

THE WANDERING MERCHANT

A GOOD PORTSMANSHIP GAME FOR THE PIECEPAK BY JORGE ARROYO

Based on Merchants of Venus by Richard Hamblen.

Version 0.5, 2007-07-16

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1-6 players, 60-180 minutes

Equipment: 1 piecepack set, the 4 seasons expansion, pen and paper to track money, a cup or bag to draw coins randomly and some tokens (glass beads) for more than 3 player games.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Merchant of Venus (from now on referred to as MoV) each player controls a spaceship and travels from planet to planet discovering cultures and buying/selling different goods. Ships can be upgraded and even replaced with faster or bigger ships. The goal is to be the first player to reach a set amount of money (Usually \$2000 or \$3000).

For this port, I felt that a fantasy theme would work best with the piecepack suits (especially for the 4 seasons suits). In The Wandering Merchant, players drive carts pulled by horses transporting goods between small villages separated by dangerous wilderness areas. The goal is similar and players can also get more carts to be able to carry more goods as well as horses to travel faster.

2. ABOUT THE PORT

The text in this section is not necessary to play the game. It's just an explanation about how the port was done and how the basic mechanics were adapted.

MoV uses several key mechanics that clearly identify the game. These are a roll and move system with different number of dice rolled depending upon the speed of the ship, a unique supply-demand system that handles random production rates and a simple penalty system where all structural damages to the ships are dealt with by paying money. This system works also for combat, although MoV only has combat as an optional rule.

The basic roll and move mechanic of MoV has been retained, but the movement system has been slightly changed. The dice roll still controls the distance a player can move, but the numbers on the tiles indicate how long the path is in that area. Also, each suit (from the four seasons expansion) represents a type of terrain. Winter: A freezing mountain range. Spring: Regular Plains. Summer: Water. Fall: Forests.

The supply-demand system has been left mostly unchanged. Each village sells one type of good that three other villages want to buy (the next three as in MoV). Goods (coins) are randomly drawn and placed in the corresponding villages. Each time a unit of goods is sold, its coin is returned to the cup of unused coins and another one is drawn randomly. The number of villages has been reduced as well as the number of goods. The main difference is that in MoV there were goods and equipment as separate things. Here, they are both in the same category to make the system work with the limited number of coin types. When buying an item, the player chooses whether to transport it or use it.

The penalty system has been adapted to the different type of board. In MoV there are hundreds of dots in the tracks used by the ships to travel from system to system (the dots correspond to the number rolled by the dice to move). When a track passes near a hazardous object (like a supernova) the dots have a penalty number. When a ship enters

such a dot the player has to either pay the stated amount to keep moving or stop and resume movement next turn. The winter and summer tiles serve as penalty markers in this way but with some small additions.

The rest of the game is quite similar. There is a monetary goal that the players agree upon before starting to play and when a player reaches it, the game ends. Also, players can upgrade their carts and buy extra wagons to increase cargo capacity at the expense of speed. They can also buy more horses to travel faster. Other equipment (as in MoV) can be used as protection from the different hazards or to attack.

3. EXPLANATION OF TERMS

In The Wandering Merchant the different suits are used to identify different places or objects of the game world. They are usually different for coins or tiles, coins being goods a player can buy or sell and tiles being different types of terrain or the villages themselves. The pawn each player chooses has no relationship to any of the other tiles or coins of the same suit/color.

Terrain Tiles (numbered from 2 to 5 plus the blank tiles):

- Spring: A safe grass plain.
- Summer: A lake or river.
- Fall: A forest.
- Winter: A cold mountainous area.

Special Terrain (Null tiles from the standard set)

- Sun: The ruins of a wizard's tower.
- Moon: A field inhabited by wild horses.
- Crowns: The ruins of a castle.
- Arms: An old cave.

Village Tiles (the 8 ace tiles):

- Spring: The Elven Town
- Summer: The Fishermen's Village.
- Fall: The Wood Folk's Refuge.
- Winter: The Mountain Folk's Caves.
- Sun: The Wizards' City.
- Moon: The Riders' Town.
- Crowns: The Knights' Castle
- Arms: The Dwarven Caves.

