# Piranha's Valley
Level Design Document

Setting
Piranha's Valley is a lush basin secluded deep in a rainforest, surrounded by tall cliffs on all sides and populated with strange plants and colorful but often dangerous wildlife. When Mario finds himself warped here, he must climb through the trees, scale cliffs, face off against voracious Piranha Plants, and keep an eye out for secrets in his search for Power Stars.

Player Goals
To collect Power Stars, of course! As is standard for a Super Mario 64 course, this is an open-world-ish gameplay space containing seven Stars, which the player can collect in more or less any order (although the game does provide a suggested order on the level start screen). As a secondary goal, the player will want to collect 1-UP mushrooms and coins to avoid running out of lives.

Aside from collectibles, the other important thing the player will gain from this level is knowledge. This course is intended to have a light-to-moderate difficulty level that would fit into the difficulty curve of the original SM64 at maybe Course 4 or 5– not introductory, but still relatively early in the game. Thus, the player should already understand most basic movement mechanics, but also may require some instruction on advanced techniques (especially climbing).

Level Map
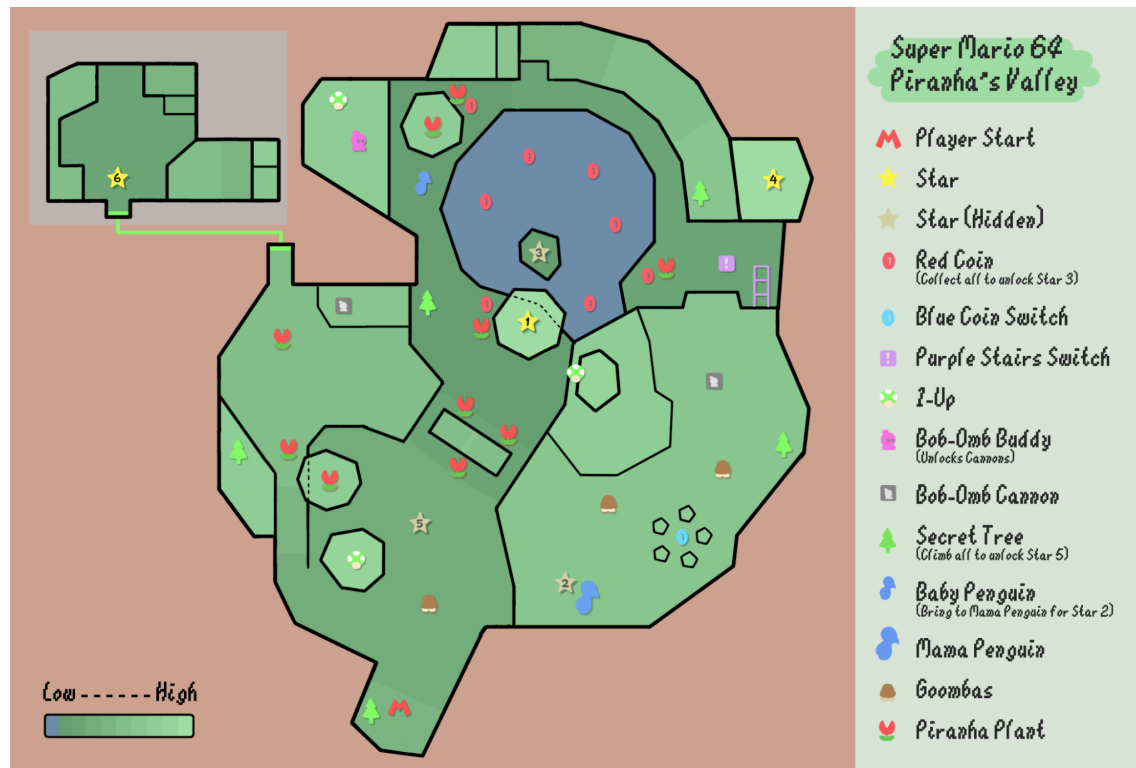
Stars

1. Climb To The Canopy

Length of Play: 2 - 2.5 min.

The first star of the course is in a conspicuous place, easily visible from the moment the player enters the course– at the very top of a tree near the center of the level. There are quite a lot of possible paths the player can take to reach the tree. They can choose to head straight down the central valley to the lake, walk around it or swim through it, and then use a purple switch to create some stairs up to the plateau; or, they could head up the hill to the left and cross over the valley on a tilting bridge. Either way, they should reach the plateau on the right side of the level. From there, they can get to the top of the hill by jumping and climbing up small palm trees, and then finally make one last jump over to the treetop.

