

# Orbital Colonies and Wayfarers' Haven

Spacers (Commonthroat qGKqJqg, {huff long rising strengthening growl, huff, long high weak growl, huff, short low weak growl}) are yinrih who live and work primarily in outer space.

As I've stated many times before, orbital colonies have no artificial gravity since that allows yinrih to use all their paws for grasping while in motion.

Many orbital colonies are satellites of a planet or moon. These are usually exclaves of a terrestrial government. There are also colonies that orbit around Focus itself, usually in the inner or outer belt, but there are a few colonies inside the orbit of Hearthside very close to Focus. These stellar stations are mostly monasteries.

Belt colonies act like perpetual boom towns, going from asteroid to asteroid to mine the minerals to trade for other goods. Some colonies simply exist because there are resources to mine. Others, such as Wayfarers' Haven, only mine to keep the lights on, but the reason the people are there is to come together as an independent and self-governing community.

The first thing you'll notice upon entering an orbital colony is the lighting, or lack thereof. Yinrih can see wavelengths from 12 mm all the way up to the edge of ionizing radiation in the UV range, so what constitutes comfortable "white" light for them is culturally dependent, and it's as often as not outside the human visible range.

The other thing you'll notice is the smell. Yinrih fur sheds constantly, and they have a natural musk, so even though they're just as concerned with personal grooming and cleanliness as humans are, they can't help but have an aroma about them. Most humans liken it to the smell of a kennel. Wayfarers' Haven is even affectionately called "The Kennel" by human visitors.

Orbital colonies come in diverse form factors, but a common template, seen with Wayfarers' Haven, is to have a wide central axis that acts as a "main street", with modules attached to the sides. These modules can even be smaller thoroughfares, with smaller capsules attached to them in tern. The result looks from the inside like a large American shopping mall if it were designed by the people who made the game Descent.

The central axis is quite broad, so cabling is suspended at regular intervals to allow residents to pull themselves along and to keep people from being stranded floating in the middle. It looks like a mile-long jungle gym. There's also constant air circulation throughout the colony, both to keep CO2 from collecting and to filter out all the shed fur and other particulates. I can only imagine what the filters must look like when they need to be changed.

The "shops" in this case can be personal quarters, businesses, government offices, schools, and so forth. Personal quarters in particular are an interesting case, as they're often designed to be portable, like a mobile home. They can't move on their own, but can be loaded onto interplanetary ferries and attached to other colonies.

Wayfarers' Haven started out as a refugee camp of mostly other spacers, but also some surface-dwellers of a dwarf planet in the Outer Belt that the Partisans decided they wanted for themselves. While the land grab is mostly just that, it didn't hurt that the natives they were evicting were Wayfarers. The Allied Worlds got wind of the pending invasion, and helped the residents get out before they could be subjected to whatever horrors the Partisans could come up with.

Since Wayfarers' Haven was originally a refugee camp, it looks a lot like someone welded a bunch of FEMA trailers to a giant version of the ISS. That's because it basically is a bunch of FEMA trailers, or the cultural equivalent: Allied Worlds standardized refugee aid capsules.

As you intuit, the culture is very pious, so some traditional practices are maintained, like the engine room doubling as the Lighthouse, and the town hearthkeeper also filling the role of chief engineer.

Since the engine room is also the Lighthouse, every surface is absolutely encrusted with bones. While most of the colony's vital systems rely on more conventional generators, the customary star hearth still powers the individual homes of the residents in accordance with tradition.

After the mass router is perfected, Wayfarers' Haven is chosen to be the endpoint for the trunk line between Sol and Focus since it's technically the only state to have any relations at all with Earth.

As for how the individual missionaries ended up there, Tod was one of the Peacekeepers helping with the evacuation and resettlement, and decided to settle down there after his tour of duty ended. Sunshine wanted to work under one her old teachers who was one of the refugees. The others were refugees themselves.

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These are just some preliminary thoughts. I have a lot more to say in the future about spacer society and Wayfarers' Haven.

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