

# Tabletop Adventures Presents

## DESTINATIONS: CHARON'S WALL

By Martin Riefke

### Introduction

Introduction: Charon's Wall is the third spaceport in the Destinations Line from Tabletop Adventures. This mini-PDF presents a fully described spaceport that can be dropped into any world campaign featuring space travel. It needs little or no preparation – just read the overview, and you're good to go. Charon's Wall is 100% description, no rules material or crunchy bits, making it entirely system-neutral.

Throughout this PDF you will find sections of text that are designed to be read aloud to your players. They follow the format:

#### Scene Name

*Read-aloud text. (Notes for the GM, not to be read aloud.)*

#### Where Can I Use This Spaceport?

Charon's Wall is intended to be situated on a world with Earthlike gravity and a breathable atmosphere, and near a reasonably large community.

Depending on the nature and flavor of your campaign, though, it can easily be placed on a non-Earthlike world by making just a few changes. For instance, if you set Charon's Wall on a world with a poisonous atmosphere, most activity at the port will take place inside the Wall itself, and everyone in the landing area will need to wear breathing gear.

### Overview

This prime spaceport is tucked away into a cliff face and its entrance shows signs of a recent attack.



### Charon's Wall from the Air

Your ship slices down through the atmosphere, approaching the Charon's Wall spaceport. As you get closer, all you can see is a cluster of bombed-out buildings sitting on the edge of the cliff – no ships, no ground cranes, no spaceport. With the engine whining as your ship begins to brake, you see past the damaged buildings – and suddenly, you see Charon's Wall. Far below you at the bottom of the cliff face is the spaceport's landing area, a wide circle of bare permecrete with smaller lanes radiating out from it.

As your ship makes a wide turn, coming in for a landing, you can see other spacecraft below – but something is not right. Instead of being covered in lane markings, the spaceport's landing area looks like a war zone. Large craters dot the surface and you can see huge piles of debris pushed off to the sides of each lane. As your ship angles up land for its final approach, there is no time to change your mind – but you have a moment of coming here was a good idea.

#### About the Author

Since 2004, Martin Riefke has been a freelance GM for RPG sessions, with work in print and PDF from Fantasy Flight Games, Green Ronin, Necromancer Games and Tabletop Adventures, among others. Currently, he's GM'ing at Games that, just recently the author of *Travels Tabletop RPG* blog. Martin has been gaming since 1987 and GM'ing since 1989. Both blogs are great resources for indie GMs.

<http://www.destinations-games.com>  
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As the name suggests, Charon's Wall is a rather grim place. This spaceport sits at the base of a massive cliff, with its landing lanes radiating inward from the rock face in a radial pattern. Hangers and other buildings hug the cliff and tracks for the port's shuttle network cross-cut the landing area. Everything from the architecture to the equipment built out of time – which most of it is – and the port's overall appearance is not helped by the fact that nearly everything is gray.

There is one more factor that makes Charon's Wall often just called "Charon's" – even less welcoming. Only a few weeks ago, the port came under attack, leaving many of its facilities badly damaged. Despite the damage, Charon's Wall is still a functional spaceport – for the most part.

Given its dated technology, industrial appearance and now the recent damage, one might wonder why anyone would land at Charon's Wall. The answer is that question is the same now as it was before the attack: *Why*.

One, for instance, Charon's Wall is one of the cheapest spaceports in the galaxy. There are no landing fees, and port services – fuel, water, repairs, refueling, landing, etc. – are all provided at rock-bottom prices. There is also an added attraction, which frequent visitors come up with the saying, "Wall's outside the Wall, stays outside the Wall." (The 'Wall' of course, is the cliff that looms over the spaceport.) This spaceport's alleged value is the derisive opinion attitude of the port's owners and staff, who are focused on keeping Charon's Wall from going out of business. It is not a smuggler's haven (like the closest spaceport of Tridon Vega, described in *Destinations: Tridon Vega*, also available from Tabletop Adventures) but there is a low-key quality to doing business at Charon's Wall, and that is something many of its customers have come to value.

### Who Attacked Charon's?

In order to make this PDF as broadly useful as possible, the exact nature of Charon's Wall's attackers is left up to you to decide, as are their motivations. Descriptions of the damage that the

spaceport suffered are written with the following assumptions in mind:

- The attackers set out to cripple the port, taking out its defenses and its central control so that they could have free rein to shut up the landing area.
- They made no effort to get at the port's main facilities, which are buried deep inside the Wall.
- They attacked from the air with a variety of weapons, including cannon and bombs.

