

Plane Trip

Travel Guide

1. What Is This?

Plane Trip is a casual Magic: The Gathering format that emphasizes exploring the breadth of Magic's history. The most powerful spells will be cast alongside the weirdest & worst creatures you've ever seen. And all of it for no mana — but at the cost of giving your opponents more options.

It is an online-first format designed with Cockatrice in mind, though any tool that allows you to bring in arbitrary cards from outside the game will work. You can also play in paper with a cube, a big stack of draft chaff, your entire collection, whatever.

Plane Trip has been most extensively tested with three players, but also works great in two player or two-headed giant. Nothing is stopping you from four-player free-for-all, or playing with bigger groups, but it might start taking a very long time.

The [full rules](#) are a bit complicated, and there are some nuances and variants you don't necessarily need to think about to have a good time. This travel guide will start by giving you the bare minimum you need to get the idea and have some fun, and then add on to that gradually. Feel free to use it however suits you — you can read the whole thing before you start, you can jump in and refer to it when you get stuck, or you can just start playing and make up your own answers to rules questions as you go. You could even try to learn the full game from the rules document, but I really don't recommend this unless you are a judge or (like me) some other kind of huge nerd who reads the CR for fun.

2. How Do You Play?

In order to play Plane Trip, you need some way to generate small pools of random cards. Luckily, I have built a website for you to do this! It's available at <https://tjor.tkr.com/planetrip/cards>. I just went there myself and asked for a pool of size 9, and got this:



As you can see, we've got cards from many different eras, with no particular color or rarity distribution, in no particular order. Every Vintage-legal Magic card has an equal chance to appear (with the exception of a very small number of banned cards). **Clicking on a card copies its name to your clipboard**, so you can easily paste it into your game program of choice. Clicking also flips over DFCs. You can use the buttons at the bottom of the screen to roll new pools of the specified size.

The core concept of Plane Trip is this: in your draw step, instead of drawing from your library (which starts empty), you **pick a card from a pool of random cards** like the one above and draw it. Then you can use **up to 15 free mana of any kind per turn** to cast cards and activate abilities... **but each mana you spend gives your opponent a bigger pool** of cards to choose from on their turn. Apart from drawing for your turn, when you draw cards with an empty library, **draw random cards** from outside the game (generate a pool with size equal to the number of cards you're drawing, and draw them all).

The default pool size is three; each special Plane Trip mana spent increases it by one. After you draw, you reset to three. If you want, you can just start playing now. This is how the first games of Plane Trip were played, and it's plenty fun!

Draw Pools

However, it has some pretty glaring flaws, which quickly led to the introduction of a more complex draw pool mechanic. **If your first draw pool would go above 9 cards, you add the excess to a new one instead. If any other draw pool would go above 6 cards, you add the excess to a new one instead.** This means that if you spend 6 mana in a turn cycle, your opponent will draw one card from a pool of 9; the starting pool size of 3, plus one for each mana spent. If you spend 10 mana, for what would be a total pool size of 13, they'll instead draw from a pool of 9, and then draw a second card from a pool of 4. If you spend all 15 allowed mana on your turn, they'll look at 3 (default) + 15 (mana spent) = 18 total cards, divided into three pools of sizes 9, 6, and 3. If you cap out on your turn *and* their turn, they'll look at a total of 33 cards, drawing 5 of them, since 9 + 6 + 6 + 6 + 6 = 33. This may be a bad idea.

Instawin Prevention

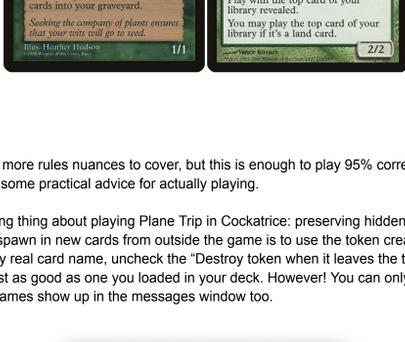
Another obvious problem we ran into right away is X spells — the very first game of Plane Trip ended on turn 2 when I found Howl From Beyond. To address this, **X in mana costs can be at most 5** (unless it's defined on the card). Similarly, **activated abilities may only be activated 5 times per turn**.