Goods (Coins in the 8 suits) produced by the villages of the same suit:

- Spring: Jewelry.
- Summer: Fish.
- Fall: Wood.
- Winter: Thick Clothes.
- Sun: Magical Ingredients.
- Moon: Horses.
- Crowns: Shields.
- Arms: Weapons.

4. SETUP

First decide the ending condition for the game. The normal way is to set a goal in terms of Gold Coins (1000 for a shorter game, 2000 for a normal game and 3000 or more for a long game). If playing with limited time, a time limit can be set instead.

Second, take the eight ace tiles from the two pipcepack sets and shuffle them suit side down. Arrange them into a suit side down stack within easy reach of the players. Take the first tile and without turning it over place it on the table. This is the first town.

Third, add the four null tiles from the regular set to the rest of the tiles from the four seasons set. Shuffle them well suit side down and arrange them in a stack near the other stack. This is the "wilderness" stack

Next, in turn order, each player takes a tile from either stack and places it on the table. Tiles have to be placed so that at least one of their sides is (and no more than three are) touching a side from a tile already on the table. The tile already on the table cannot end up with more connections than allowed. Tiles also have to be aligned with each other. Most fall tiles should end up connected to three other tiles and the rest should end up connected to two other tiles, but a few may be connected to three. This gives the players more movement choices.

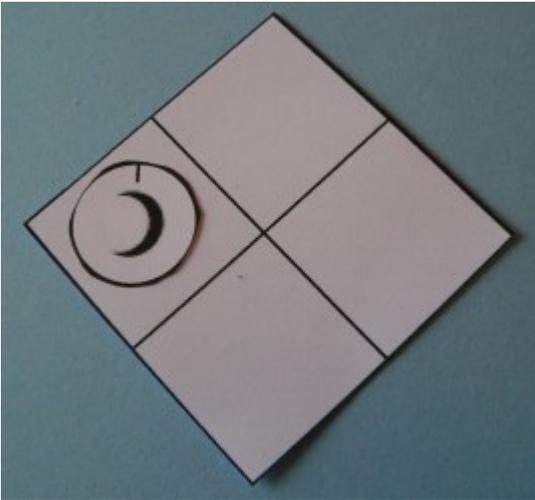
If the new tile placed is from the wilderness stack, it must be placed suit side up (orientation is irrelevant, but it should be kept consistent).

If the new tile placed is from the towns stack, then it must be placed suit side down without looking at its face. Also, there have to be at least 2 wilderness tiles between any two towns in the board (except if there are no more wilderness tiles on the stack).

This is a possible board setup.



When all the tiles are on the table, each player chooses a pawn to mark their position on the board and take a tile from the standard set, placing it in front of them suit side down. This tile is their cart. Also, players take a Moons coin (1 horse) and place it on one of the squares of their cart. A starting cart only has 3 spaces for goods or equipment, but later it can be upgraded to four and the Moons coin can be placed just outside the tile. It is important that the coin points upwards (away from the player). This means that the horse is being used and not being transported. Goods for cargo must be always placed pointing down (towards the player)



This is an small cart. Note that even though the horse is on the tile, it is considered to be outside the cart.

Note that if you're playing with more than 2-3 players, you should have other tokens at hand (such as glass beads) and use those instead of the Moons coins when using them as pulling horses (not cargo), returning the coin to the cup so that there are more available for all the players.

Place all the coins for both pizzepack sets on a cup or bag and randomly draw 16 coins. Place them on the side of the board in stacks for each suit making a column in the following order from top to bottom: Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter, Suns, Moons, Crowns, Arms. This order helps seeing which towns sell to which other towns.

On a piece of paper, the money for each player can be tracked. At the beginning of the game each player gets 20 GC (Gold Coins) per player in the game. So for a 2 player game, each player gets 40 GC.

All the players then place their pawn at the null Spring tile.

5. PLAYING THE GAME

After randomly selecting the starting player, the player's turn begins. On a turn a player can do the following:

- *Move*: The player first indicates the direction for his first step, then rolls a number of dice equal to the number of extra horses he's got plus 1. So, subtract the number of carts from the number of horses in use, and then add 1 to the result. The numbers on the dice are the number of steps he can move that day (ace being 1 and null being 6 so regular dice can be used optionally).

