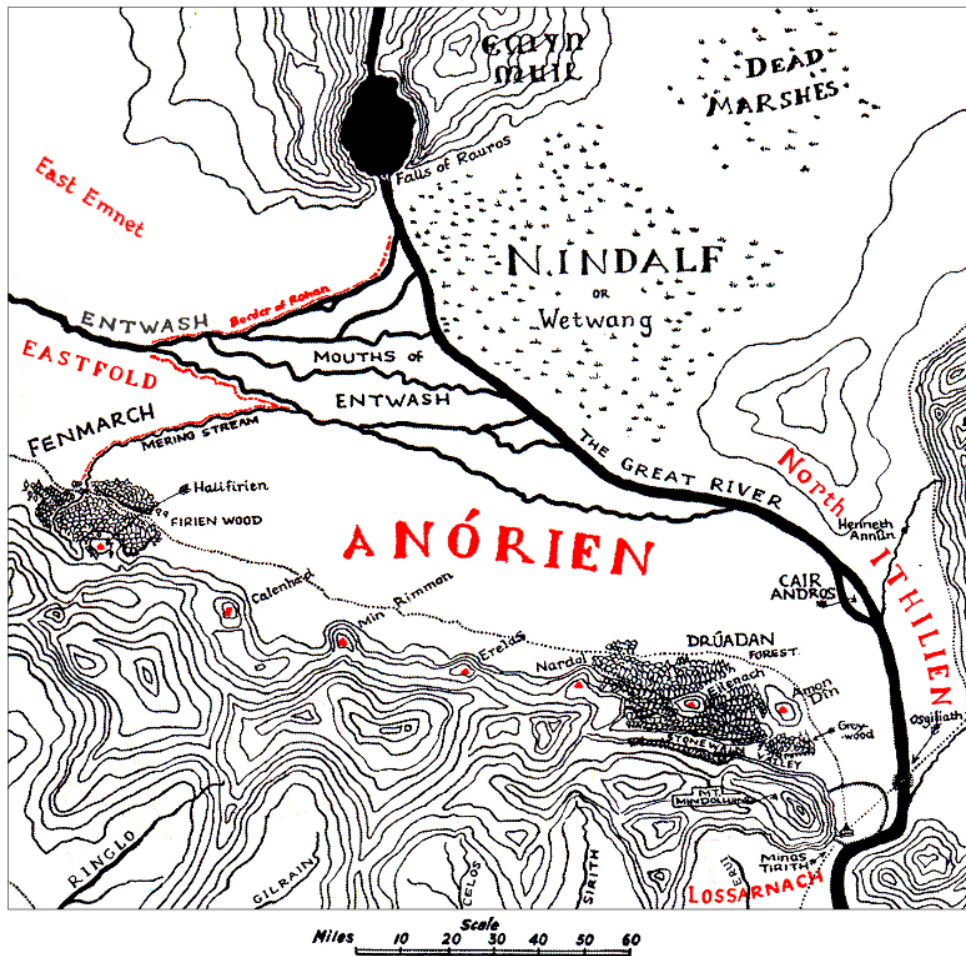


Anórien

Terrain Research & Planning Document

Contributors: TheStephen

Map



Anórien and its environs, excerpted from the map of Gondor in *The Lord of the Rings*, by JRR Tolkien. Drawn by Christopher Tolkien.

Introduction

Anorien is one of the 2 northern most provinces of Gondor, being created during the reign of Anarion as first co-ruling king of Gondor. This region was originally occupied by relatives of the House of Haleth who became known as the Druadain, or Woses in Rohirric. As time passed they became ever more reclusive, inhabiting the deep woodlands on the slopes of the White Mountains.

Etymology

Likely meaning Sun-lands from Sindarin.

Borders

Anorien is bordered to the west by Rohan at the Mering Stream, to the north by the Entwash Delta, to the east by the River Anduin and to the south by the White Mountains.

Lore

Overview

'In the realm of Gondor,' the wizard answered. 'The land of Anórien is still passing by.'....

'What is that?' cried Pippin suddenly, clutching at Gandalf's cloak. 'Look! Fire, red fire! Are there dragons in this land? Look, there is another!'

For answer Gandalf cried aloud to his horse. 'On, Shadowfax! We must hasten. Time is short. See! The beacons of Gondor are alight, calling for aid. War is kindled. See, there is the fire on Amon Dîn, and flame on Eilenach; and there they go speeding west: Nardol, Erelas, Min-Rimmon, Calenhad, and the Halifirien on the borders of Rohan.'

