

# **Embra Constructed Places of Interest 1:**

## **Crepuscular Palace**

The Crepuscular Palace, one of the most important sites in the city, and its ruling heart, is indeed home to Embra's Faerie ruler, known as The Verdant Sorceress, who flies on wings made of summer flowers. A facial portrait of her typical humanoid guise by the map links to a full-length image of her elsewhere in the Atlas. The Palace is also the main barracks for Embra's magical-military defenders and police-force, the Knights of the Thistle. The Knights maintain a large secondary home elsewhere in Embra, along Thistle Street (this Street is Embra's Enclosed Place 8), to and from where they can pass swiftly, either magically in small numbers, or in larger numbers and more ceremonially by Flying Boat (such a Boat is shown tethered at the Thistle Street Barracks). The Palace is set upon the great, stepped-cliff, rocky hill of Palace Heights. The Heights can be a very strange place, for the hill does not always appear as shown on this map, as a vibrant, colourful, living Palace. Those familiar with Embra will either know or realise that this is the same hill that sometimes appears as the abandoned, grassed-over, scarcely-recognisable, ruin, also known simply as "Palace Heights" (Hilly Places 1; see that separate map for details). The ruined version of this site cannot be entered directly from this map, but GMs may wish to allow possible access to it in some fashion, because of the Law of Similarity, and the fact this is the identical place, if one apparently projected hundreds of years into the future, when the Palace has long fallen into ruins and reverted to a wild state.

Notes on the labelled locations and map features follow. First though, some more general points.

The misty edge to the mapped area is because, like all the Embra Places maps, Crepuscular Palace does not link directly to any other specific location in the city. Instead when leaving the mapped zone (or sometimes only when passing some form of threshold within it - GM's choice), the party can return either to the Constructed Places map, or the Embra Official Guide map, from where the GM can select a new location for the players to visit.

While scales are provided alongside the map, accurate to the features as drawn, and directions in these notes refer to the standard pattern of north being towards the map's top as viewed, east to its right-hand edge, and so on, none of these elements need be considered strongly fixed. Such things in the Faerie Realm can be quite fluid, to fit whatever the GM may prefer.

The featured text also beside the map could be used or ignored, as the GM might choose, although it does provide an additional element beyond what the map illustrates. It reads: "Black geese bearing gold-hilted swords decorated with emeralds, guard the Palace. They may become winged humanoid Faerie warriors when they wish." These warriors are additional to the Knights of the Thistle stationed here, although they neither have, nor require, their own barracks.

For greater clarity, note that the FCW file has a toggle to allow the on-map labels to be turned-off, if desired. A second toggle lets the interiors of the mapped buildings be viewed.

Note that only the ground level of the interiors are illustrated; the Palace's higher levels and their access routes are left for GMs to define.

## **Aspects of Crepuscular Palace**

As the interior view indicates, broad passageways run through all the main walls of the Palace, which also have similarly broad walkways along their tops. Many of the domed towers have walkways or narrow balconies partway up them as well, although all reach notably higher than any of the walls. Much of the stonework is of a pale red to pink and pale purple marble of immense strength and magical quality. There are a great many wonders within the Palace, only a few of which are noted in detail here. Colours inside and out can change from moment to moment, if often quite subtly, and are commonly of sunset or sunrise kinds, thus of many hues, while trending towards reds, oranges, yellows, purples, blues and occasionally greens. Green especially can sometimes appear only momentarily, and very startlingly so (see the real-world phenomenon of the Green Flash, or Green Ray, on this, seen rarely only at the exact moment of sunrise or sunset). While the Palace is not constantly in twilight or with just a low Sun, as is the case for the Twilight Market at Embra, there seems a very clear connection to the Market in the Palace's coloration, and of course also its name. When the Sorceress wills it, it is eminently possible for revellers at the Palace to pass to and from parts of the Market during one of the greater celebrations here, without opening the Palace up to access from the Market by others in return.