Depending on the needs of your campaign, perhaps an one knows who attacked Charon's Wall, or why. (It's that over the PC's may have landed on the spaceport to uncover the mystery.) The spaceport could have been attacked by tactics, trying to force the port's traffic to land elsewhere (perhaps at a spaceport under their control) – or an stationer for failing to pay protection money. If you are running a more martial campaign, Charon's Wall could have been taken out in a military strike. On a planet with strong tradition between factions and communities perhaps a faction based movement is crippling the spaceport, denying their rivals its vital income. Another possibility is that one of the PC's longtime enemies could have been behind the attack, and destroyed the port while looking for an alien artifact or other item that is also of interest to the PC's.

#### Damaged Spaceport:

*Creating Charon's landing area: It is hard to imagine that a few weeks ago it must have looked worse, as one of the port's shuttle tracks craters by, you pick your way over a pile of rubble and then alert the one person who has craver on the other side. Bits of permecrete and chunks of metal crunch underfoot, and you step over a wide streak of dried blood. Looking up, you see that the Wall did not escape damage, either.*

*Where were it was dented with weapons pods and defunct cranes, now only shattered cranes loom up the cliff's sheer surface. One pod was completely vaporized, leaving only a*

surprisingly small hole 200 feet up. Several others were partially destroyed and bits of metal and splinters of wire and cables dangle down from them.

#### The Hullsaps:

You see a crowd up ahead, a mix of travelers and spaceport personnel. Stepping over a patch of glassed permecrete – where a lower class went away in the recent attack – you see that the crowd is gathered around a large crater. It's a very large crater – 10 feet wide and nearly 20 feet deep, surrounded by rubble and debris. The crater's walls are black and sooty, except where the blast cleared off whole sections of rock; there, the exposed rock looks bright and clean to contrast.

Three spacers – mercenaries, by the looks of them – are working their way around the inside of the crater with pulse-guns. Already a net that five feet wide lies at the crater's center and the three spacers are working on pulling it tugged, bright red fire around it. When they are done, this crater will be a bulwark in many ways than one.

#### What Still Works

The attackers crippled the port's defenses beyond repair. Charon's Wall is completely defenseless other than whatever weapons maybe on the ships landing there. The spaceport's central control, which is situated atop the Wall and overlooks the landing area, is the one most-damaged area. Much of the port's repair efforts have gone into restoring the comm. gear and computers required to keep ship traffic moving smoothly – and to keep ships from crashing into each other.

Beyond that, though, everything else still works to a greater or lesser degree. There are enough clear areas between the craters to accommodate most ships, the port has supplies on hand for refueling and repairs, and so forth. You can easily change this to suit the needs of your game, however – deleting the PC's for a few more days by having the port be out of the supplies they need, for example,

or having the only open landing area be the one between two ships covered by steel heads of space guns.

### Spaceport Layout

Charon's Wall consists of two distinct sections: the landing area and the Wall. The landing area is shaped like a half-cylinder and radiates out from the cliff face. The portion closest to the cliff's bulk is to accommodate larger ships, while the narrower lanes surrounding it are for smaller vessels.

The cliff itself, which is called "the Wall", houses the majority of the spaceport's facilities, everything from living quarters for its staff to supply warehouses, all buried deep inside the rock. A handful of service buildings built up against the cliff including hangars for the port's small fleet of service drones.

Three dozen weapons pods – the spaceport's defense grid – used to dot the 500-foot-high face of the Wall, but every single one of them was destroyed in the attack. Scattered craters and dumping chambers of wire debris are all that remain. *Top the Wall is the port's control center, a cluster of badly damaged buildings that house the communications and computer gear required to keep a viable spaceport moving properly.*

### Landing Area

#### Landing at Charon's Wall:

*At first glance, it is tough to see how this could be a functioning spaceport. Even from a distance, you can see large craters in the landing area. The massive cliff face that surrounds the landing area is covered in scorch marks and deep scars, and the remains of a destroyed ship looms prominently on the base of the cliff. Closer in, though, other details become apparent.*

*There are people all over the landing area, loading and unloading the doors or on ships that are docked there, picking their way around the craters as they go about their business. As you land for your landing, a larger ship is taking off directly in front of you. The white flare of its engine drives the world into sharp relief, giving everyone on the ground long shadows. As you settle unevenly onto the permecrete, the larger ship cranks over the cliff above you and is gone.*

#### On the Ground:

*On the ground, Charon's Wall is less chaotic than many other spaceports, simply because much of the usable space is separated by craters, piles of debris and other obstacles. Ships tend to cluster together, creating islands of chaos surrounded by relative calm. Shuttle tracks crisscross the landing area and occasionally a three-car train will rattle by, skirting the permecrete.*

*Spaceport personnel in dark gray uniforms – which match the gray permecrete, gray cliff face and gray equipment – are all around you, loading and unloading ships and logging from place to place. Also prominent are the mercenaries and guards that many of the larger ships have hired for protection. One or all looms the shadow of the Wall, 200 feet high and speckled with black craters.*

*Charon's landing area is in pretty sorry shape. Dozens of blast craters surrounded by debris mar its surface, ranging from a few feet to up to 10 feet wide. The largest and deepest crater has even earned its own nickname, "the hullsaps." The long low scars are also hard to miss, surrounded as they are by glassed patches of permecrete, bullet holes, smears of blood, and scorched chunks of spaceship hulls.*

*Most of the major debris has been cleared away, however, leaving about half of Charon's landing area – which is half a mile in diameter – in a usable state. The most hit area was the central "hub" of*

the hubcap, the section reserved for larger ships. Charon's Wall has been hit at most three larger ships. Instead of the lanes that radiate out from the center of the landing area, however, are actually craters, which means that there is no fierce competition among pilots to land on those lanes.