But Shadowfax paused in his stride, slowing to a walk, and then he lifted up his head and neighed. And out of the darkness the answering neigh of other horses came; and presently the thudding of hoofs was heard, and three riders swept up and passed like flying ghosts in the moon and vanished into the West. Then Shadowfax gathered himself together and sprang away....

Pippin... paid little attention to Gandalf telling him of... how the Lord of the City had beacons built on the tops of outlying hills along both borders of the great range, and maintained posts at these points where fresh horses were always in readiness to bear his errand-riders to Rohan in the

North, or to Belfalas in the South. 'It is long since the beacons of the North were lit,' he said; 'and in the ancient days of Gondor they were not needed, for they had the Seven Stones.'
The Return of the King, Ch 1 Minas Tirith

And so King Théoden departed from his own realm, and mile by mile the long road wound away, and the beacon hills marched past: Calenhad, Min-Rimmon, Erelas, Nardol. But their fires were quenched. All the lands were grey and still; and ever the shadow deepened before them, and hope waned in every heart.
The Return of the King, Ch3, The Muster of Rohan

Lore: Drúadan Forest & Stonewain Valley

'Nay, nay,' said Elfhelm, 'the enemy is on the road not in the hills. You hear the Woses, the Wild Men of the Woods: thus they talk together from afar. They still haunt Drúadan Forest.... Remnants of an older time they be, living few and secretly, wild and wary as the beasts. They go not to war with Gondor or the Mark; but now they are troubled by the darkness and the coming of the orcs: they fear lest the Dark Years be returning.... Let us be thankful that they are not hunting us: for they use poisoned arrows... and they are woodcrafty beyond compare.... [They] have offered their services to Théoden. Even now one of their headmen is being taken to the king.'....

The Return of the King, LoTR Book 5, Ch 5, The Ride of the Rohirrim

'But our need is for aid in battle,' said Éomer. 'How will you and your folk help us?'

'Bring news,' said the Wild Man. 'We look out from hills. We climb big mountain and look down. Stone-city is shut. Fire burns there outside; now inside too. You wish to come there? Then you must be quick. But gorgûn and men out of far-away,' he waved a short gnarled arm eastward, 'sit on horse-road. Very many, more than Horse-men.'

The Return of the King, LoTR Book 5, Ch 5, The Ride of the Rohirrim

'Let Ghân-buri-Ghân finish!' said the Wild Man. 'More than one road he knows. He will lead you by road where no pits are, no gorgûn walk, only Wild Men and beasts. Many paths were made when Stonehouse-folk were stronger. They carved hills as hunters carve beast-flesh. Wild Men think they ate stone for food. They went through Drúadan to Rimmon with great wains. They go no longer. Road is forgotten, but not by Wild Men. Over hill and behind hill it lies still under grass and tree, there behind Rimmon and down to Dîn, and back at the end to Horse-men's road. Wild Men will show you that road. Then you will kill gorgûn and drive away bad dark with bright iron, and Wild Men can go back to sleep in the wild woods.'

The Return of the King, LoTR Book 5, Ch 5, The Ride of the Rohirrim

'Wild Men go quick on feet,' said Ghân. 'Way is wide for four horses in Stonewain Valley yonder,' he waved his hand southwards; 'but narrow at beginning and at end. Wild Man could walk from here to Dîn between sunrise and noon.'

The leading company was halted, and as those behind filed up out of the trough of the Stonewain Valley they spread out and passed to camping-places under the grey trees. The king summoned the captains to council. Éomer sent out scouts to spy upon the road; but old Ghân shook his head.

The Return of the King, LoTR Book 5, Ch 5, The Ride of the Rohirrim

"It was late in the afternoon when the leaders came to wide grey thickets stretching beyond the eastward side of Amon Dîn, and masking a great gap in the line of hills that from Nardol to Dîn ran east and west. Through the gap the forgotten wain-road long ago had run down, back into the main horse-way from the City through Anórien; but now for many lives of men trees had had their way with it, and it had vanished, broken and buried under the leaves of uncounted years. But the thickets offered to the Riders their last hope of cover before they went into open battle; for beyond them lay the road and the plains of Anduin, while east and southwards the slopes were bare and rocky, as the withen hills gathered themselves together and climbed up, bastion upon bastion, into the great mass and shoulders of Mindolluin. The leading company was halted, and as those behind filed up out of the trough of the Stonewain Valley they spread out and passed to camping-places under the grey trees."

