

CASTLEGRASP

Castlegrasp, the City of Granite, is the last major city before the Desolation of Ditimaya and the Obsidian Plain cut off the rest of Omeria from the southern end of the continent. Ruled by Khan Hayyan Harrak XI (known by his people as 'Fair Eleven'), Castlegrasp keeps the peace thanks to its strong military and strict, but just, laws.

Castlegrasp is home to some 12,000 humanoids, the majority of which are Ditimayan humans. Indestructible granite walls surround the whole of the city. The mighty Castlegraspian Stonearms (LG any race knights) protect the city and keep the peace while the legendary Castlegraspian Navy patrols the turbulent waters of the Bay of Suen and the Omerian Ocean.

Thanks to the Castlegraspian navy's watchful eye, southern merchants feel safe traveling along the Scorched Coast. And as the connecting point between southern and central Omeria, Castlegrasp is a major trade port. Goods from Odonburg, Qey, Yraka, and more touchdown in Castlegrasp. There, the Merchant Guilds purchase and issue the goods caravans for journeys north along the Arrow Road. Castlegrasp itself exports the unusually durable granite from which it earns its nickname as well as plums, sheep, and of course, its famous wines.

Thanks to Fair Eleven's just and (some would argue) liberal attitude towards criminals, most of the crime that existed two decades prior has vanished from Castlegrasp. Still, it has its fair share of black hat organizations. The city's biggest criminal organization, the Crystal Toad handles black market trade and is rumored to have many of the city's nobles on their payroll. Meanwhile, the shadowy cadre of assassins known as the Owls earn heavy purses of gold as murderers-for-hire. In the Low Ward, a new devilkin crimelord named Light Beyond the Hills invokes terror among the ward's citizens.

Not only does Castlegrasp act as the starting point for the adventure, but it could also function as an exciting base of operations for characters adventuring in Central Omeria.

IMPORTANT LOCATIONS

The City of Granite is a thriving metropolis with hundreds of homes, shops, and places of interest. Below are some of the popular destinations found in Castlegrasp, keyed to the map of Castlegrasp on page 2.

1 - THE VIOLET QASR

The Violet Qasr is the royal palace of Khan Hayyan Harrak XI (N male Ditimayan human noble). Off-limits to outsiders and guarded by the Stonearms' most elite fighting force, the Granite Nine (all LN Ditimayan human knights), there are whispers of great treasures hidden within the Khan's palace. It is rumored that hundreds of feet below the palace, Uve the Harrow's ring is locked in a vault of permanent ice and protected by dao Gasta-Harrak's greatest warriors.

The Khan often makes public appearances from the front of the Qasr upon the great, circular Dais of Khans where he takes answers directly from the people of Castlegrasp in a townhall format. It's the Khan's openness and frank

manner of speaking that's earned him the nickname Fair Eleven.

2 - ORCHARD PARK

The Violet Qasr overlooks a two-acre olive orchard at the center of the city. In addition to the olive trees which give the park its name, the park has many open fields for recreation and lounging, as well as a large, cold-water pond called Uve's Ire.

Statues of nine of the ten previous Khans are carved to look as if they are hiding among the park's trees. The only Khan whose statue is missing is Khan Hayyan Harrak III, also known as Forgotten Three. His statue is found two miles outside of the city at the edge of the Desolation, half-buried by the sand.

3 - THE VAGUE OLIVE INN

Also known as the Inn of Many Bridges, the Vague Olive is an inn, restaurant, tavern, market, and, of course, a popular gateway into the Orchard Park. The inn itself consists of eight separate buildings, all painted different shades of blue and violet each connected by ornate, crisscrossing bridges illuminated by willow-lights.

During the Autumnal Equinox (commonly referred to as Ditimayan New Year), the Olive celebrates with its popular Festival of Blue, where the citizens of Castlegrasp don blue masks and robes to celebrate the cooling of the Desolation and the return of the Weysevain wet season.

The Vague Olive is owned by Kashgar Rapos (N male krig). Having lived in the city almost since its inception, Kashgar is one of Castlegrasp's wealthiest and most influential citizens. The eight-eyed noble has a close relationship with the current Khan, as well as five of the khans before him. After all, it's no coincidence that his mighty tavern sits at the edge of the Olive Park with a clear view of the Violet Qasr.

