

Travellers of the Silken Road (Blademaster)

The sun peeks over distant hills to find him already awake and active. His blade in hand, shirtless and glistening with sweat, he moves through a stately and complex dance, partnered with his sword. Two other caravan guards, on the tail end of the night watch, look on with bemused expressions as he explodes in a flurry of motion and subsides in sudden stillness, the heaving of his chest the only motion.

“And that helps, does it?”

He looks over at the scarred older man who has spoken then bends to pick up his tunic. He pulls it over his head and carefully settles six ribbons on his chest. When he looks up, the older man grins a challenge at him but the young one looks on with real curiosity. He answers:

“It helps. The perfection of the form remains, regardless of whether or not there is an opponent. Opponent is irrelevant to Form: only unity of mind, body, and blade in the motion that controls space and time is important. Form leads through the chaos of battle and to the purity of success.”

The older guard laughs derisively and turns away, but the younger guard looks on with a flicker of understanding kindled in his eyes. There may yet be hope for him.

Description

The Travellers of the Silk Road are people who forswear all melee weapons save one: the sword. They dedicate their life to perfecting the use of the sword with a single-mindedness that makes chaotic cringe. In exchange for this dedication to their craft and their weapon, they learn sword forms that give them options in combat that others do not have. However, for every gift, there is a price, and each sword form has its own trade-off of negative for positive.

The Traveller discipline grew from guards working the Silk Road caravans. Over the years, these western men and women assimilated some eastern fighting concepts and adapted them into a unique style all their own. Travellers are commonly known as Blademasters, but refer to themselves simply as Travellers.

Hit dice: d10

Requirements

Race: Any

Alignment: non-chaotic

Base Attack Bonus: +6

Feats: Weapon Focus, Quickdraw

Special: Tumble 5, find a Traveller and get them to agree to train you, own a Masterwork sword, and possess the above feats.

Class Skills

The Traveller's skills (and the skill key ability) are:

Balance (*dex*)

Handle Animal (*cha*)

Heal (*wis*)

Jump (*str*)

Listen (*wis*)

Profession - Wagon Handler (*wis*)

Ride (*dex*)

Spot (*wis*)

Tumble (*dex*)

Wilderness Lore (*wis*)

Skill points at each level: 4 + INT modifier

Class Features

Weapon and Armour Proficiency

A Traveller is proficient in all simple and martial weapons, light armour, and shield. Travellers can use missile weapons, but generally disdain them for anything other than hunting and sport.

Feat Limitations

Since Travellers focus on one sword, they do not fight two-weapon style and can never take the Two-Weapon Fighting or Improved Two-Weapon Fighting feats.

Sword Forms

A Traveller must practice and meditate over her sword for two hours each day. If the Traveller does not practice regularly, she will lose the ability to use her sword forms after just a few days. She can skip one day's meditation for each sword form she knows, and to regain the use of sword forms, she must practice four hours a day for a number of days equal to the total number of sword forms she knows. Unless otherwise noted, sword forms are standard actions. Travellers do get additional attacks if their base attack bonus warrants it, but only one sword form can be performed in a round. Any additional attacks are normal. All armour class penalties last the entire round. A Traveller can trade a feat to gain two sword forms. To display their prowess with the sword, Travellers wear a ribbon on their armour or clothes for each form they have learned. Note that these ribbons in no way signify exactly which sword forms are known, just how many.

Imbue Sword

Travellers focus not just on one general type of sword, but focus on one specific sword, which must be a master-craft weapon. Travellers can perform sword forms only with their specific, chosen, unique sword. Over time, the sword is imbued with the Traveller's own energies and the weapon becomes, in effect, magical (see the chart below). If this weapon is destroyed or lost, a new weapon can be chosen by the Traveller, but the choosing process takes six months and precludes any other activity beyond eating and sleeping. These weapon bonuses are active only while the weapon is in the hands of its Traveller. These bonuses do not stack with any other magical bonuses the weapon possesses.