The Return of the King, LoTR Book 5, Ch 5, The Ride of the Rohirrim

Lore: Beacon Hills

Amon Din

[It] is stated that "Amon Dîn 'the silent hill' was perhaps the oldest, with the original function of a fortified outpost of Minas Tirith, from which its beacon could be seen, to keep watch over the passage into North Ithilien from Dagorlad and any attempt by enemies to cross the Anduin at or near Cair Andros. Why it was given this name is not recorded. Probably because it was distinctive, a rocky and barren hill standing out and isolated from the heavily wooded hills of the Drúadan Forest (Tawar-in-Drúedain), little visited by men, beasts or birds."

Unfinished Tales, Part 3, Ch 2, Cirion and Eorl and the Friendship of Gondor and Rohan: Notes, Note 51

"Amon Dîn. . . . was distinctive, a rocky and barren hill standing out and isolated from the heavily wooded hills of the Drúadan Forest (Tawar-in-Drúedain), little visited by men, beasts or birds."

The Tradition of Isildur, Note 51, Unfinished Tales

[As the Riders] behind filed up out of the trough of the Stonewain Valley they spread out and passed to camping-places [in the Grey Wood]....

'Wild Men say many things,' [Ghân] said. 'First, be wary! Still many men in camp beyond Dîn, an hour's walk yonder,' he waved his arm west towards the black beacon.

The Return of the King, LoTR Book 5, Ch 5, The Ride of the Rohirrim

Eilenach

The Halifirien was the highest of the beacons, and like Eilenach, the next in height, appeared to stand up alone out of a great wood....

Unfinished Tales, Part 3, Ch 2, Cirion and Eorl and the Friendship of Gondor and Rohan: Cirion and Eorl

“Eilenach was the highest point of the Drúadan Forest. It could be seen far to the West, and its function in the days of the beacons was to transmit the warning of Amon Dîn; but it was not suitable for a large beacon-fire, there being little space on its sharp summit. Hence the name Nardol "Fire-hilltop" of the next beacon westward; it was on the end of a high ridge, originally part of the Drúadan Forest, but long deprived of trees by masons and quarriers who came up the Stonewain Valley.”

The Return of the King, LoTR Book 5, Ch 5, The Ride of the Rohirrim

The host was bivouacked in the pine-woods that clustered about Eilenach Beacon, a tall hill standing up from the long ridges of the Drúadan Forest that lay beside the great road in East Anórien.

The Return of the King, LoTR Book 5, Ch 5, The Ride of the Rohirrim

Nardol

Eilenach... could be seen far to the West...; but it was not suitable for a large beacon-fire, there being little space on its sharp summit. Hence the name Nardol "Fire-hilltop" of the next beacon westward; it was on the end of a high ridge, originally part of the Drúadan Forest, but long deprived of trees by masons and quarriers who came up the Stonewain Valley. Nardol was manned by a guard, who also protected the quarries; it was well-stored with fuel and at need a great blaze could be lit, visible on a clear night even as far as the last beacon (Halifirien) some hundred and twenty miles to the westward.

Unfinished Tales, Part 3, Ch 2, Cirion and Eorl and the Friendship of Gondor and Rohan: Notes, Note 51

Erelas

Erelas... was a green hill without trees....

Unfinished Tales, Index

Min-Rimmon

Min-Rimmon 'Peak of the Rimmon' (a group of crags), fifth of the beacons of Gondor in Ered Nimrais.

Unfinished Tales, Index

'Many paths were made when Stonehouse-folk were stronger.... They went through Drúadan to Rimmon with great wains. They go no longer. Road is forgotten, but not by Wild Men. Over hill and behind hill it lies still under grass and tree, there behind Rimmon and down to Dîn, and back at the end to Horse-men's road.

The Return of the King, LoTR Book 5, Ch 5, The Ride of the Rohirrim

In Anórien many people still dwelt and had the task of guarding the northern approaches, either out of Calenardhon or across the Anduin at Cair Andros. For communication with them the three oldest beacons (Amon Dîn, Eilenach, and Min-Rimmon) were built and maintained....