Apart from the damage, the landing area at Charon's Wall looks much like the landing area of any mid-sized spaceport: a vast expanse of permecrete broken, in this case, by black craters, scorch marks and debris dotted with ships and swarming with people and ground vehicles. The age of the port's equipment – large and small, from shuttles to hydraulic pumps – is also notable, as is its thickness.

Also apparent are the many guards, mercenaries and hired thugs that are retained by spacers to protect their ships and cargo. Since the spaceport is longer hit defenses of its own – but even security officers – security is left up to individual ships to handle as they see fit.

No matter how pleasant the weather or how bright the sun is shining, there is something fundamentally grim about Charon's Wall – plus, of course, the looming mass of the Wall itself, which looms a large part of the landing area is shadow for much of the day.

#### Shuttle Trains:

Fortunately, the spaceport's shuttle network emerged from the attack almost entirely unharmed. No shuttle cars were in the landing area at the time, and the damaged sections of track were quickly replaced.

Charon's shuttles look a lot like real-world subway cars, only smaller, and they come in two varieties: open and enclosed. The rails provide power to the whole shuttle network, allowing any car to pull other cars behind it. Most of the time shuttles run in three-, with one enclosed car pulling two open ones.

The open cars are little more than a flat surface on top of a set of wheels, and are built to land cargo. Since they're the fastest way to get around the

spaceport, they frequently attract passengers, as well – jumpers, both spaceport staff and visitors. The tops of the open cars feature dozens of mount points, cycles and other hardware for slinging in different loads, as well as a powered lift on either side.

Enclosed cars rest 12 feet, mechanisms of mechanisms, actually have human drivers. The majority of these cars are just people movers, designed to ferry staff and visitors around the landing area. There are also a few specialized cars, including one that is full of tools for handling small repairs.

Mainly from within the entire landing area, and the all intents and purposes they can go wherever you need them to – their coverage of the spaceport is all but complete. Unsurprisingly, the shuttle landing pads, ramps and stairs as they cross the landing area, always sounding like they are on the brink of falling apart – and, of course, they only move at better walking speed.

## The Wall

### In the Wall's Shadow:

Five hundred feet high, the Wall casts a shadow over a third of the spaceport – a gray pall that shifts colors, making the ambient shuttle cars seem even more confused than they are. When you look up, the top of the Wall appears as if the moving, making it seem as though the entire cliff face is going to come crashing down on you. Looking up also reminds you that the spaceport is unsheltered as you can see the remains of the dozens of jet services that used to be out from the Wall.

Before the attack, the Wall – 500 feet of sheer, jagged rock that looms over the spaceport – was even more imposing than it is now as it belted with gun turrets and weapons pods. All of the port's defenses were taken out in the attack, leaving the Wall slightly less imposing. Still, there is no sensation quite like the one you get when you are standing at the foot of a cliff this high – especially not if you are used to the simplicity of space.

Apart from the cranes, jacksaws, and maintenance weapons pods, the Wall's surface is unremarkable. There are no stairs, walkback trails or established climbing routes. This is because everything protruding about the Wall happens in two places: at the top, or inside the cliff face.

In the bottom of the Wall are the remains of Charon's hangars and outbuildings. Prior to the attack, these housed the port's fleet of dozens and small aircraft, nearly all of which were destroyed. A few bullet-scared service buildings remain.

### Cliff Elevators:

There are six elevators inside the Wall, each of them connecting the landing area with the control center at the top of the cliff as well as points in between. No one knows why the builders of Charon's Wall elected to put all of the elevators inside the cliff – exterior elevators could offer spectacular views and street corners – but they did, making the Wall's structure hot, claustrophobic and unpleasant.

Worse still, the elevators are slow. It takes about five minutes to climb the 500 feet from the base of the cliff to the top, and the elevators shake, rattle and squeal the whole way up. Fortunately, many visitors to Charon's Wall never set foot inside the elevators; they are used primarily by spaceport staff. In the event that the elevator stop working, there is an additional top-to-bottom shaft with a narrow ladder in it – a poor backup, but a backup nonetheless.