\* **Autumn Garden:** One of the six open, outer courtyards at the Palace, on its southeastern side, at the foot of Sunset Tower. The colours here are chiefly autumnal reds, oranges, yellows and browns, both of the trees and shrubs, their shedding foliage, and all the painted buildings and surfaces. There is a large round gazebo in the angle between the Garden's two paths, and a more enclosed longhouse by the east wall for cooler evening parties. Scents and the temperatures here always seem autumnal. The larger southern-wall buildings are a small barracks and a storehouse. The four "seasonal" courtyard gardens never change their natures, regardless of the time of year.

\* **Guest Quarters:** Most of the narrow, open, inner courtyard is a garden with four comfortable longhouses where honoured guests may be accommodated. Red and lilac-purple are the dominant colours, both among the buildings and the trees and shrubs. Only the especially favoured are allocated quarters elsewhere among the Palace's upper inner tower levels.

\* **Legion Copses:** Several clumps of open woodland that lie across the northern part of the map, north of the River Clack.

\* **Palace Dome & Towers:** At the centre of the Palace complex is this great hexagonal structure, set upon the highest part of Palace Heights. While the surrounding broad walls are typical of those elsewhere across the Palace in nature, they are also taller than any seen elsewhere. The corner angles of these walls are surmounted by six towers, again each notably higher than any of the other Palace towers, and each with a blue, domed roof. In the middle of the walls and towers is the huge hexagonal Dome, also blue-roofed, which is the heart of the entire structure, albeit only the middle parts of its roof reach the same elevation as the walls around it. There are several levels in the Dome, including a banqueting hall, throne room, ballroom, kitchens and receptions rooms. They are not

always in the same place, or even level, from one occasion to the next, and some may be underground at times too. The six high towers contain the royal apartments, staff quarters and places for especially favoured guests to stay, all richly appointed. Again, the locations of these, and where they are within a given tower, may change at irregular intervals. In general though, the royal and staff quarters tend to be in the more southwesterly trio of towers, the guest rooms in the northeasterly three. Note that the greater height of these central towers allows a Flying Boat to dock at any of the uppermost walkways with ease, should that be required for any reason. On the northeastern wall of the outer hexagon is a smaller, square, blue-roofed tower over the main entrance to the Palace Dome, where the entry route through the Stable Yard reaches the Palace gates. As the interior layout view shows, the first room inside the Dome from this gateway tower does not connect with the rest of the Dome. Access to other parts within the Dome is only via the walls and towers to either side of the square gate tower.

\* **Palace Heights:** This is the main part of the hilltop where the Crepuscular Palace lies. The hilltop is gently domed towards its approximate centre, directly beneath where the great hexagonal blue Dome & Towers are, and thus all the walls and towers set upon it similarly seem to be higher across the top towards its middle, although only the walls, Towers and Dome of the hexagonal central structure are genuinely taller than any others here. The Palace Walk roadway rises on a rock ramp up to the outermost of the two Sun Gates by the near-sheer cliffs on the hill's eastern side. Although very steeply-inclined, invited guests and those with important business at the Palace will have (magically) little difficulty in ascending this ramp on foot, on mounts or in carriages. Others may find this route far more (again, magically) difficult, however.

\* **Palace Rock:** These are the steepest slopes and cliffs closest to the south bank of the River Clack, although their nature is similar all the way around the edges of Palace Heights' hill. The hill rises in four distinct, almost-sheer, cliff-lines to the summit, made from a crystalline grey volcanic rock similar to granite, although it is actually a Faerie version of that rock, which makes it unexpectedly difficult to climb. Climbing ropes, well-hammered-in pitons and grapples will mysteriously come loose at random moments, climbers lose hand- or footholds as they slide back into the rock, and so forth. Note that there are none of the magical spiders or their illuminated webs here, as may be found on the Palace Heights map elsewhere in the Atlas. The actual cliff heights can be chosen as best-suits the storyline, though a useful rule-of-thumb would be to assume each cliff-line is between roughly 50 and 75 feet high (15 to 23 metres).