Each tile has a number of steps needed to traverse it (null and aces are 1 step). The number on the starting tile is not important, only the tiles the player enters. If the player doesn't have enough steps to traverse a tile he must stop in that tile.

So, if the roll is 4 and the player wants to travel to a 2 tile and then to a 3 tile, he must stop at the 3 tile. Also, a player doesn't have to use all the movement points, but once he has rolled, he has to at least move one step if possible.

There are other effects depending on the terrain (explained below).

- *Buy/Sell*: If the player ends his movement at a village or decides to remain in the village for a whole turn, he can buy or sell goods in that village. In the first case only one unit can be bought and one unit sold. To buy or sell more goods the player must remain in the village for his next turn, when he can buy and sell without limit.

Each town sells one kind of good (look at the table below) and buys only goods from the three towns that precede it on the town list.

When selling goods, place the coins back in the cup and randomly take the same number of coins to be placed in their respective towns.

All the goods can be bought as cargo to be traded, but some are also useful to be used by the players. When this is the case, place the coin pointing upwards. If it not a horse (moons) then it has to be placed inside a cart. If it's an extra horse, place it outside, but close to a cart.

Used goods can be bartered for half their buying price in any town to buy other goods but they cannot be sold for money.

- *Search*: If the player is at one of the Special Terrain tiles (the null tiles from the standard piecepack set). He may attempt to search the place. Look under 5.3.1 below for details.

5.1. PRICES FOR GOODS

Each good has a buying price and a selling price. You can buy a certain type of good at the town with the same suit as the good. You can sell it to the next three towns (as directed by the town order).

Here's a table with all the prices:

Suit	Town	Good	Buy Price	Sell Price
1. Spring	Elven	Jewels	120	200
2. Summer	Fishermen's	Fish	30	80
3. Fall	Wood Folk's	Wood	40	90
4. Winter	Mountain Folk's	Clothes	60	120
5. Suns	Wizards'	Magical Ing.	200	300
6. Moons	Riders'	Horses	80	140
7. Crowns	Knights'	Shields	50	100
8. Arms	Dwarven	Weapons	90	160

Note that used equipment can be bartered for half its buying price at any town to buy other goods or equipment. If the whole amount is not used that turn, then the rest is lost.

5.2. DISCOVERING A TOWN:

When a player moves to a face down town tile he can choose to explore it. He has to stop movement there and turn the tile suit up, revealing it for everybody. Also, he has to take 3 coins from the cup and place them as goods in their respective towns.

