

# The Race of the Expeditionaires

Hang on, do I know these three types? Adventurer 1 has finally had a haircut. Number 2 seems to have become addicted to alcohol in the meantime – or is it just the heat that is getting to him? The third party now wears free-flowing hair, but with a face identical to the one on the cover of VALDORA. These are unmistakably the same characters that once set out to explore the “hidden valley of unimaginable riches” (Valdora). There was also no fresh equipment offered. As a result, we have a new game in a not-quite-so-new outfit.

This time, people do not travel to an imaginary land, but the journey takes them to the African continent as it may have appeared at the end of the 19th century. So there are still many things to discover. Each of us players is an intrepid explorer, traveling from one location to the next, joining expeditions, hoping to profit from them, and experiencing the odd adventure, meaning: collecting precious items.

The starting points of the excursions are fixed and distributed widely across the entire continent. We can visit almost two dozen African locations. These are connected by a route network. And even though this may be fictitious, it is well worth taking a closer look right from the beginning. Traveling is always done from one location to the next, with some distances being surprisingly short. Starting from Naples, Cape Town can ideally be reached in just three steps, which makes it almost as close as the seemingly much nearer Timbouboutou.

In order to head for a certain

location, we require the appropriate travel document – we need to play a travel card with the corresponding color symbol. Most locations accept two different symbols, irrespective from which direction you arrive, whereas only a few ask you for a certain, mandatory one. The travel cards are drawn facedown from a pile as one of your actions during your turn.

While on the go, you should keep a lookout for expeditions. These are represented by cards lying faceup on the board, with each one stating the start and destination of the respective excursion. When reaching the starting point with your explorer, you are free to join. Simply place your marker on the card, as the expedition will still remain accessible to the other players. Everybody who joins gets a small bonus, which can be either a travel card or money. However, only the player who reaches the expedition's destination first will profit from its success. Then even more money can be gained, plus victory points at the end of the game.

There are always five expeditions on the move in Africa. You can participate in up to four of them simultaneously. As our explorer

pawn may travel to several locations at the same time in our turn – provided we have the relevant travel cards – the route requires careful planning to beat the other players to the location as well as meet new expeditions on the way.

## Collecting rocks

And then there are the adventures still waiting for us. In each half of Africa – separated by the equator – we find one “adventure book”, a small deck of cards on a wooden tray, which may be leafed through like the pages of a book. The cards show a location, in each case in the other half of the continent, and the reward that is waiting there for us. In most cases, these are precious stones, which will either immediately fill our purses, or generate victory points at the end of the game. Should we be in a position to show an entire collection, there will be a particularly high number of points. We may also gain helpers to join up with our explorer. The help they provide will be explained later.

As opposed to the expeditions, the adventures may be reserved exclusively by a player through payment. Only one of the open cards from the book is available for purchase at a time. We may turn the page once for free, but any additional leafing through the book costs money. If we have enough cash, we may buy several adventures at the same time. This only makes sense, however, when we are able to survive them successfully. The number of cards that we can take into the next round is limited, and the adventures are too expensive to simply discard without having tried to complete them.

Buying adventure cards is the second alternative action, after drawing travel cards. The third one is the movement of the explorer pawn.

For this we need, as already mentioned, the appropriate travel cards, but luck is of minor importance when drawing from the deck. For one thing, you may re-color travel cards into the



right ones by making a certain contribution. Also, each player has received a wild card for the journey, which may be played for any color, and is not discarded, so it is always available for the next move. And then there are the helpers. They function

Money plays a minor role in counting up victory points. It therefore makes sense to spend it during the game. This is possible without risking abject poverty, as the cash flow is so finely balanced. The first expeditions pay the highest reward for successful participation, and joining is thus

It is slightly confusing that the player color determines the turn order. Player yellow will always be starting in Lagos and is always the third in line. This can however be safely changed. In our games, we have tied the turn order only to the start locations and then distributed the colors randomly. The fact that they are printed onto the game board can be quietly ignored.

What we liked most in AFRICANA are the various options for actions. When you set your explorer in motion, you can head for up to five stations – provided you have the right cards. On the way you can carry out adventures, join new expeditions, and complete others. There is no rule that confines you to one, two or three steps or actions; only the cards set a limit to your opportunities. With the longer routes, there are always several ways to reach the destination. Therefore, skilful card management is required – a situation which can slow the game considerably if somebody at the table tends to mull over problems. However, that does not change my conclusion: If we had not received this game as a review copy, we would buy it!

KMW/cs



like a permanent travel card of a certain color.

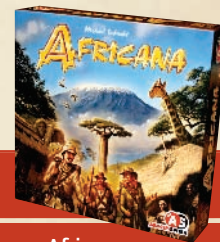
This is tempting, since the helpers may be chosen from the adventure books as desired. But there are drawbacks, since the choosing will cost money when the pages of the book are turned too often, and the supply of helpers is limited. Moreover, you lose victory points in the end, if you employed two or more helpers during the game!

There comes a time when no new expeditions are brought into the game, which is the signal to conclude the exploration of Africa. The winner is the player who was able to bring in the most victory points. They could have been called glory points, which might have been more appropriate, given the theme of exploring 19th Century Africa.

well worth it, even though they only generate a small amount of victory points. The money can be spent on adventures, preferably on those that present you with a helper. When you can employ these early in the game, it will improve your ability to move, and this can be worth the effort, despite the negative points they gain you in the final scoring. With later expeditions, the relationship between victory points and income in money is turned around.

### Memorizing cards

When a player is leafing through the adventure book, it pays to watch closely. You should memorize where certain cards are, but also which artifacts the other players are collecting, in order to rain on their parade, if possible. Some combinations gain your competitors 12 victory points, and it is in nobody else's interest to let them get away with this.



Title: **Africana**  
 Publisher: **ABACUSSPIELE/Z-Man**  
 Designer: **Michael Schacht**  
 Artist: **Franz Vohwinkel**  
 Players: **2-4**  
 Age: **about 8 and up**  
 Duration: **about 60 minutes**  
 Price: **about 39 €**

Reviewer	Playing appeal
KMW	8
Udo Bartsch	6
L. U. Dikus	7
Stefan Ducksch*	7
Wieland Herold	6
Harald Schrapers**	6

\* Best played with three and without constant mulling.

\*\* I actually like logistical games on maps. But sadly, the cluttered AFRICANA lacks a certain element of tension to be kept up right until the fabricated final scoring, so that the game experience sometimes runs out of steam.