Unfinished Tales, Part 3, Ch 2, Cirion and Eorl and the Friendship of Gondor and Rohan: Cirion and Eorl

Calenhad

The name probably meant 'green space', with reference to the flat turf-covered 'crown' of the hill: had being derived, with the usual mutation in combinations, from sad 'place, spot'.

Unfinished Tales, Index

Halifirien/Amon Anwar

The Halifirien was the highest of the beacons, and like Eilenach, the next in height, appeared to stand up alone out of a great wood; for behind it there was a deep cleft, the dark Firien-dale, in the long northward spur of Ered Nimrais, of which it was the highest point. Out of the cleft it rose like a sheer wall, but its outer slopes, especially northwards, were long and nowhere steep, and trees grew upon them almost to its summit. As they descended the trees became ever more dense, especially along the Mering Stream (which rose in the cleft) and northwards out into the plain through which the Stream flowed into the Entwash. The great West Road passed through a long cutting in the wood, to avoid the wet land beyond its northern eaves; but this road had been made in ancient days, and after the departure of Isildur no tree was ever felled in the Firien Wood, except only by the Beacon-wardens whose task it was to keep open the great road and the path towards the summit of the hill. This path turned from the Road near to its entrance into the Wood, and wound its way up to the end of the trees, beyond which there was an ancient stairway of stone leading to the Beacon-site, a wide circle levelled by those who had made the stair. The Beacon-wardens were the only inhabitants of the Wood, save wild beasts; they housed in lodges in the trees near the summit, but they did not stay long, unless held there by foul weather, and they came and went in turns of duty.

Unfinished Tales, Part 3, Ch 2, Cirion and Eorl and the Friendship of Gondor and Rohan: Cirion and Eorl

[No] tree was ever felled in the Firien Wood, except only by the Beacon-wardens whose task it was to keep open the great road and the path towards the summit of the hill. This path... wound its way up to the end of the trees, beyond which there was an ancient stairway of stone leading to the Beacon-site, a wide circle levelled by those who had made the stair. The Beacon-wardens were the only inhabitants of the Wood, save wild beasts; they housed in lodges in the trees near the summit, but they did not stay long, unless held there by foul weather, and they came and went in turns of duty.

Unfinished Tales, Part 3, Ch 2, Cirion and Eorl and the Friendship of Gondor and Rohan: Cirion and Eorl

[They] came at last to the upper slopes of the Hill and passed through a belt of white birches and saw the stone stair going up to the summit. After the shadow of the Wood the sun seemed

hot and bright, for it was the month of Úrimë; 1 yet the crown of the Hill was green, as if the year were still in Lótessë 2....

[When] they came to the summit they saw there a wide oval place of level turf, unfenced, but at its eastern end there stood a low mound on which grew the white flowers of alfin....

"[This] is [Elendil's] tomb," said Cirion; "and from it comes the awe that dwells on this hill and in the woods below."

Unfinished Tales, Part 3, Ch 2, Cirion and Eorl and the Friendship of Gondor and Rohan: Cirion and Eorl