\* **Palace Walk:** The hard-packed earthen roadway at ground level that leads to the eastern entrance to the Palace at the outermost of the two Sun Gates. It ascends to the Gate by a very steep rock ramp, as described above under the "Palace Heights" entry.

\* **Purkinje Tower:** The northeastern outer great tower on the Palace's walls, surmounted by a very striking, yet hard to look-at, dome with a spiralling blue and red striped patterning. It has a central golden spike at the dome's summit. [The real-world Purkinje Effect refers to the odd appearance of certain colours, such as blue and red, when seen under twilight conditions, and the human eye is neither fully light- or dark-adapted.]

\* **River Clack:** The Clack often appears variable in size and nature from the different Places maps on which it features, but it is always the same river that names the vale in

which Embra lies. Here it is apparently surprisingly narrow, and runs by the northern foot of Palace Heights. The Clack usually flows east to west, right to left when viewing the map.

\* **Spring Garden:** The westernmost open courtyard garden in the outer part of the Palace, with fresh green growth always on the vegetation here, complete with the scents and temperatures appropriate for springtime. The low buildings by the southwestern wall are painted spring green, and include a sheltered longhouse for evening parties (the more northerly of the two), a small barracks and storehouse. All four “seasonal” courtyard gardens never change their natures, regardless of the time of year.

\* **Stable Yard:** Lilac-painted stables for mounts and garages for vehicles are set by the walls of this Yard between the Sun Gates and the Palace Dome. There is no direct accessway to any other part of the Palace from here, except by using the gatehouses attached to the Dome and the innermost Sun Gate.

\* **Summer Garden:** The fragrant southern open courtyard garden in the outer part of the Palace, with a yellow-painted summer house on the southern wall. The Summer Tower is in the southernmost wall-angle. There are many flowering plants and summer-fresh trees and shrubs here, and it is always warm and pleasant. As noted earlier, the four “seasonal” courtyard gardens never change their natures, regardless of the time of year.

\* **Summer Tower:** The southernmost outer-wall great tower, with a golden dome on its roof.

\* **Sun Gates:** The double set of entryway gates in to the Palace complex, and the square open courtyard between them. The main roadway from the ground, Palace Walk, rises steeply up by a rock ramp to the outermost Gate, then narrows a little as it passes through the courtyard and the inner Gate. There is no access-route to the rest of the Palace other than by using either gateway.

\* **Sunrise Tower:** The outer westernmost great tower on the Palace walls, surmounted by a horizontally-striped dome in red-and-white, with a golden finial.

\* **Sunset Tower:** The southeasternmost great tower on the Palace’s outer walls. It has a dome with coloured tiling in spiralling green and red stripes, centred on a golden finial. This colouring is almost as difficult to look at steadily as that on the dome of the nearby Purkinje Tower.

\* **Thistle Knight Barracks:** The main barracks for the Knights of the Thistle. There are two red-roofed buildings here, set in the outer part of the Palace just north of the Sun Gates courtyard. The open space here allows for training, parades and parties.

\* **Winter Garden:** The largest of the open outer-Palace courtyard gardens, with two purple-painted longhouses. The northerly one is used for parties and performances, while the southern one is a small barracks and storeroom. The scents and temperatures here are those of winter, and there is often white frost or snow across the ground, yet the foliage is apparently still green and growing. Close inspection reveals the greenery is illusory, and the deciduous shrubs and trees are actually bare of leaves, as they would be

in winter. If anyone asks about this, they will be told the leaves are there because the plants are asleep and dreaming of the spring and summer, dreams that become visible here. As discussed with the others of the four “seasonal” courtyard gardens, the Garden never changes its nature regardless of the time of year.

\* **Winter Tower:** The northernmost outer wall’s great tower, with a spiral-patterned dome on its top in yellow and pale purple stripes, with a golden central spike.