

Embra Enclosed Places of Interest 2: Red Picket Golf Course

The second of Embra's Enclosed Places of Interest is the city's famous Golf Course, Red Picket. It is bounded by the River Clack on three sides, and by woodland and some of the Course's rough on the fourth. Its true boundary away from the Clack though is actually the footpath that runs through and along the outer edge of some of the woods and rough on the northeastern side. While the Course can be left at any point, it can be entered only using the path running from the map's northwestern edge to the bridge over the Clack leading to the Reception Hall building.

Toggles on the FCW version of the map allow the interiors of the Reception Hall and Clubhouse to be viewed (including the upper floor of the latter). Another toggle turns on or off the labels and Course indicator arrows, while a fourth operates the map's other labels for greater clarity, when required. Notes regarding the Course and the labelled map features follow, but first, some more general points.

The misty edge to the mapped area is because, like all the Embra Places maps, Red Picket does not link directly to any other specific location in the city. Instead when leaving the mapped zone (or sometimes only when passing the Course's border, or even crossing some form of threshold within the Course - GM's choice), the party can return either to the Enclosed 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.

Similarly, the featured text also beside the map can be used to add extra flavour to Red Picket, or ignored, just as the GM wishes.

Aspects of Red Picket Golf Course

By the side of the map is a small key to help identify the usual features of the Golf Course - bunkers (or sand traps); greens, where the hole to aim for has been cut; areas of rough, where long grass and shrubs are maintained, and occasionally also trees; and the tees, from where the scoring strokes for each hole begin.

Everyone entering the Course, whether Faerie or not, must pass through the **Reception Hall**. This is simply how the Course works, and anyone voicing other opinions will have this strongly pointed-out to them in advance. Attempting to access the Course in any other way results in those involved being instantly returned to the Enclosed Places of Interest map (or the Official Guide map, if that seems more appropriate), from where a new destination can be selected. Those so affected will find their subsequent dealings in Embra are done at a disadvantage, until such time as the GM may deem suitable for their

“rehabilitation”. Aside from regulating access to the Course across the Clack’s only bridge here, the Reception Hall also overlooks the low stone wall of red sandstone that surrounds the zone around and between itself and the Clubhouse. The buildings here are also made of this same red sandstone.

Those wishing to play the Course can hire equipment and Faerie caddies to carry it for them here. Spectators are each given a bright yellow flower that they must wear prominently at all times while at Red Picket. Once they have their flower, they may continue on to the Clubhouse and thence the Course proper when they wish. Players may use the Practice Green, and can have refreshments in the Summerhouse first. The **Summerhouse** is an open-plan, domed structure set on four pillars without walls. It overlooks the river beyond the Course’s Practice Green, as well as the Green itself.

The **Practice Green** introduces some of the quirks of the Course, which may help non-Faerie Players acclimatise a little better. Such things include holes that can move (sometimes up into the air), or drift as if in a tide or current, where distances between points are not firmly fixed, and so forth. The idea is to use the space for putting practice, as this is liable to prove one of the more challenging aspects of the Course especially for those less familiar with the workings of Faerie. A fence that runs between the Reception Hall and Clubhouse along the Green’s southern side restricts access only to those practising golf, and intending to play the Course.

The **Clubhouse** has locker rooms and other facilities that might be expected for Club members and visitors, together with large viewing windows for spectators, dining and refreshment rooms, with some private-function rooms available on the upper floor. Players and spectators can enter the Course itself from the ground floor’s northeastern doors.

Viewing the Course as mapped, especially for those familiar with real-world golf courses, will suggest it is unusually small, aside from comprising just half the typical number of holes, at nine. The labelled Course indicator arrows showing the more direct routes between each tee and its respective hole seem to be all less than about 300 feet (90 metres). This though can be misleading, since as already noted, distances and directions in Faerie can be unexpectedly fluid for those used only to how the Mortal Realm operates. In addition, as some of the Course features may hint on first viewing, parts of it play like a miniature (or crazy) golf course, where certain elements must be physically negotiated by skill in timing or unusual manoeuvres, or sometimes simply luck. For example, trees and shrubs may move in the way at times, or a bunker may cause the ball to pop-up in another one than it went into, etc. A further distraction, should one be required, can come from the silent, dancing Faerie butterflies of the featured text: “Above bushes with deep crimson flowers flit pairs of great butterflies. One has red wings with black-white “eye” patches, and a white body. The other is all black with red “eyes”. They are really dancing faeries, though there is no music.”

Playing the Course

* **Hole 1 - Clack Bank Stroll:** Apparent distance = 210 ft (65 m), Par = 3. A seemingly straightforward hole to begin with, best played with a slight curve to the right near the green to avoid the rough. Like all the Course's bunkers, those here are deep and steep-sided around their edges closer to the green. Those on this hole have an unnerving tendency to move towards where the ball is about to land sometimes, albeit this is more of a warning to the unwary than a significant problem.

* **Hole 2 - Sandy Hollow:** Apparent distance 155 ft (45 m), Par = 5. What seems a very short hole for such a very high par count, even with the right-hand curve to help reach the green while avoiding the rough, this hole is made far more difficult because of the abnormal number of bunkers scattered all across it. Although they do not move in the way of those at Hole 1, they do open and close at erratic intervals, with new ones opening from time to time where moments before was simply smooth grass. Should one vanish with a ball inside it, the Player forfeits a stroke, but can play on from where the bunker had been.