4 - THE BEAUTIFUL TIGRESS

If there is one thing that all Castlegraspian nobles love to do, it's outdoing one another. Seeing the elaborate design of Kashgar Rapos' Vague Olive, Alzahra Nedali (LN female Ditimayan human noble) went the other direction with her inn. The tallest building in Castlegrasp, the Beautiful Tigress is less an inn than it is a tower with many bedrooms. And the further one climbs the Tigress, the higher the room fee. Supposedly, the suite at the very top costs a tenant as much as 2,000 gp per night.

Despite displaying a public persona of a bitter and uptight wine heiress, Nedali is actually one of the most beloved people in all of Castlegrasp. On more than one occasion, the citizenry of Castlegrasp have suggested that were the city to elect its next Khan, Nedali should be next in line. Seeing as how Fair Eleven has no heir—male or female—it just might happen.

5 - ARMED LAVENDER INN

Not all of Castlegrasp's inns are works of art or demonstrations of power and wealth. The Armed Lavender inn, a box-of-a-building pressed close to the city's outer walls,



Vineyards

Bay of
Suen

Sunflower Fields

N

250

500m

is a warehouse-sized fest hall that caters to Castlegraspians of all stripes. Its proprietor/bartender/entertainer, Rolf Anderberg of Jovelnot (NG male Knotsider human scout) delivers his northerner attitude and charm night after night. No one's ever seen Anderberg sleep. So, a frequent joke heard in the Armed Lavender is that Anderberg is secretly a Dinzer construct disguised as a northerner. "Splash a little water on him, and he'll likely rust."

Of course, the Armed Lavender comes with plenty of controversies. Its lack of security makes it one of the Crystal Toad's favorite places to do business.

6 - THE AMAZING CLOCK

Truly a sight to behold, the Amazing Clock is just that—a gargantuan clock. Fashioned by a silent mage named Oxon nearly 500 years ago and gifted to Castlegrasp shortly after its founding, this eight-handed clock does more than just tell time. It can predict phases of the moon, eclipses, and even seasonal weather patterns. But its greatest function is its ability to predict catastrophic events.

Whenever the clock's eight hands align as one, catastrophe follows. So far, the clock's hands have aligned themselves seven times in the last 500 years. Each ominous alignment was given a name: the Hand of the One, the Hand of the Two, and so forth. Because the alignments rely on the clock's unpredictable eighth hand for its forecasts, no one knows when the next alignment, the Hand of the Eight, will occur. And since this alignment will be eight on eight, many think it will be the clock's final alignment which will signal a final catastrophe followed by the end of the world. Hence the popular middle-Omerian expression and toast, "Until the Hand of the Eight" (in essence, "seize the day.")

At all times, the Amazing Clock is protected by the final Dinzer Gear Golem, Constant. Not that anyone could harm the clock if they tried, mind you; Oxon's enchantments are unbreakable. Still, Constant stands guard as a reminder of the Castlegraspian-Dinzer alliance that has kept central and southern Omeria united for over a century.

7 - THE MAGIC DART

Looking for magic items? Look no further than the Magic Dart. Outside, the Magic Dart looks like an ordinary shop. Other than a simple wooden sign with its name painted in blue and purple, there's nothing special about it. Step inside, however, and right away you'll notice that the Dart is impossibly deep. The first thirty feet or so of the Dart is where most of the typical common and uncommon magic items one expects to be sold in a magic shop can be found. But the further you walk towards the back of the shop—of which you will never find the end—the stranger and more unusual the offerings become. Because of its neverending nature, a tradition known as "Running the Gauntlet of Dreams" has attracted adventurers and arcane scholars far and wide. To run the gauntlet, a visitor to the shop must see how far back into the shop they can travel before they wish to return. A gauntlet-runner can walk for miles into the rear of the shop without ever finding the end. Most turn back in fear of the dangers that hide deep within the bowels of the Dart. Fortunately, the moment someone turns back, they discover themselves within the front of the shop once again as if they had traveled no further than a few feet.

The shop has only one known employee, Gudner. Gudner sits behind the counter at the front of the shop reading tomes day and night, pausing only to collect gold from customers for their purchase. Even those who've Run the Gauntlet and returned with legendary items have received little more than a "thank you, come again" from the tired-looking old man.

8 - TEMPLE OF YRENA

One would think that Castlegrasp's position on the border of the Obsidian Plain would make its citizenry shy away from the worship of Yrena, Goddess of Destruction, but quite the contrary. Having seen the effects of her wrath, Castlegraspians hold great respect for Yrena.