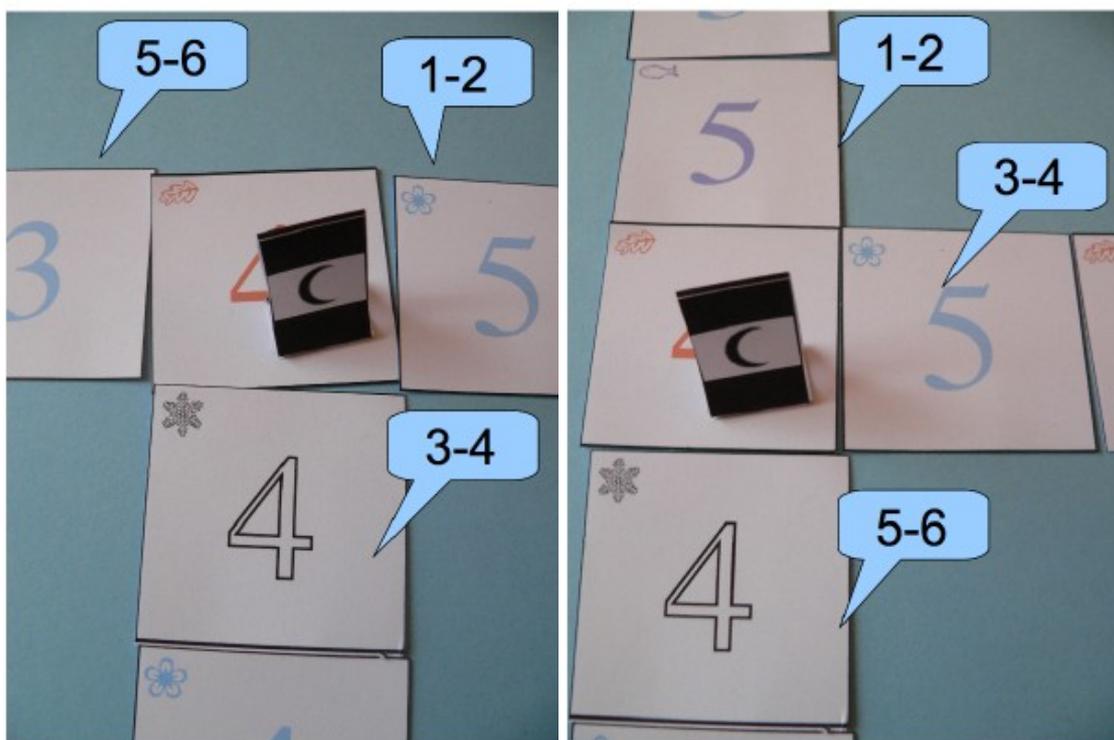
He then gets a bonus amount of money to spend on that town as a reward. This amount is equal to the buying price of one unit of the goods for the town except in the case where the price per unit is more than 100 GC. In that case, the bonus amount is equal to 100 GC. If a player doesn't want to spend this bonus immediately, he can save it for later (just take a note on the scoring paper).

In the round that the player discovered the town, he can trade as normal when arriving to a town (1 buy operation and 1 sell operation maximum).

5.3. MOVING THROUGH DIFFERENT TERRAINS

The different suits for the wilderness tiles represent different types of terrain:

- *Spring*: Plains. Regular flat terrain. Easy to traverse with no effects.
- *Summer* - Water. A lake or river to be crossed. The player has to either stop his movement and end his turn in this tile to wait for the regular ferry boat to make the crossing or pay to rent a fast boat and be able to cross immediately and continue his movement. The amount to pay is 5 times the number on the tile. Of course, the player has to have enough movement points left.
- *Fall* - Forest. Difficult to know which direction to go. After rolling, The player must choose one of the dice rolls as his "compass number" for the whole turn. Starting from the pip icon (on the NW corner) each connected tile is assigned 2 numbers. The first, 1 and 2. The second, 3 and 4 and the third, 5 and 6. The player has to move to the tile that is assigned the same number as his "compass number". If there are only 2 tiles connected, then just roll a new die. If the result is higher than the number in the tile, the player can continue his movement normally. Else, he has to stop and end his turn.



Here're some examples. The numbers point to the tiles the player can move to with those "compass numbers".

- *Winter* - Mountains. Cold nights. A player caught in a mountain tile at the end of the turn has to pay for shelter. The amount to pay is 10 times the number on the tile. If the player cannot pay, he has to spend one unit of either food or clothes to survive the night. If he doesn't have the one of either, he cannot enter the tile.

For movement purposes, the special null wilderness tiles are considered to be Plains.

5.3.1 TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE SPECIAL TERRAIN TILES

The null tiles from the standard piecepack set are special places where a player may attempt to search for free goods or equipment, but there is a risk too. At the beginning of his turn, the player must be at the special tile and cannot move for the turn.

He rolls a die and adds 1 for each unit of equipment he has in use. If the total number is lower than 3, then he's managed to find a free unit of the same suit as the tile. Just look for it and take it from the cup. If the number is 4 then nothing happens. If the number is more than 4, the player pays a penalty equal to the number times 5. The player can subtract his number of shields in use to the number before multiplying.

Here's a simple table:

Modified Die Roll	Outcome
1 or 2	A unit of the same suit as the tile is found
3	Nothing found, and nothing happened
4 or more	Attacked. Pay a penalty to the bank equal to the number times 5. You can subtract the number of shields in use before multiplying

5.4. USING GOODS

Some goods can be used by the players to help them in their travels. This is the list of those goods and their use. A player must state that he plans on using the unit of goods when buying it, never afterwards, and then must place it pointing upward (away from him). The cargo always points down. The only exception is when a player ends the turn at a mountain tile and doesn't have enough money to pay but has either food or clothing as cargo. In this case he can use a unit of those types of cargo to survive the night. He then loses the unit.