This challenge gives the player ample opportunity to take a look at the whole level, and practices their climbing abilities, which they will continue to use a lot in this course.

2) Baby Parrot Rescue
Length of Play: 2 - 3 min.

Three baby penguins, retextured as parrots and each with different colors, are hidden around the level. The player is tasked with finding the one that matches the mama penguin's coloration and bringing it back to her on the right plateau. The correct baby is at the very bottom of the level beside the lake. The best way to bring it to the mama from here (the only practical way, really) is to carry it back toward the start of the level, then up to the left plateau and over the bridge.

Once the player brings the baby penguin to the mama, she rewards them with a star. If they bring one of the other penguins (marked with Xs on this map), she offers a more explicit hint to pay attention to the babies' plumage.
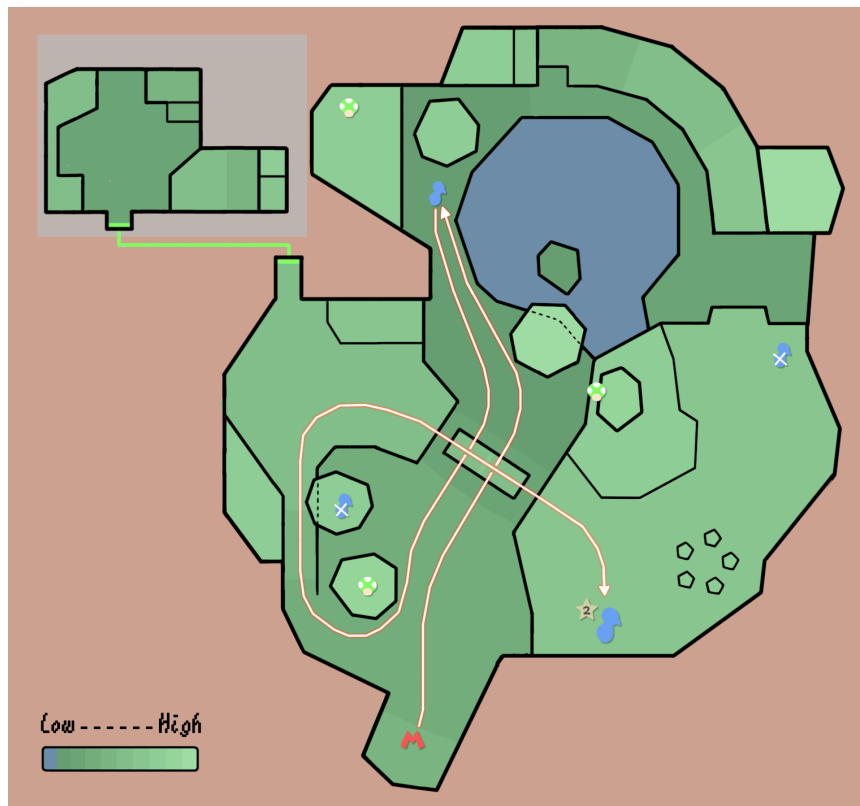
3) Red Coins In The Lake

Length of Play: 1.5 - 2 min.