Yrena's temple is a circular building with a large circular courtyard at its center. A statue of the ram-headed goddess towers at the center of the courtyard, standing over the broken body of her lover, Zealdir, also a statue.

The temple is cared for by eight blind seers, Yrena's Witnesses (LE male Ditimayan human mages). In addition to their eyesight, the Witnesses have given up their names and personalities, each referring to himself as 'One-of-Eight.' Although murder is illegal in Castlegrasp, Khan, despite being a skeptic, allows for the Temple of Yrena to make the eight sacrifices required by the Witnesses' tenets. In recent years, a movement calling for the end of the tradition has gained strength.

9 - SHRINE OF NAEYER

"At Naeyer's feet!" is the worst curse a central Omerian can throw at his or her enemy. Naeyer, the Sun God, is feared more than both Yrena and Suen combined. Only by the care and wisdom of the Children—the water sprites—are central Omerians protected by Naeyer's cruel hand.

As the god of fire and ifrits, Naeyer is identified by most central Omerians as an evil god. Those who worship him are called the Cracked, as their faces are often a blistered mess of damaged, bleeding skin. Despite the presence of the shrine, none of the Cracked are allowed in the city. The small, ramshackle shrine only exists to appease the cruel, chaotic god.

When the first rains fall on Castlegrasp following the Autumnal Equinox, Castlegraspians travel to the shrine to mock and shame the god, believing that once again the Children have once more protected them from Naeyer's wrath.

10 - TEMPLE OF SUEN

Suen is the goddess of storms and worshiped primarily by sailors, fishermen, and others who work in or around the sea. Seen as neither god nor bad, the neutral goddess Suen can bring destruction just as quickly as she can bring great fortune.

The Temple of Suen in Castlegrasp is more than just a place of worship. It's also a popular tavern overlooking the Omerian Ocean and Bay of Suen. The high priest of the temple/tavern Barsumlin Coinminer (LG male Von Doral dwarf priest) serves drinks and issues prayers. Half the time he's drunk on his own supply, though, and passed out on the floor of the temple.

Ten years ago, the worshippers of Suen tried to erect a statue dedicated to the goddess in the harbor. Unfortunately, a southerner fishing boat accidentally bumped into the statue, knocking it onto its side. Later that year, that same boat was capsized by a colossal wave.

11 - GRYTIAS' FALL

Fifteen years ago, five ivory dragons fought on behalf of the northern armies during the Attack of Regrets. Four of the dragons were killed south of the Obsidian Plain by Dinzer warblimps. But the fifth, a one-eyed grump named Grytias, turned his attention to Castlegrasp. Dozens of Castlegraspian Stonearms fell to the beast's breath during the battle. Finally, a knight named Thawab El Khouri saddled a griffon and flew directly towards the beast. Grytias' caught El Khouri's mount in its jaws, but El Khouri was able to dodge its teeth and cling onto the dragon's dewlap. El Khouri stabbed Grytias through he neck with his spear, and in seconds, the dragon turned to stone and crashed into the city's Lower Ward. Sadly, El Khouri perished in the fall, too. The petrified corpse of the ivory dragon remains hunched over the city's southern wall. During the Day of Spoken Regrets in the summer, El Khouri's widow, Zayna, embraces visitors who come to pay their respects to the fallen hero.

12 - THE MARCH OF STONEARMS

Castlegrasp was founded upon a granite quarry two hundred years ago. Today, the granite stones pulled from the quarry make up much of the city's walls, buildings, and even the Violet Qsar. But the granite did not come free. Soon after the mine was opened, the earlier Castlegraspian discovered that the terrain was inhabited by earth elementals. The elementals' queen, a might dao named Gasta the Pure, confronted the Castlegraspian, questioning their presence in Central Omeria. The city's founder, Khan Hayyan Harrak I, met privately with the dao. In a move thought unusual by many of his peers, Harrak surrendered his soul to the dao in exchange for access to the granite. Initially surprised by Harrak's offer, Gasta the Pure agreed to the exchange. Not only could the Castlegraspian mine the granite from her kingdom, but she would enchant the stone as well. Thanks to Gasta's magic, no man-made weapon would ever penetrate Castlegrasp's mighty granite walls. In addition, Gasta blessed the first nine Castlegraspian soldiers with her touch; she turned the soldiers' right arms to solid stone. But much to their surprise, they could still move these stone arms as normal. In addition, any bladed weapon they held with their stone arms would petrify any enemy it pierced.