Libraries

The next big question you'll run into is, what do you do when cards tell you to interact with your library? The general rule here is: **if your actual library has cards in it, use them. Otherwise, use random cards from outside the game.** If you need a specific number of cards that exceeds the number in your actual library, use the ones in your library first, and make up the difference with cards from outside the game. (In general, when I say "cards from outside the game", I mean cards generated with the Plane Trip website, or taken from your cube, or whatever you decided on when you started playing.)

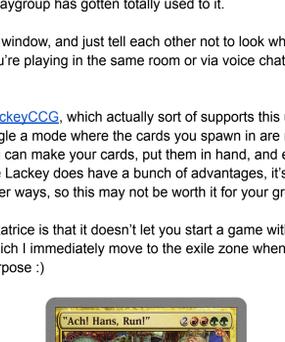
This process also has some immediate problems: when trying to resolve something like Hermit Druid's "reveal cards from the top of your library until you reveal a basic land card" ability could take a very long time. To address this, **Plane Trip uses two hard limits on how many cards an ability can look at: if you would search a library with fewer than 9 cards, search that library plus additional cards from outside the game until you've searched 9 cards.** The cards from outside the game that you search but don't find stay outside the game. **If you are repeatedly acting on the top card of a library with fewer than 15 cards and run out of cards, continue repeating the action with cards from outside the game until you've done the action 15 total times.** The cards you act on move to the appropriate zone, which by default is your library. This means that if you play Oracle of Mul Daya with an empty library, you'll take a random card from outside the game and put it into your library, where it will be revealed. The next time you draw a card (apart from drawing for your turn), you'll draw that card, and then replace it with a new random card from outside the game.



Time To Play

There are still quite a few more rules nuances to cover, but this is enough to play 95% correctly, so I figure we should take a break and go over some practical advice for actually playing.

There's one really annoying thing about playing Plane Trip in Cockatrice: preserving hidden information. This is because the only way to bring in new cards from outside the game is to use the token creation feature (Ctrl/Cmd + T). This lets you paste any real card name, uncheck the "Destroy token when it leaves the table" box, and create a copy of that card that's just as good as one you loaded in your deck. However! You can only spawn tokens face up on the battlefield, and their names show up in the messages window too.

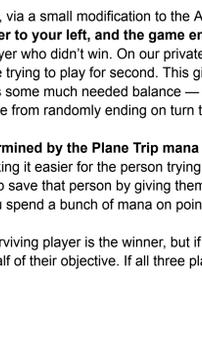


I can't sugar coat it: this sucks. It is probably the number one thing that made me wait several months before even getting started typing up this document, because I know a lot of people just aren't going to want to deal with it. There's an [open feature request](#) on the Cockatrice Github about this, but it doesn't seem to be a high priority. That said, it can be dealt with, and my playgroup has gotten totally used to it.

What we do is close the messages window, and just tell each other not to look while we spawn in the card and move it to hand. This is a lot simpler if you're playing in the same room or via voice chat, but it can work with an external chat program too.

Another viable solution is to use [LackeyCCG](#), which actually sort of supports this use case. You can use the /hiddenmode chat command to toggle a mode where the cards you spawn in are not visible to other players or announced in the log, and then you can make your cards, put them in hand, and enter the command again to toggle it back off. I will say though that while Lackey does have a bunch of advantages, it's significantly less polished and user-friendly than Cockatrice in other ways, so this may not be worth it for your group.

Another annoying thing about Cockatrice is that it doesn't let you start a game with an empty deck. I just made a deck with a single "Achl Hans, Run!", which I immediately move to the exile zone when the game starts. Have fun picking your own signature cards for this purpose. :)



One last tip for making the game go smoothly in Cockatrice: use the colored counters on the left to track your mana usage. Reset it to 3 after your opponent's draw step, click it once for each mana you spend, and if you're spending mana on multiple turns within a turn cycle, use a second counter to track per-turn usage separately from total usage. For instance, in the image below, I cast a counterspell on my opponent's turn, spending 3 mana and bringing the total cards my opponent will look at to 6. Now on my turn I've just cast Blightsteel Colossus, bringing the total to 18, but by tracking this turn's usage on the second counter I can easily see that I have 3 of my 15 mana left to spend this turn. (Note: These mana numbers are all wrong, as you'll see soon, but I haven't covered that yet so I'm just using printed values.)