The player's objective here is to collect the 8 red coins in and around the lake at the bottom of the level. The three coins on land are guarded by some Piranha Plants, while the ones in the lake are just out in the open, because honestly, swimming into such small targets with SM64's swimming controls is already a decent challenge. After picking up all of the coins, the third star appears on the small island in the center of the lake. That's all there is to it! The main challenge of this star is that it forces the player to get close to the Piranha Plants, and they will have to either defeat them or sneak around them.
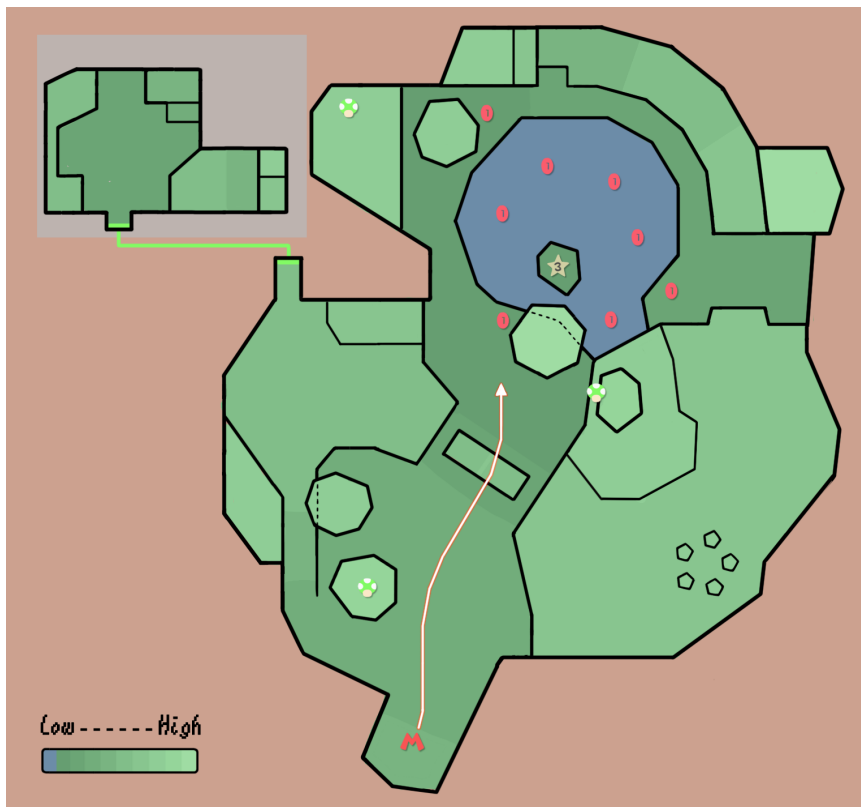
4) Blast Over The Treetops

Length of Play: 2 - 3 min.

This star is located inside a ! box on a very high platform on the right side of the level, with no clear way to reach it directly. The actual way to the star begins by climbing the ledges along the wall at the very back of the level. This is a short but tricky path that requires the player to use some movement tech like high jumps and wall jumps, and also scale more climbable trees. The path takes the player up to the platform in the upper-left corner of the level, where they find a Bob-Omb buddy who will open up the course's two cannons. Now that the player can use the cannons to launch themselves around, they are able to blast up to the ledge with the fourth star with no problem.

Once the player makes the climb, the cannons stay open permanently. This is a significant reward– having a way to quickly blast around the course is helpful not just for Star 4, but other missions that require the player to move around the level a lot (most notably, Star 5 and the 100-coin Star).

One more important note: this is the only star in Piranha's Valley that can *not* be collected in any order. The Bob-Omb Buddy does not appear during Star 1, so the player must collect at least one other Star before this one is available.


Low ------ High
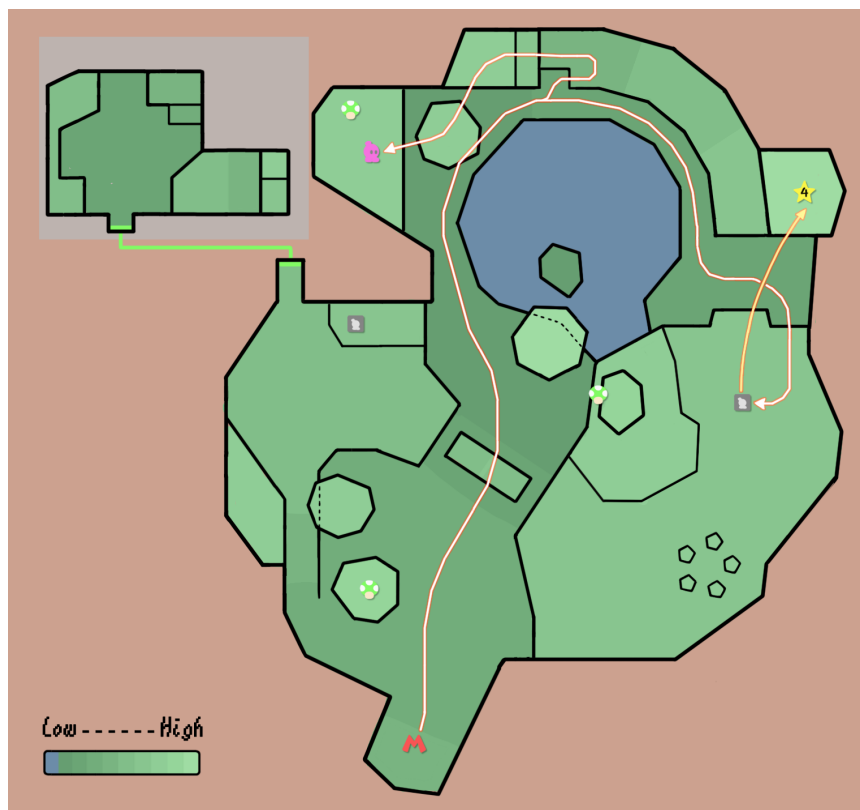
5) Find The Five Rare Trees

Length of Play: 2.5 - 3 min.