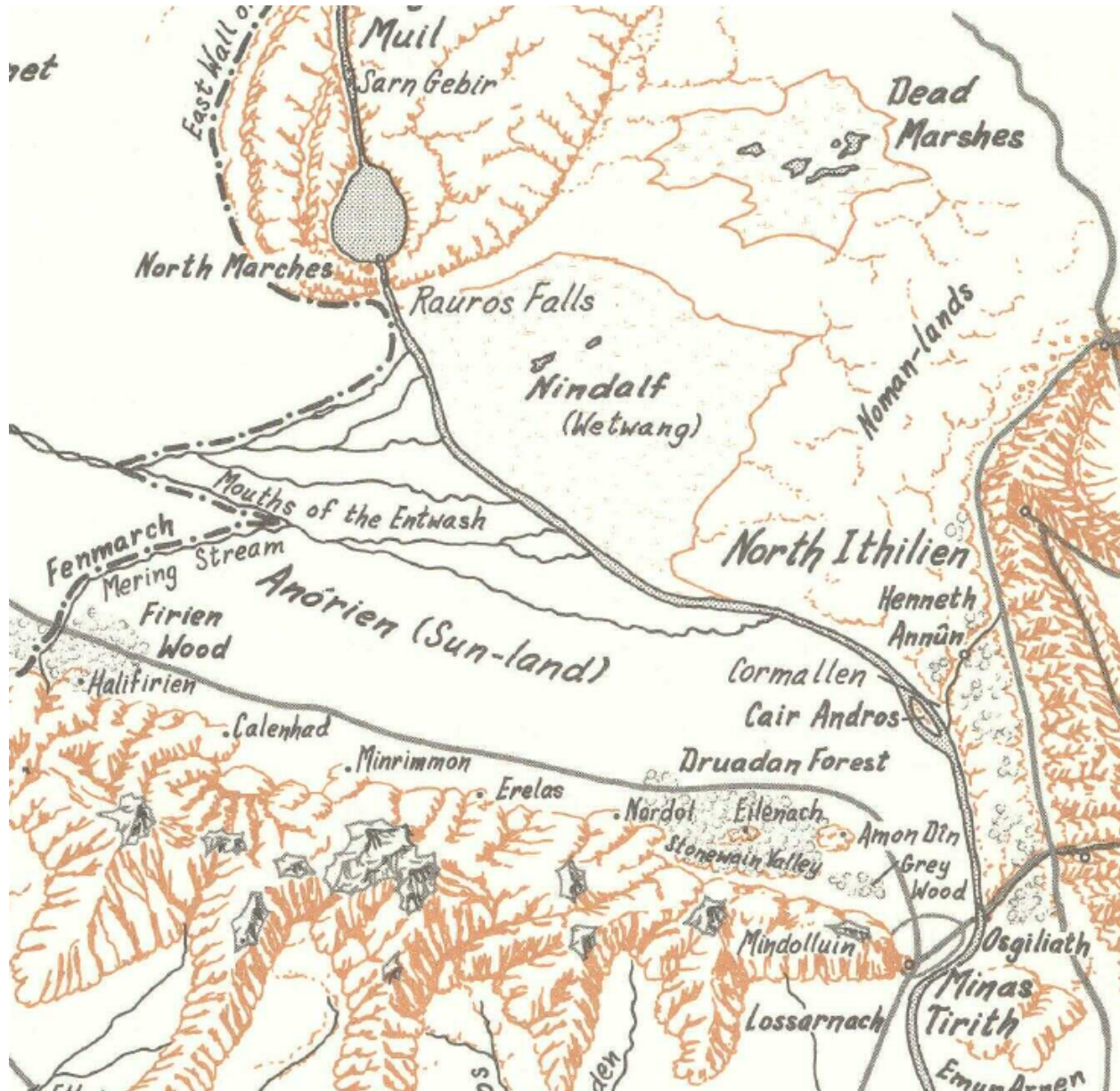
... the line of the Mering Stream was fortified (between the impassable marshes of its confluence with the Entwash and the bridge where the Road passed westward out of the Firien Wood)...

Unfinished Tales, Part 3, Ch 2, Cirion and Eorl and the Friendship of Gondor and Rohan: Cirion and Eorl