3. The Three-Player Rules

Plane Trip really shines with three players, via a small modification to the Attack Left option as presented in the CR. In this mode, you **win by killing the player to your left, and the game ends as soon as one player dies**. In this mode, a winner, a loser, and a third player who didn't win. On our private leaderboard, we track this as 50, 0, and 1 points respectively; you really shouldn't be trying to play for second. This gives each player a strong incentive to save the player attacking them, which provides some much needed balance — huge early threats have to get through two players' answers, which prevents the game from randomly ending on turn three as often as it does in two player.

Each player's draw pool sizes are determined by the Plane Trip mana spent by the player to their left, which is to say, when you spend mana, you're making it easier for the person trying to kill you to kill you. **You may not spend Plane Trip mana on nothing** to try to help save that person by giving them more cards; however you can and occasionally should take cards that let you spend a bunch of mana on pointless stuff for this purpose.

If two players die at the same time, the surviving player is the winner, but if you care about points, the dead player whose target died gets 25 for achieving half of their objective. If all three players die at the same time, the game is a draw, and nobody gets any points.

4. The Nitty-Gritty

Alright, now for a bunch of annoying rules that make the game more balanced. If you think you're only going to play a few times, you could probably just skip all this. They take some getting used to, but they really do make the game a lot more fun in the long term.

Mana Costs

Casting Nicol Bolas, Dragon-God for the same price as Mirror Gallery feels a bit silly, and not just because this is a cherry-picked joke example: some mana costs are meant to be harder to pay than others.



To make costs feel a bit more in line with their designed power level, we've landed on the following rule: **Two-color spells cost their printed mana value. Spells with more or fewer colors cost one more or less mana per color more or fewer.** So Bolas here will cost you 6, while Mirror Gallery only costs 3. For this purpose, {C} in costs counts as a color.

We're not trying to perfectly balance everything, that's impossible. Activated abilities are generally very good and are frequently colorless, so we've just left them as-is. There are lots of different kinds of weird alternative costs, and we mostly don't do anything special about those. One semi-exception that falls out from the details of how the mana reduction rules are written is that you **decide how you're paying hybrid costs before any reduction or increase is applied**, so you'll probably prefer to spend 2 on Kitchen Finks. As an additional note, all reductions are optional, so you can always choose to pay full price to get sunburst or whatever.

We also decided that huge creatures make the game end too fast too often, and should give your opponents a few more chances to find answers, so we instituted what we call the "dino tax": **Creature spells with final, pre-planeswalker mana cost 7 or greater cost an additional {2} to cast.** This rule is listed as optional in the technical rules document, but I highly recommend it. Note that in conjunction with the standard mana cost rules, this means that a 5GG creature will cost 8 to cast, up from 6.

Mana Abilities

Okay, so most mana costs are different than they look. That's kinda confusing. Then we went and made it a whole lot worse :D

We wanted to make sense to ever take lands and mana rocks. The first, fairly obvious thing here is **mana produced by normal means does not increase your opponent's draw pool size, nor does it count against the 15 mana limit**. But it turns out this isn't really enough; spending a whole draw step taking a card that just gives you a little discount rarely felt worth it. So we decided to make your spell's total cost relevant to: **if you pay for all of one kind of colored mana symbol in a spell's cost with mana you made yourself, that spell's total cost is calculated as though it had one fewer color.** So if you cast Dark Ritual before playing Nicol Bolas, you'll spend a total of only 2 Plane Trip mana: the Ritual is one color and thus reduced to 0, and since you're paying all three {B} in Bolas's cost with mana you made yourself, it's treated as a 2-color card with a total cost of 5. You've paid 3 of that, so you'll only give your opponent 2 more cards to look at. If you have a Mountain as well, the total cost drops to 0. Paying generic mana in a cost with mana you made does not provide a discount, but paying all {C} in a cost with colorless mana you made does.