Level	Base Attack	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	0	+2	0	2 Sword Forms and either Weapon Finesse with chosen sword or Improved Initiative
2	+2	0	+3	0	1 Sword Form, +1 sword
3	+3	+1	+3	+1	1 Sword Form, Bonus Feat*
4	+4	+1	+4	+1	1 Sword Form, Keen weapon
5	+5	+1	+4	+1	1 Sword Form, Bonus Feat*
6	+6	+2	+5	+2	1 Sword Form, +2 sword
7	+7	+2	+5	+2	1 Sword Form, Bonus Feat*
8	+8	+2	+6	+2	1 Sword Form, +3 sword
9	+9	+3	+6	+3	1 Sword Form, Bonus Feat*
10	+10	+3	+7	+3	1 Sword Form, +4 sword

* **Bonus Feat List:** Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spring Attack, and Weapon Specialization

Sword Forms

Boar Rushes Down The Mountain

The Traveller performs a Bull Rush with +2 bonus to strength, but is considered flat-footed for the round.

Carry Tiger To Mountain

The Traveller performs a Trip attack with +2 bonus. However, she sustains an armour class penalty of -3 for the round.

Cock Stands On One Leg

The Traveller rises from prone as a Free Action, and receives a -4 initiative penalty.

Dove Takes Flight

The Traveller gains +2 to initiative, and the opponent is caught flat-footed versus the attack. This attack only does 1/2 damage.

Dragon Seeks The Path

The Traveller gives up a standard action to refocus. This also gives the Traveller a +2 circumstance bonus to the next attack

Fair Lady Works A Shuttle

A successful hit spins the opponent, who is caught Flat-Footed by the Traveller for the remainder of the round.

Heron Wading Through Rushes

The Traveller gains an armour class bonus of +2 for the round, but suffers a -3 to this attack roll.

Hummingbird Kisses The Honeyrose

The Traveller gains a +4 bonus on her attack. However, the attack only does 3/4 base weapon damage and has no chance for a critical.

Kingfisher Takes A Silverback

This sword form gives the Traveller a +4 initiative bonus and +3 damage. She also suffers a -1 penalty to hit and a -2 penalty to her armour class.

Leaf On The Breeze

The Traveller does not attack, but doubles her dexterity bonus to her armour class for one round.

Lightning Of Three Prongs

This sword form is a full action. The Traveller performs three attacks. All of these attacks have a -4 penalty to the attack roll and must be against a single target. Additionally, the Traveller's armour class receives a -2 penalty for the round.

Moon On The Water

This sword form is a full action. The Traveller is the last to perform an attack that round. If there are no successful attacks that round against the Traveller, she gets a +3 attack bonus.

Parting The Wild Horse's Mane

The Traveller performs a disarm attack with a +2 bonus. The opponent's resultant Attack of Opportunity on the Traveller gains a +2 bonus.

Ribbon In The Air

This sword form is a full action. The Traveller performs no attacks, but she gains an armour class bonus of +2 and takes 1/2 damage from all weapon damage.

Sheathing The Sword

If this attack is successful, it performs an automatic critical. Unfortunately, the Traveller also takes a critical from the opponent's main weapon. (A Last Great Act kind of thing...)

Stones Falling From The Cliff

The Traveller gains a damage bonus of +3, and a -2 penalty on her attack roll and armour class.

Stork Spreads Wings

This sword form is a full action. The Traveller attacks 2 opponents. Both attacks have a penalty of -3 to attack and occur (for all intents and purposes) simultaneously on the same segment of initiative. Opponents must be in adjacent squares.

Striking The Spark

This sword form is a full action. The Traveller attacks last in the round and gains double her normal damage bonus.

Swallow Takes Flight

The Traveller gains a +2 bonus to initiative and a +1 bonus to attack. She also suffers a -1 penalty to armour class, and a -2 penalty to inflicted damage.