* **Hole 3 - The Windmill:** Apparent distance = 140 ft (40 m), Par = 3. What might be otherwise a simple straight-drive hole is made trickier by the very narrow fairway in two places, and most particularly by the huge blue windmill in its centre. The ball must be played through the open doorways from the front to the back of the structure (which is hollow inside, not an actual building), avoiding the ever-turning vanes of the mill on the way. These completely block the front doorway when they pass across it. Trying to strike the ball over the mill will not work, as the vanes always manage to knock the ball from the air back the way it came, no matter how fast, or how far above the roof of the windmill, the ball was struck. The turning vanes either speed-up or grow to reach the ball (to an impossibly great height if necessary). Similarly, the vanes will not allow anyone to enter the mill. The ball must be struck cleanly through it in a single shot. The mill turns normally even when there is no wind.

* **Hole 4 - The Hedge-Maze:** Apparent distance = 175 ft (55 m), Par = 5. The entire hole except the green is set in the rough, making it initially more challenging. It then has a high-walled hedge-maze that can be played through only with difficulty. The green, and where the hole has been cut in it, cannot be seen from the tee, or until the Player is past, or through, most of the maze. Aside from the bunkers by and in the maze, trying to play the ball outside the hedges is made harder as the two footpaths running alongside the longer edges of the hole, its rough and hedges, are out-of-bounds, so if the ball lands there, the Player has to start again from the tee. What fun!

* **Hole 5 - The Old Ruins:** Apparent distance = 250 ft (75 m), Par = 3 or 4. The direct route to the ruins on the green overflies a double row of six larger bunkers and a broad strip of rough. Giant sandworms in the bunkers here love to spit sand up to strike golf balls passing over from the air, deflecting them, or even dragging them down into a bunker or the rough, when they hit. Once at the green, the trick is to avoid hitting the uneven, variable-height, stone-wall ruins, as these too will deflect the ball more strongly than might seem possible - sometimes right back, and oddly unerringly, to the tee. If the hole is positioned on the green beyond the ruins from the tee, it is classed as an "easy"

Par = 3. If the hole is instead in the ruins, or worse still, between the ruined wall angle and the bunker on the green's southwestern edge, it is classed as Par = 4.

* **Hole 6 - Hex Shot:** Apparent distance = 175 ft (55 m), Par = 2. Simple, no? No rough, a mere three bunkers by the green, no other obstacles. Except invisible sylphs and air sprites love to frolic in the air above this fairway, often deflecting shots in quite unexpected ways without warning. Enjoy!

* **Hole 7 - Splash!:** Apparent distance = 210 ft (65 m), Par = 3. Holes 7 & 8 have no rough. Instead, they have very many large, deliberately-placed trees, which create even greater difficulties than the long grass and low shrubs of the rough patches elsewhere. It is possible to just see the green between the trees from the tee on Hole 7, although as the hole is generally cut somewhere close to the Clack bank-edge of the large green, this is of only limited assistance. Should the ball end in the Clack - which is especially deep here - the Player has the choice of playing on from within the river (for many medium-sized humanoids or smaller, this will require the ability to breathe underwater), or forfeiting the shot to try again from the tee.

* **Hole 8 - Woodland Ride:** Apparent distance = 300 ft (90 m), Par = 4. Here, the light woodland is densely-set enough that it is not possible to see the green from the tee at all. The perceptive may notice there are numerous ricochet streaks on many of the tree trunks on this hole however, which do give clues as to the direction to aim for - assuming they are paid attention to. The trees here will make pained and sarcastic comments should a Player manage to hit one of them, or if they make a particularly poor, or ill-aimed, shot. Each time a tree is struck, it shifts its position a little. Attempting to strike the ball over the tree-tops, or through the foliage, results in the ball being caught and thrown back to the ground near the Player involved. Fresh sarcastic comments will result from the trees nearby too. If the tree returning the ball in this manner manages to hit the Player, the neighbouring trees will make admiring comments to the successful tree instead, and rustlingly applaud. Those trees nearer the green will similarly applaud and respond favourably when a Player completes the hole. The best way to succeed here is to allow the ball to ricochet off the trunks, as this always speeds the ball further in the right direction for the green, regardless of the trees' opinions.

* **Hole 9 - Spinner's Rough:** Apparent distance = 190 ft (60 m), Par = 3. An easy hole to finish with, where only a lobe of rough intrudes onto the fairway between tee and green, as the deep bunkers form an arc only behind the green. It is though best to dogleg the shot past the rough, and not try to fly over it, as the whole patch of rough here is home to giant spiders that hunt by shooting sticky silk web strands straight up into the air from where they lurk on the ground amongst the long grass and bushes. They unerringly snatch any ball from the air that passes over their homes, only to spit it back towards the tee when they discover it is not food after all.

No one needs to complete the Course once begun, but those who do, no matter how long it seems to have taken - perhaps days, and a huge number of golf strokes, later - will return to a warm welcome at the Clubhouse no more than three hours after they set out from it. Their golf score for the Course is irrelevant; completing the nine holes is all that matters. Successful Players gain a one-off permanent bonus to dealings with Faerie beings thereafter, and perhaps (at GM's option), also some physical benefit as a token of the fact

(a small magical trinket or treasure, say) if they have played the Course especially well, interestingly, amusingly, or maintained a cheerful demeanour throughout whatever tribulations may have befallen them along the way.

Other Labelled Features of Note

* **Bredwood:** A large, densely forested area on the south bank of the Clack, and south of the Course. It is effectively impassable to non-Faerie beings, who will quickly become lost or disoriented once in it, and be unable to leave the mapped area in this direction.

* **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 quite broad, and has just one crossing point, the bridge leading to and from the Reception Hall at the start of the Golf Course, as noted earlier. It usually flows from the east (right-hand side) of the map as viewed, to the map's north (top) edge.

* **Sleeping Wood:** An expanse of woodland covering both banks of the Clack north of the Course. It is not nearly so challenging to pass through as Bredwood.