Points of Interest

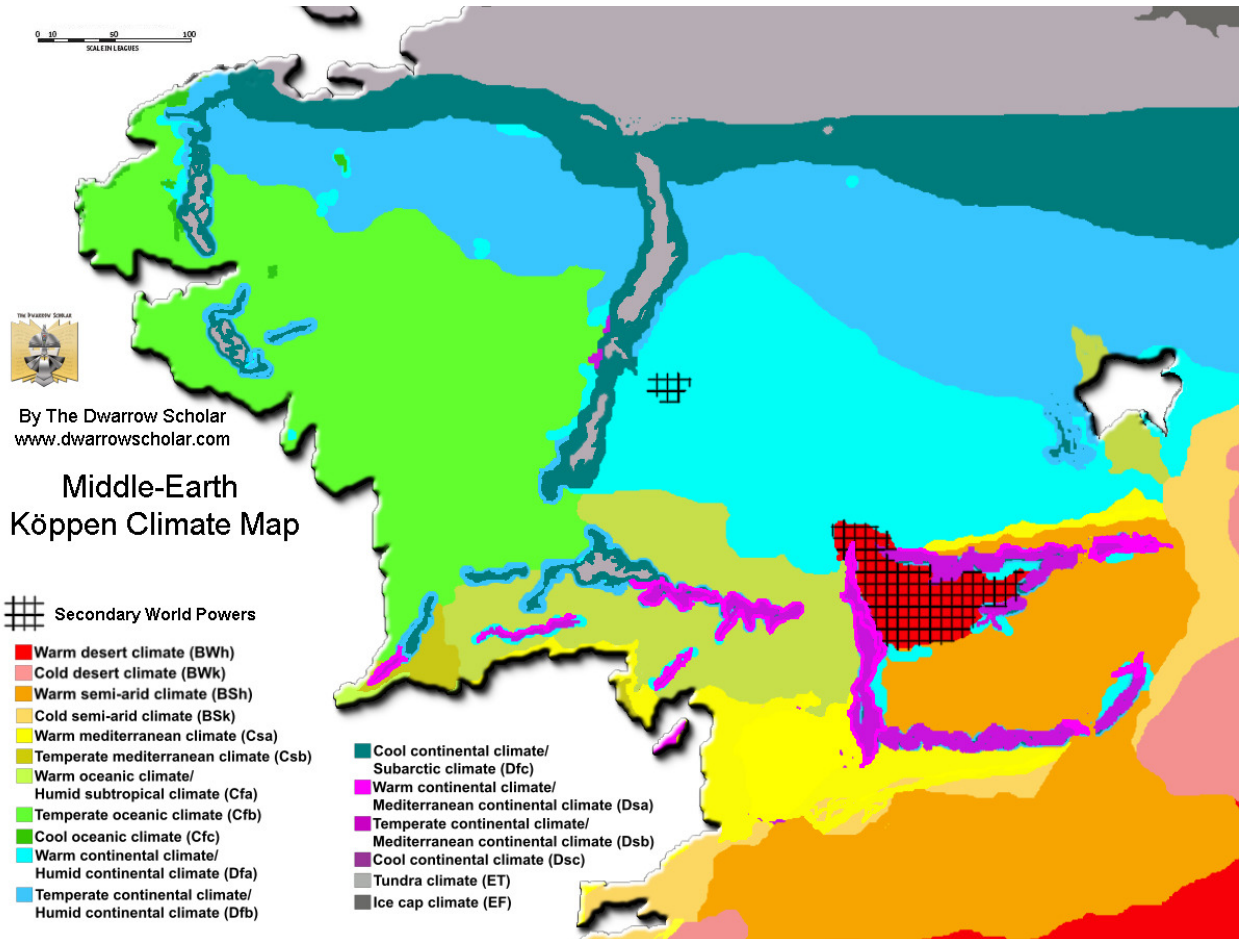
Amon Din
Eilenach
Nardol
Erelas
Min-Rimmon
Calenhad
Halifirien
Merring Stream
Druadan Forest
Grey Wood
Stonewain Valley
Firien Wood
Cair Andros
Great Road

Atlas of Middle Earth References



Geography

Climate



Weather: Temperature, Precipitation & Wind

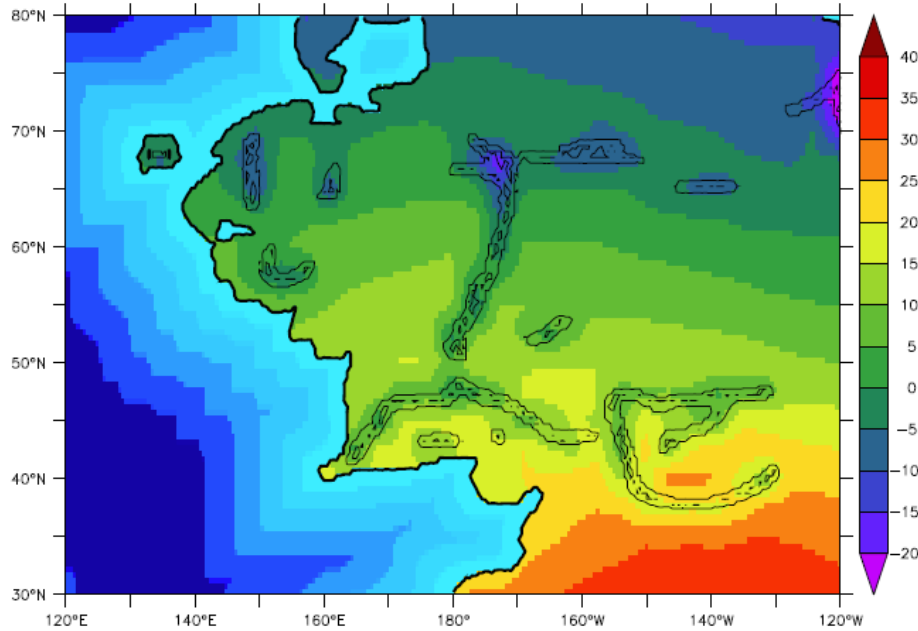


Figure 3. Modelled temperature across Middle Earth by R. Brown (2013). Units are °C.