Years later, as the Khan grew ill, he tasked the Nine to bring him before Gasta. As promised, he surrendered himself to the dao. Gasta, cherishing her long, peaceful relationship with the Khan, placed his soul within a sky diamond. She then set the diamond next to her heart, forever keeping him close. Their souls merged and the king and the genie queen became one.

When a Castlegraspian soldier proves his or herself during training, demonstrating immeasurable virtue, they are encouraged to take the March of the Stonearms. The soldier must enter the first mine and seek the dao Gasta-Harrak. From there, he or she must kneel before the dao and offer his or herself to the dao just as the first Khan did two-hundred years prior. If Gasta-Harrak detects the spirit of the Khan

within the soldier, they are granted her blessing—an arm of stone. However, if she senses any impurity within the soldier's heart, she commands the earth to devour them.

13 - DOCKS

The epicenter of commerce in Castlegrasp, the docks are alive with the sounds of fisherman shanties, laughing children, gulls, and the crashing of the Omerian's mighty waves. Easily one of the safest harbors in all of central Omeria—if not all of Omeria—Castlegrasp's docks are protected by the undefeated Omerian Navy. Its twenty-four warships have earned the nickname, the Azure Curse. They're fast, tough, and heavily armed, capable of sinking armadas twice their size.

The docks are also the center of operations for the Crystal Toad, where their three merchandise runners smuggle illegal products into the city. Stavros Nanakos (NE male Knotsider human spy) oversees the operations on behalf of his father, Daavid. Stavros has seen the inside of Castleburg's Dungeons on more than one occasion. Fortunately for the young noble, his father is an important player in local politics. Still, Captain Allah is determined to see young Nanakos entered into the Yard of Deterrents.

14 - DEK BAZAAR

In Castlegrasp, a mercantile lifestyle is more than just a way to earn a living; it's a competitive sport of sorts. Seven mercantile houses call Castlegrasp their home. And while the seven are fierce competitors, they also respect and admire one another.

Each day when Naeyer's eye banishes the twin moons, the seven houses play what they call "The Big Game." Once the shops open in Dek Bazaar, it's a race to 7,777 gold coins. As the day progresses, the vendors shout their numbers so the housemasters can hear. The housemasters then mark their earnings in chalk on a large column of slate at the center of the bazaar. Once a house reaches 7,777 coins—typically in the early afternoon—the gamekeeper rings the bell, double-checks the numbers, and announces the winner. While all seven of the houses have shared one or more turns as The Big Game's winner, by far, House Ibn Al-Hasan has claimed the most victories. Ibn Al-Hasan trades in wine.

15 - SWEET OLIVE WARD

The majority of the city's nobles live in Sweet Olive Ward, north of the Violent Qsar. The ward itself was built into a rocky hill from which a cold-water spring gushed. Afraid to spoil the path of the water, Sweet Olive's streets and homes were built around the natural flow. The waters terminate in a waterfall that fills a large well at the southwestern side of the ward. Then, the well's underground streams then flow out to the Bay of Suen and eventually join the waters of the Omerian.

The streets of Sweet Olive Ward are lush with greenery. Sleepy willows, plum trees, and of course, venerable olive trees flank the narrow streets of the ward. Although one of the shadiest areas in the city, it also has the largest security presence. In addition to the usual assignment of Stonearms and city militia, Sweet Olive has its own volunteer defense force called the Blueguard. While most of these young noblemen and women are thought of as "weekend warriors" by Castlegrasp's professional defenses, they have pledged

their lives to the protection of the Granite City. During the Attack of Regrets, they joined the Stonearms on the front lines. Seven Blueguard boys died fighting for the City of Granite. The Blueguard's leader is a retired Stonearm named Safura El Khouri (LG female Ditimayan human knight). Her brother was the great dragonslayer, Thawad.

16 - THE LOW WARD

The newest section of the still-growing Castlegrasp exists just beyond its southern gates. Many of the locals have dubbed the low ward "the Oven" as it catches the heat waves rushing up from the Obsidian Plain to the far south. As such, it's home to the city's growing devilkin population. Still untrusted by many Castlegraspians, the devilkin (called "tieflings" by northerners) have eked out a comfortable existence in the City of Granite. Despite the constant racism most Castlegraspian devilkin face each day, they are loyal to their home. Recently, the Low Ward celebrated the induction of the Stonearms' first devilkin, Ember in the Dark (LG male devilkin knight).