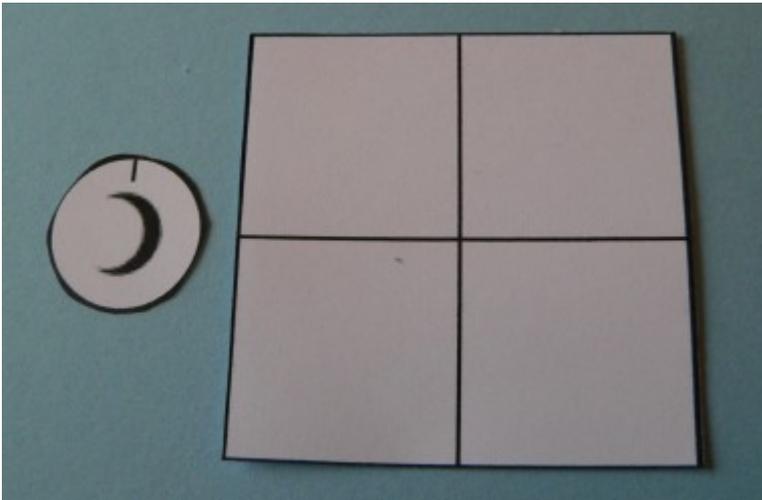
- *Magical Ingredients* (Suns): Can be used once per unit carried (then it is returned to the cup) to ignore any terrain effect for the current turn.
- *Horses* (Moons): Add to the speed of the player. Subtract the number of carts from the number of horses in use, then add 1 to the result. So if the player has 1 cart and 2 horses, he will roll 2 dice.
- *Shields* (Crowns): Whenever the player has to pay a penalty for engaging in combat, the amount to pay is reduced by 10 times the number of shield units in use.
- *Weapons* (Arms): Whenever the player engages in combat, each weapon unit adds 1 to the die roll.

Note that each time a coin is returned to the cup, another coin has to be taken from the cup and placed in its respective town.

5.5. UPGRADING THE CARTS

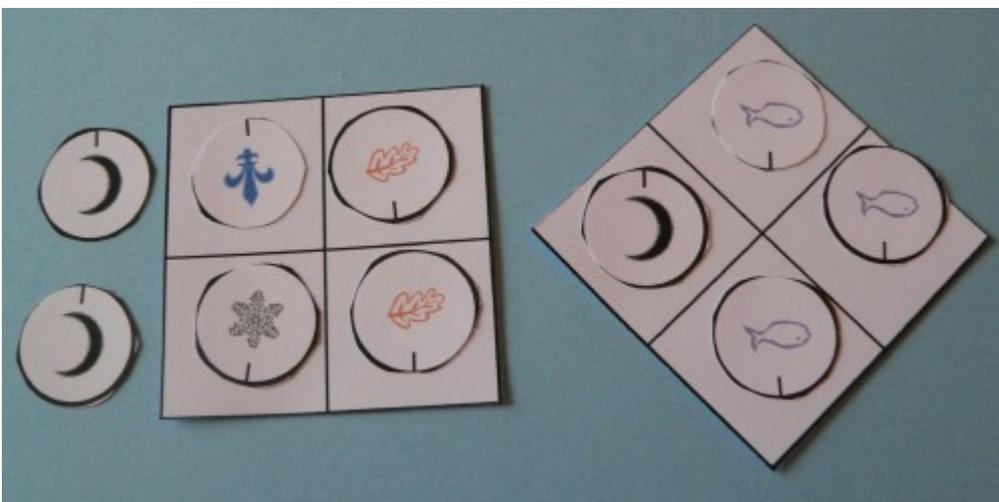
Any time a player is in one of the towns, he can choose to buy an upgrade for a small cart he owns or even buy a new cart if he has enough active horses (at least one horse for each cart).