Additionally, **if you pay the full cost of an activated ability with mana you made yourself, that activation doesn't count against the 5 activations per turn limit.**

Getting Things From Elsewhere

There are various ways to introduce game objects to the game that weren't there before. They're each a little different, so here's a list:

- If you venture into the dungeon, you just pick a dungeon as normal.
- If you Wish or Learn, you look at 9 random cards with the relevant characteristics and pick one. You'll have to use Scryfall and random.org for this for now.
- You start with one of each Attraction shuffled up and ready to go in your Command zone.
- If you need a sticker, you pick 3 sticker sheets at random and can use only those for the rest of the game.

Passing Tax

When you first start playing Plane Trip, the temptation is usually to just take the most impactful card you see and slam it. However, over time we discovered that leaving your opponent a default 3-card pool is pretty powerful in its own right, especially when you're already ahead on board. So to prevent starving your opponent out, **if you spend no Plane Trip mana and play no cards between your opponent's draw steps, their pool is increased from 3 to 5**. You can still leave them at 3 by playing a land or a 1-drop, another little bonus for taking what are still usually pretty weak cards. Like the dino tax, this rule is officially optional, but we never play without it.

Milling

As of the time of writing, this rule is somewhat more experimental than the other optional rules. We've played with it a good number of times, but it very rarely even gets close to coming up. However, when it has come up, it has felt pretty reasonable.

If your graveyard and exile zone have 40 cards between them, you lose.

5. Extra Cards

The default settings on the [Plane Trip website](#) will give you Vintage-legal Magic cards. If you like, you can sprinkle in some extra wacky stuff: to add cards from the AI-generated (human curated) [Spiral Chaos](#) set, add an 's' before the number in the url on the cards page. You can add an integer multiplier before this to make them show up more frequently; we generally play on 2s. You can easily add the cards to Cockatrice with the instructions in the link, so that pasting the names into the token dialog brings up the card images and text just like any real Magic card.

If you really want to for some reason, you can also try out the ridiculous Plane Trip-specific [custom cards](#) that my playgroup has made. Add a 'c' before the number (and before the s, if using Spiral Chaos as well). These cards are extremely overcomplicated, often based on in-jokes or our particular interests, and just generally not particularly intended for public consumption, but there they are if you want them. You can also download them as a Cockatrice custom set file [here](#).

In our games the winner makes a new custom card, and I can't recommend this way of playing enough. I'm delighted to announce that you can now include your own custom cards instead of ours in the generator: The site accepts a url via the "set custom url" button. The link should point to a plain text file (e.g. raw gist) containing one line per card. Each line should consist of the card name, a tab, and then the url of the card image.

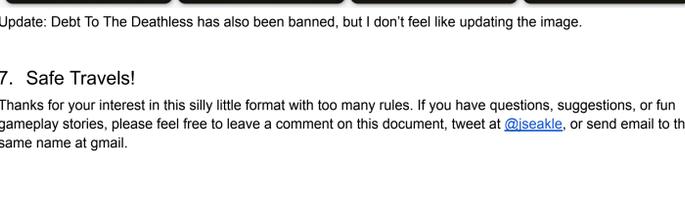
Even more uselessly, you can also include tokens in the generator by adding a 't', again before the other two.

The pool size buttons will preserve your settings. Since I don't want to make a whole separate section for this, I'll also note here that the + button will add a card to the pool with the current settings, and holding the X key on your keyboard and clicking on a card in your pool will reroll that one card. You can use this to implement a personal banlist.

6. Banned Cards

A small handful of Magic cards win the game on turn 1 or 2 by themselves if not answered immediately. We think that's kinda boring, so by default the Plane Trip website excludes them. You can put an 'x' before the number (and any extra card flags) in the url to ignore the banlist.

The complete list of banned cards:



Update: Debt To The Deathless has also been banned, but I don't feel like updating the image.

7. Safe Travels!

Thanks for your interest in this silly little format with too many rules. If you have questions, suggestions, or fun gameplay stories, please feel free to leave a comment on this document, tweet at [@seakle](#), or send email to the same name at gmail.