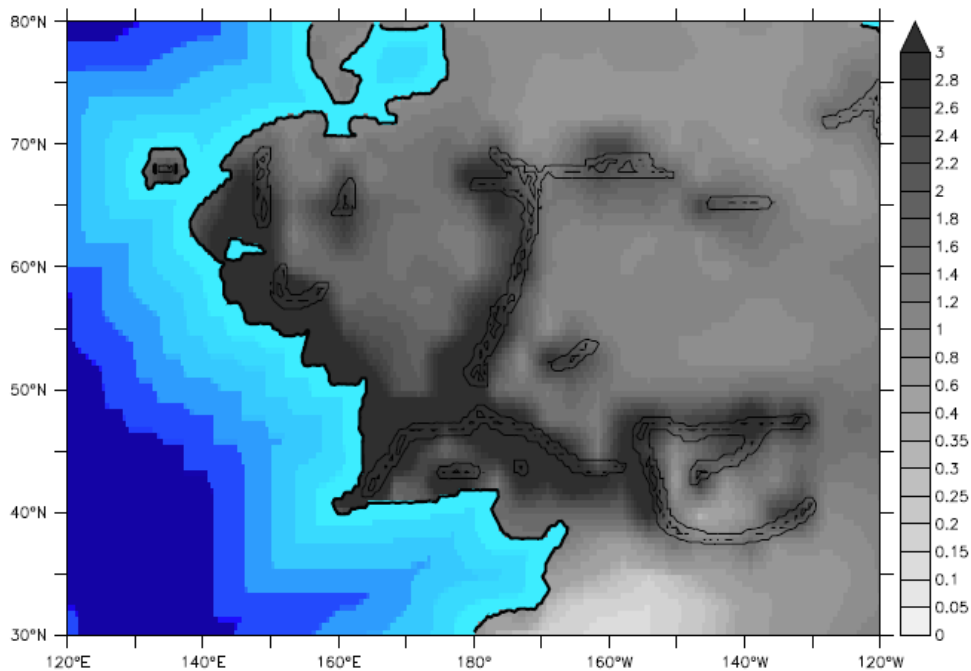


Figure 4. Modelled rainfall across Middle Earth by R. Brown (2013). Units are mm/day

