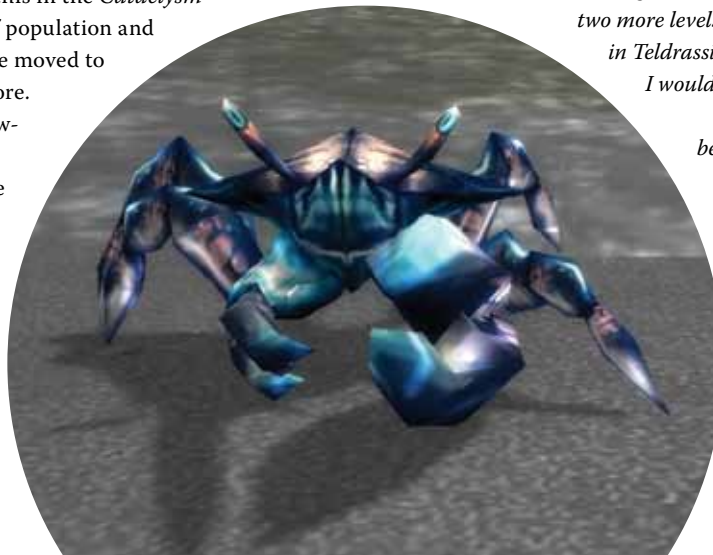
The return of Deathwing will bring the complete destruction of the city of Auberdine in Northern Kalimdor. Although Auberdine already had a “gloomy” feeling throughout its lifespan in *World of Warcraft*, it still stood as one of the few safe havens in the lands of Darkshore. But compared to the peace and serenity felt in other night elf–laden places like Darnassus, this city nestled on the coast of Darkshore oozed desolation.

We’ll still be able to visit the remnants of Auberdine in Darkshore (we got a sneak peek of this in the *Cataclysm* trailer), but the remaining night elf population and their respective travel points will be moved to a new location in northern Darkshore.

Before Auberdine is crushed, however, many of us will want to take part in its final days. If you have the time, make sure you have a chat with Thundris Windweaver, learn to fish with Gubber Blump, or help Wizbang Cranktoggle with his buzzboxes.

“The first time I stepped off the boat that goes from Teldrassil to Auberdine in Darkshore, I was running down the dock, looked over, and saw a level-13 crab. I freaked out. My immediate thought was, ‘Oh, god, I’m going to die horribly here.’ I handed in the delivery quest and turned right back around to grind out two more levels on cats and spiders in Teldrassil. I was so convinced I wouldn’t be able to handle the area, and I can’t believe I was so scared for the safety of my poor little druid.”

—Eilonthay



*CHANGE IS COMING TO THE COAST,
AND OUTPOSTS LIKE GROM'GOL
WILL FEEL THE PRESSURE.*



STRANGLETHORN VALE

"The combination of the landscape and quests just 'fit' for some reason. The quests were bunched-up enough that I felt like you were actually making a significant impact on each part of the zone as you rolled through it."

—*TheOnyx*

For a time, Stranglethorn was easily one of *World of Warcraft's* most hotly contested zones. With its two-faction makeup and convenient PvPing locations, many adventurers met their demise at the hands of high-level players. However, the design of the zone allowed players to quickly and easily gather quests and then complete them in long tours throughout the jungle, killing basilisks, Bloodsail Buccaneers, or the tribal trolls that spotted the region.

With the emergence of Deathwing causing tidal waves to batter the coastlines of both Kalimdor and the Eastern Kingdoms, Booty Bay and the Horde outpost

of Grom'gol will face some serious natural pressures. Before the devastation strikes, players may want to check out some of the more iconic areas throughout the Vale. Completing the Bloodsail quests from Baron Revilgaz and Fleet Master Seahorn is a kick, especially when Seahorn sports his own pirate hat and cutlass. Who would have thought a tauren could make a fitting swashbuckler?

Perhaps the most iconic individual in Stranglethorn is Hemet Nesingwary Jr., who wants sturdy entrepreneurs to join his expedition to find rare and exotic animals throughout the Vale. Nesingwary Jr. is actually



THE GREYMANE WALL

Built to isolate the Gilneans from the rest of their human brethren, the Greymane Wall has stood as an impassive testament to the will of Genn Greymane and his people. Following the Second War, the Gilneans erected the wall to remove themselves from the conflicts of their brethren — and, as a result, separated themselves from the coming threat of the Plague. However, the worgen curse proved to be just as costly to the secluded humans.

With their feral rage in check, the Gilneans have decided to once more step beyond the bounds of their wall, and their inner change is reflected in the outer structure of their once impregnable stone façade. The opening of the wall's gates will only be one part of the entire makeover. The architectural styling of Gilneas will shape the new look of the wall, giving it touches of wooden fortifications and accents.



THE INFAMOUS HOGGER

Few enemies have garnered as much publicity as the elite Riverpaw Gnomer known as Hogger — especially enemies that are no match for high-level players — but Hogger continues to defy the odds. He's succeeded in appearing as a level 80 monster in the Trial of the Champion (even if he was just an illusion) and earned 24th place in a *GamePro* article depicting the most diabolical video game villains of all time.

Hogger's most memorable antics didn't come through his actions, but via the players who were looking for a bit of fun. "Hogger Raids" saw full 40-player contingents of first-level characters swarming over one another to do their miniscule damage to the elite level 11 monster. Often these raids would end in a total player wipe, and thus Hogger became infamous as an invincible foe.

the replacement for his father, who has since moved on to Outland and Northrend to hunt bigger game, but the quests are still a memorable part of the Stranglethorn experience.

Beyond the characters and quests in the region, players have long considered Stranglethorn Vale to be one of the most beautiful zones in Azeroth. Its lush green jungles and pirate-dotted coastlines were fitting reminders that the evils that have plagued Azeroth haven't destroyed everything, though the zone still has its own problems, including goblin deforestation attempts and violent troll attacks.

"Even though it's annoying to get occasionally drive-by ganked by higher-level characters while trying to quest, it inspired some awesome spontaneous group PvP moments as players would rally together to fight off the bully or call in some high-level guildies of their own to protect them."

—Nereus