Unfortunately, Low Warders are frequently exploited by a despicable devilkin crimelord named Light Beyond the Hill (LE male devilkin bandit captain). Light, who masquerades as a simple baker, extorts and torments his brethren. When Light is crossed, he doesn't go after the one whom he felt wronged him. Instead, he removes the heads of one of his enemy's family members and leaves it for his enemy to find.

Ember has tried, repeatedly, to bring Light to justice. Unfortunately, he is alone in his war against Light and his gang.

17 - TIGER BOROUGH

There is a legend that Khan Hayyan Harrak IV once went for a walk in the lands south of young Castlegrasp unarmed and without his guard. Three miles from the city, the Khan heard a low growl from behind a group of boulders a few feet in front of him—a hungry tiger. Khan turned and ran. Alone and without a weapon, he knew he was likely doomed. In desperation, he climbed a tall boulder. The Khan could not escape from the boulder and the tiger could not reach him, no matter how hard it tried.

The day turned to night and the desert grew cold. Eventually, the tiger grew tired and laid its head down.

"Man," spoke the tiger in perfect Omerian Common. "Why do you stay on top of that boulder? I wish to catch you so I may feed you to my children."

"Tiger," the Khan answered back, "I am the king of a great city and I must return to my people and ensure their prosperity. If you eat me, I cannot do this."

The Khan and the tiger knew they were at an impasse. They remained silent for a short time after that. Eventually, Naeyer's eye reappeared in the sky. The tiger, even hungrier than before, sighed, "If you remain on that boulder and I remain here, then surely both of us will die. Then my children will die. And your people will not know prosperity."

"Yes, that is correct, tiger."

"Then we must make a deal. Allow me to bite off one of your legs and feed it to my children. I will then let you ride on my back to your city."

The Khan considered the tiger's proposal. Finally, he nodded, "Very well. You may bite off my right leg. After all, I have two. Am I so greedy as to desire both?"

Slowly, the Khan lowered himself from the rock and approached the tiger. As they agreed, the tiger bit off the Khan's right leg and brought it to its children. Once its children were fed, it picked up the Khan and placed him upon its back. Then, the tiger raced the Khan back to Castlegrasp.

The Stonearms raised their spears at the sight of the tiger and the wounded Khan. But the Khan protested, "No. The tiger and I made a deal. I upheld my end of the bargain and the tiger has upheld its. It is free to go."

The tiger thanked the Khan for his sacrifice and returned to the desert and the Khan returned to the Violet Qsar. From that moment on, the Khan was given the nickname Tiger Four. Following the incident, Tiger Four led Castlegrasp to an era of great prosperity. He also passed an important law: "No tigers shall be killed within three miles of the city. They are our friends."

The Tiger Borough at the heart of Castlegrasp takes its name from this legend. Residents of the ward pay their respects to the legend of the Khan and the Tiger by leaving food at the doorsteps for wild tigers who enter the city. When tigers do enter the city, they do not attack, lending credence to the tale. Quietly, the tigers walk to the borough, eat the offerings, and exit the city as Castlegraspians watch in awe.

18 - BARRACKS AND CITY DUNGEON

When the laws are broken in Castlegrasp, criminals are placed in the city's dungeon below the militia's barracks. The leader of the militia, Captain Farida Allah (LG female Ditimayan human veteran) personally oversees every arrest and incarceration.

All criminals are given a fair trial by a jury of four representatives and the Khan. Those who are found guilty by the jury, are all given the same punishment: petrification and temporary residence in the Yard of Deterrents.

The Yard of Deterrents is a large courtyard filled with the petrified statues of the city's convicts. Convicts sit on one of the yard's stone benches. Then, one of the Stonearms touches their spear to the convict's spine and, within seconds, the convict turns to stone. The statue must remain in its petrified state until the criminal has served its time, typically a year, but sometimes longer depending on the severity of the crime for which they were charged. Once the time is served, the family of the convict can pay to have he or she returned to flesh. However, if no one claims the body within a year, the stone body of the convict is placed on a cart and delivered to the Petrified Labyrinth where it continues its mission as a deterrent—this time to the armies of the north.