

NOTES ON THE OUTER RIM

Compiled for the Newly Arrived, by a Corridor Hand Who Prefers Not to Be Named

Found circulating on the station channels in several versions. This one is considered the least wrong.

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1. What the Rim Is

The Outer Rim is everything past the point where the Empire's enthusiasm runs out but its tariff schedule doesn't. It is mining platforms, transfer stations, refinery towns, corridor waypoints, and a few actual planets that would rather you didn't mention it. Nobody planned the Rim. It accreted, the way rust does, out of everyone the Core squeezed until they slid outward.

Do not call it lawless. The Rim has more rules than the Core. They're just not written down, and the penalties are administered faster.

2. What the Rim Is Not

It is not romantic. It is not a frontier of opportunity. It is a place where water is metered, air is filtered, heat is budgeted, and every one of those has a price that arrives monthly whether your cargo did or not. The people who talk about Rim freedom are almost always standing in the Core when they say it.

It is also not doomed, whatever the Core bulletins imply. The Rim has been six months from collapse for forty years. Collapse keeps missing its docking window.

3. The Corridors

All travel out here runs the hyperspace corridors, and each has a personality. Learn them or hire someone who has.

The Sabil is the main road: busiest, best-marked, most patrolled. Customs works it hard, especially at quarter's end when seizure quotas come due. If your paperwork has ambitions, the Sabil is where they'll be audited.

The Herath is the quiet road: thin traffic, tired beacons, and past the Meridian interval a stretch of drift shallows that has ended more careers than the tariff court. Crews fly it to be left alone. The corridor obliges, in every sense.

The Kessara carries the ore traffic and asks a toll no schedule lists. In a bad season its boundary wanders. Rim crews speak of it with respect and change the subject. You

should too.

4. Stations Worth Knowing

Rimfall Station is as close to a capital as the Rim admits to. If it exists, someone on Rimfall sells it, ships it, or can introduce you to somebody who does. The station runs tight. Behave accordingly.

Thessan Crossing is the junction: freight in every direction, news moving faster than the freight. What's said in a Crossing canteen reaches three corridors by morning.

Tessera is an old mining platform that refused to die, and is proud of it in a way that will be explained to you at length. Good markets, better people, no patience for Core manners.

Selden's Reach is a working settlement that has administered itself since before anyone asked permission. Paperwork there is efficient, local, and not interested in your opinion of it.

The Pelari stations handle long-haul traffic and repairs. If your ship needs work done quietly and well, Pelari is where quiet, good work lives.

5. Docking Etiquette

Pay your berthing fees first and argue about them second. A crew that disputes the invoice before the clamps are even cold has told the whole ring what kind of crew it is.

Do not touch another crew's cargo, gantry allotment, or water ration. This is not a guideline.

If a dock chief finds an error in your fees in your favor, say nothing, nod once, and remember the station fondly. You have just been paid a compliment in the only reliable Rim denomination.

6. On the Arithmetic

You will hear the phrase "correcting the arithmetic." This refers to the discovery and resolution of errors in official fee calculations, and it is conducted with dignity by all parties or not at all. Never offer anyone money. Offer to review the figures together. The Rim considers the distinction civilizational.

Note that some imperial officers do not take the arithmetic. These are either the honest ones or the ambitious ones, and since you cannot tell which from the outside, treat both as weather: unfixable, and worth planning around.

7. Talking About the Empire

The safe positions, in ascending order of company trust, are: the tariffs are high, the tariffs are absurd, and silence. You will not be asked your politics. Volunteering them marks you as new, and new is the most expensive reputation on the Rim.

Whatever you privately think of the Empire, remember that every third person in the canteen has lost something specific to it, and does not need your analysis.

8. Cargo Sense

Rules of thumb, offered without warranty. Know what you carry, even when the manifest disagrees. Weigh your own ship before somebody in a uniform does it for you. The margin on any cargo should be read alongside the sentence attached to it. And there are loads out here that pay in reputation instead of scrip. Rim crews take them anyway. Ask a station clinic why, if one will tell you.

9. Canteens, and Conduct Therein

Buy your round when it's your round. Do not ask a crew where their last run went. Do not sit in a seat that clearly belongs to someone, and every canteen has three of them, and no, they are not marked. Watch for two minutes before choosing.

The drink to accept when offered is whatever amber horror the house makes. Refusing it is legal and remembered.

10. A Short Rim Glossary

The arithmetic. See section 6, and mind your manners about it.

Clean boards. A well-run ship, in every sense that matters.

Corridor hand. Anyone who has earned their living in the lanes long enough to have opinions about beacons.

The shallows. Any stretch where the corridor markings fail and the flying gets honest.

Safe lanes. The standard parting. Say it back.

Schedule nine. The imperial tariff category for goods people cannot do without. Draw your own conclusions, quietly.

The gray year. Any year you'd rather not discuss. Everyone out here has at least one.

11. A Closing Note

The Rim will not welcome you. Welcome is a Core custom, and the Rim finds it suspicious. What the Rim will do, if you pay your fees, mind your cargo, buy your round, and shut up at the right moments, is gradually stop noticing you, and out here, not being noticed is the local word for belonging.

Safe lanes.



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