When a player upgrades a small cart, he takes the horse from the cart and places it just outside the tile. The cart has now 4 free spaces to transport goods.



This is an upgraded cart.

If a player has more than one cart, he must own at least one horse for each cart. Any extra horses will give the player extra dice for moving (more speed)



This player owns 2 carts, a big one and a small one. Notice how the arms coin is pointing up, meaning the weapons are equipment and not cargo. The rest of the goods are just being transported. The player also has 3 horses, giving him 2 dice to roll when moving.

Remember that if you're playing with more than 2-3 players, you should use some other token (such as glass beads) as pulling horses, and return the coin you bought to the cup. This way there are enough horses for everyone.

Here's a table with the prices for the different carts and upgrades:

Type	Price
New Small Cart	80
New Big Cart	100
Upgrade Small Cart	50

5.6. OPTIONAL COMBAT RULES

Combat is not the focus of this game, but can be added to spice it up a bit and make the game more confrontational.

5.6.1 ORES

These are rules to add a threat to the players which also acts as a timer. It is necessary when playing the game as a solitaire.

Each time someone rolls a 1 (ace) when moving, he has to take a coin from the cup and place it number up on any tile that connects to a town. That tile becomes occupied by ores and also stops being connected to the town unless the ores are killed.

When an ore is placed, ignore all further ace rolls until the player that placed the ore has finished his next turn.

To attack the ores a player must first enter the tile and pay 10 times the number on the coin (combat is always costly) first subtracting 1 from the coin number for each unit of shields (crowns) in use (pointing up). Then he can proceed to attack the ores. Roll a die and add 1 for each unit of weapons (arms coin) in use (pointing up). Roll another die for the ores and add the number on the coin. If the player's total is equal or greater than the ore's total, the ores are eliminated and the coin goes back to the cup (Don't take a new random coin in this case). Also, the player recovers the money payed, and then can continue moving as normal. If the player is defeated the number coin stays and the player has to stop his movement there ending his turn.

If at any point, a new ore has to be placed on the board and there are no coins left on the cup, the game ends and all the players lose. Also, if all the towns become isolated, the game ends and all the players lose.

5.6.2 PLAYER VERSUS PLAYER COMBAT

A word of caution: Using this rule, can make the game much longer. In MoV there is a similar (but more complex) way for players to attack each other and is almost never used by anyone because it can make the game too long.

To attack another player, a player has to land on the same tile as the other player. Then, the

attacking player performs the attack by rolling a die and adding 1 for each unit of weapons (arms coins) in use (pointing up). Then, the defending player rolls another die and adds 1 for each unit of shields (crowns coins) in use.

If the attacking player's number is higher than the defending player's, the defending player pays a penalty to the bank which is 10 times the difference between the attacking number and the defending number. The defending player must also discard a number of goods and/or equipment units equal to half the difference between the attacking and defending numbers (rounded up). The attacking player may pick one of the discarded goods. The rest go into the cup. Don't forget to also take the same number of goods randomly from the cup after, and place them on their corresponding towns.

If the defending player's number is equal or higher than the attacking player's, then it is the attacking player that pays a penalty. It is calculated the same way, but halved. Also, the attacking player loses one unit of weapons in use (if he's got it) to the cup. Don't forget to draw a new coin from the cup and place it on the corresponding town.

6. ENDING THE GAME:

If a monetary goal was set at the beginning, when a player reaches or surpasses the goal, finish the round of turns so that all the players have played the same number of turns. Then, the player with most G.C. wins the game. In case of a tie, count the value of the equipment too.

If a time limit was set, then when the time is up also finish the round of turns so that all the players have played the same number of turns. The winner is determined in the same way as above.

If playing with the Ore rules, the game also ends with no winners when all the towns are isolated or when there are no coins left in the cup.

7. LICENSE:

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8. THANKS:

I want to thank Clark D. Rodaffer for his help proofreading and correcting this rule set and for his suggestions on game play. I also want to thank Ron Hale-Evans for taking the time to organize the contest and playtest my games.

9. TABLES:

Prices:

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Search Roll

Here's a simple table:

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Prices for the different carts and upgrades:

Type	Price
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Using Goods/Equipment

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