Most of the many small, climbable trees in this course are palm trees, but there are five of a different type of tree as well (I'm thinking of the "spiky tree" specifically). Each of those trees has a secret "red number" trigger at the top. If the player finds and climbs all of the special trees spread around the level, the fifth star appears atop a stump near the beginning of the course.

The player has to travel all over the level to obtain this star. The route shown on the map below is what I think is the most efficient one, but the player can visit the trees in any order they want, and the path they take is really up to them. The purpose of this star is mainly to reward the player for exploring the level thoroughly and paying close attention to the scenery, and once the player figures out what they are supposed to be looking for, obtaining the star is relatively straightforward.
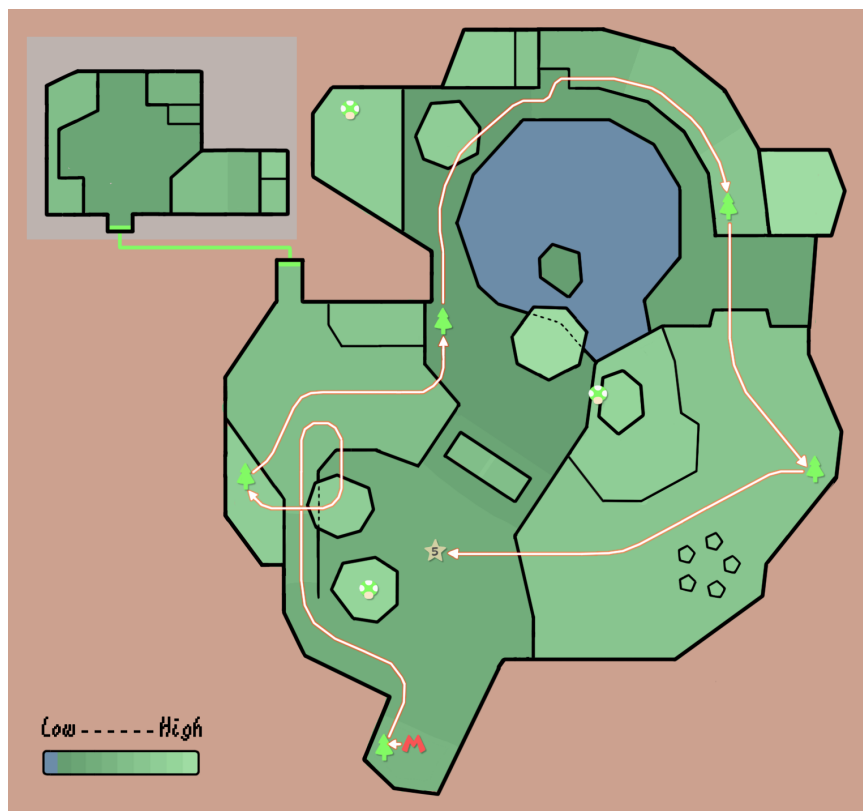
6) Secret Overgrown Cavern

Length of Play: 2 - 2.5 min.