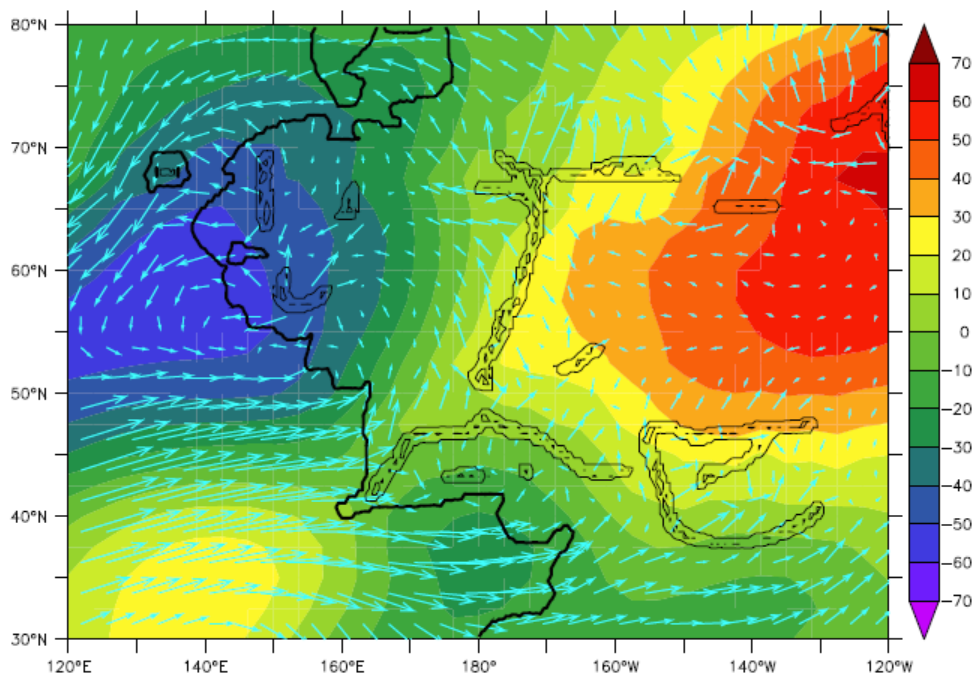


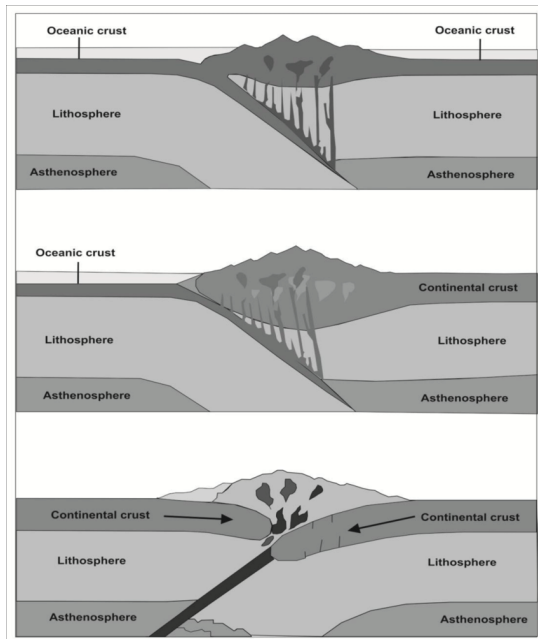
Figure 5. Modelled mid-atmosphere pressure and wind direction by R. Brown (2013). Caution should be used with this model in particular as the directions into the Bay of Belfalas are somewhat at odds with there being elf havens with ships sailing west across the 2nd and 3rd Ages.

Geology

Two types of rock are implicitly mentioned in the White Mountains. Different forms of limestone are present throughout the range: the Glittering Caves is clearly of the soluble kind, whereas by Minas Tirith it is likely more resistant and also highly probable that it has been metamorphosed into marble in some locations close by. Some of these are quarried near Nardol/Min Rimmon.

Further inference suggests that there should be at least some igneous intrusions at the eastern end of the White Mountains, given the same rock type used for Orthanc forms the outer wall of Minas Tirith. It seems unlikely that the same stone was transported all the way from Orthanc, therefore implying that there are deposits of the same material closer to Minas Tirith. It's highly probable that this is some form of obsidian that is then further worked by the builders to produce the resistant stone used in the wall.

Depending on the composition of the plates, slightly different geologies result as shown below.



Terrain: White Mountains

Tolkien specifies that the northern edge of the White Mountains is very steep, and there are few passes leading through it (Or Aragorn would not have been forced to take the Paths of the Dead). This likely is a result of a convergent plate boundary between the Rhovanion plate and the Gondor plate meeting. A reference location would be Southern Alps, New Zealand.



Terrain: Anorien Plains

Most of Anorien is comprised of extensive plains, which probably include some element of low rolling hills that descend towards the Entwash and Anduin. These likely end in flat flood plains, which potentially have some river scars from previous migration of the Anduin channel. Small river terraces are also a possibility in/at the edges of these floodplains.

Hydrology

The White Mountains provide the watershed to the south, leading to all drainage mostly being directed north into the Anduin and Entwash. Stream would start small and rocky, with many waterfalls on the northern side of the White Mountains, before descending towards the Anduin. Some smaller marsh areas could be possible in the flatter areas of the plains, particularly if there's a rapid transition in terrain immediately upstream.

The area adjacent to Cair Andros on the western bank is likely of slightly higher ground, causing the curve in the Anduin river to take place there, rather than cut more towards Amon Din.

Flora

The northern slopes of the White Mountains would have originally been covered in forests, so by the time of the height of the power of Gondor, these were likely highly depleted. By the time of the War of the Ring, Gondor's power had waned over a long period, and therefore likely allowed many of the forests to partially recover. The highest slopes were likely coniferous trees, which then transitioned into mixed coniferous and deciduous woodlands on the lower slopes. See lore section on Halifirien for all the tree species mentioned there. These are likely also present across the other parts of the northern slopes of the White Mountains.

In the lowlands, there are likely to be some scattered woodlands, but would probably be mostly covered in fertile grasslands, likely once used for agriculture. Closest to the Anduin, there are probably extensive flat areas that form the rivers' floodplain.