In the corner of the left plateau, the player can ground pound a bunch of stumps out of the way to reveal a hidden cave. Entering the cave leads into a sub-area with one more short platforming challenge. Once again, this rehearses some jumping and climbing techniques, and additionally introduces climbing on the ceiling to the mix. All in all, the cave is the most platforming-intensive area in the course, but it is also the most linear; once the player finds it, they can simply follow the path upward until they get to the star, which is hanging in the air directly above the cave entrance.
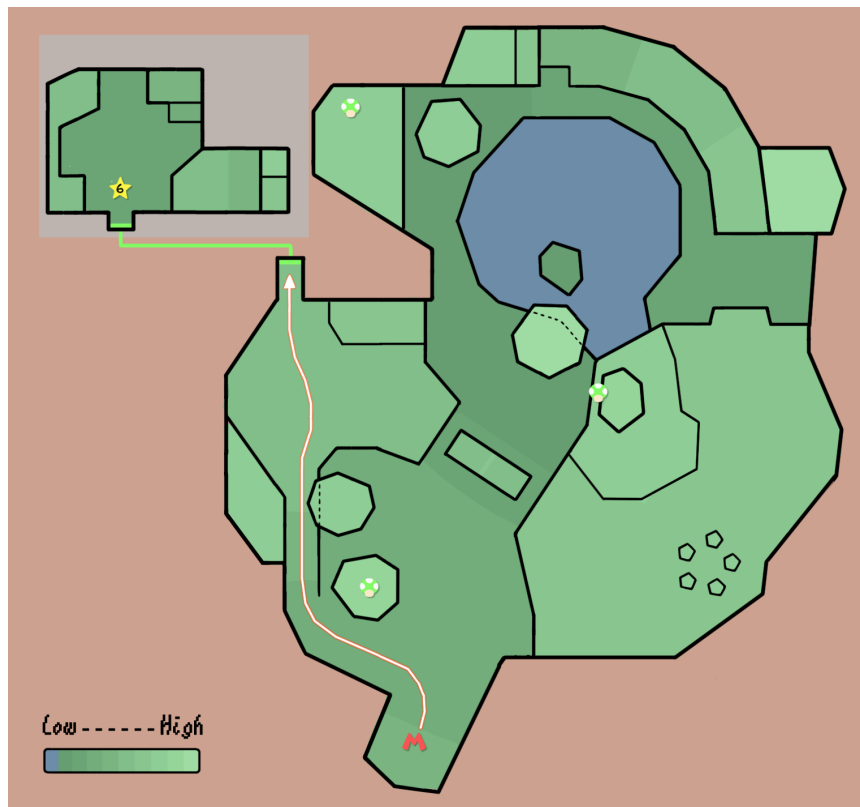
The 100-coin Star

Length of Play: 3 - 4 min

Self-explanatory– run around the level and collect 100 coins. There are coins all over the place, so there really isn't really a clear best way to do this. The blue coin switch is pretty important, since it alone gives the player 25 coins; a couple other things the player might try are gathering the red coins (worth a total of 16 coins) and defeating Piranha Plants (which drop 5 coins each).

One interesting thing to note is that, unlike the numbered stars, 100-coin stars do not take the player out of the course, so here the player has an opportunity to work toward two stars at the same time. The task of collecting 100 coins is best paired with Star 3, which requires the player to collect coins anyway, or Star 5, which takes the player to lots of locations all around the level.
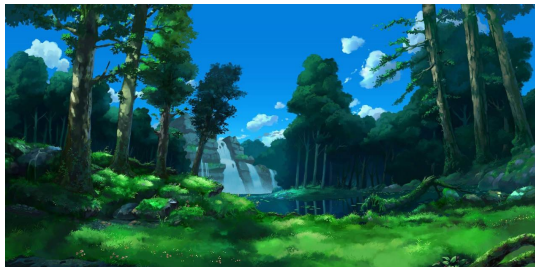
Reference:
- Overall shape of the level (462205526)

Plant life and water features (542859601, 672930181)
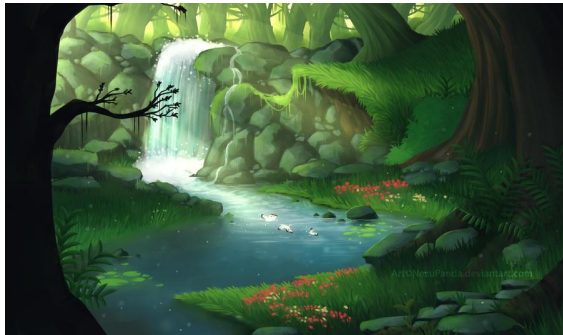
Lighting and skybox (794570419)

Plant life and mist effect

- This level ▶ Super Mario Galaxy 2 - Fluzzard's First Flight

Asset List
(Everything except the level models is built into vanilla SM64)

Terrain
- Main Level Model
- Overgrown Cave Sub-Area Level Model (for Star 6)

Terrain Textures
- Grass
- Reddish Dirt
- Vines
- Leaves
- Tree Bark
- Sand/Gravel
- Water

Collectibles
- Star
- Yellow Coin (+ horizontal line and ring formations)
- Red Coin
- Blue Coin + Blue Coin Switch
- 1-UP Mushroom
- ! Box

Environment Objects
- Breakable Cork Box
- Purple Switch (makes boxes appear)
- Tilting Wooden Platform
- Pole
- Palm Tree
- Spiky Tree
- Cannon
- Bob-Omb Buddy
- Baby Penguin
- Mama Penguin

Enemies
Piranha Plant
Goomba
Spindrift

Technical
Warp (level start)
Warp (to cave area)
Secret Triggers (for Star 5)