### Control Center:

The control center for Charon's Wall sits atop the cliff, overlooking the spaceport below. This cluster of open, interconnected gray buildings took several direct hits during the attack and the interior has had to be rebuilt almost from scratch. Never exactly state of the art, Charon's computing and communications capabilities are even worse now than they used to be.

Whereas previously any incoming ship could come on a hot, an indication of where to land and other come chatter from Charon's Wall, now up to half of the ships that land at the spaceport don't even get talked. And whereas previously every ship on the

ground was automatically logged, tracked and accounted for, since the attack the spaceport has all but lacked the ability to do that – now, Charon's Wall only tracks the largest ships.

This doesn't have smaller ships "off the grid," though – it just means that the staff has to pick up the slack. Now, most tracking and accounting is done by spaceport personnel, who greet each freshly landed ship and set up their services and unloading schedules – though not always right away, of course; for things happen right away these days at Charon's Wall.

### Interior Facilities:

Quarters for port personnel, warehouse and storage space, food supplies, fuel and repair bays, and other facilities are all housed deep inside the Wall itself. Inside, Charon's Wall looks even more like a military bunker than it does from the outside and it takes a special kind of person to be able to work in this claustrophobic environment.

By and large, the interior of Charon's Wall is inaccessible to visitors. Ironically enough, the spaceport was originally built for defense, so there are no entrance openings. The interior is sealed and controlled by massive fire and doors, with exhaust ports scattered around the control center at the top of the Wall. Since the attack, many interior areas are without power, making them dark, hot and stuffy.

This also means that much of the interior is unsheltered for use – it had and Charon's Wall can attract to the power lines and fire wire shaft.

## Bringing Charon's Wall to Life

Charon's Wall is grim, bleak, antiquated and uninviting – and yet, strangely alive at the same time. Everything about its appearance speaks of a spaceport that should have been shuttled years ago, from the rickety shuttle trains to the world-class handheld computer carried by port personnel.

The bomb craters, bullet holes and laser scars in the perspective – not to mention the bombed-out defense turrets that dot the Wall – only add to this impression. The Wall itself, while being extremely over the whole port, casting a shadow over large portions of it, does not help any.

What makes Charon's Wall seem alive are the many spaces who come there, choosing to weather the port's many problems in order to take advantage of outside services and a near-complete lack of oversight. At any given time, a host of those at Charon's Wall will be criminals, a thief will be down counterfeiting spaces and a thief will simply have stopped there because it is convenient – or because they did not know when they were getting into.

This can make Charon's Wall a dangerous place to linger, but also a fabulous place to conduct illicit business, visit the ship for half price and head out into the black with a fresh cargo of stolen goods. Unfortunately, while trying to do these flow things the experience would probably go something like this:

The crew would land too close to several other ships because there were no other well-maintained spots to set down, wait half an hour for spaceport personnel to show up and find out when they needed, and then spend twice as long getting that done. If the group intended to travel around the port, they would do so around a standing, rolling shuttle car – and if they had come to visit the control center, or set up of the facilities inside the Wall, they would have to ride the spaceport's elevators, an experience the characters would not be likely to forget.

In short: Everything is old, nothing works properly, customer service is not a priority and there is always an element of danger – but it is cheap.

### NPCs

Charon's Wall is run by a staff of 100, all of whom live onsite. Of those 100, 75 are support personnel – loaders, handlers, repair techs, shuttle drivers and the like – and 25 are officers, controllers and supervisors.

The port has no guards or other security staff, and it really needs another 100 people to run it well. After the attack, though, there simply are not enough rooms with power inside the Wall to support that many people, nor enough money in the coffers to pay them.

In any given time, there are between 10 and 20 ships of various sizes landed at Charon's Wall, along with between 50 and 200 visitors.

## Plot Hooks

### Delays:

After landing at Charon's Wall, the characters wait an inordinately long time for service (refueling, retooling – whatever) it is that they need. Ships that landed after them are taken care of, and spaceport personnel refuse to give any explanation as it turns out, one of the gangs that regularly robbed their landing ships at Charon's Wall has paid the ground staff to ignore the group, and the gang is demanding tribute money from the party before they will reverse this situation.

### Fish in a Barrel:

While they are stuck at the spaceport, a member of the port staff tells the characters that they are wanted in the control center. This entails a ride on one of the port's cliff elevators, and halfway up the elevator stops, trapping the party. One of the gang's longtime enemies has arranged this situation, and plans to send in a team of assassins to kill them while they are stuck in the elevator. The heroes will clearly have a fight in very close quarters on their hands – or perhaps a pitched battle high up in the elevator shaft, after they begin climbing the cables to escape.

### Mystery Ship:

The captain of a newly arrived freighter checks off his ship in sight of the party – and then drops some dead. Finding a foreign virus or other plague, port personnel move nearby ships, drain the shuttle trains and clear a wide circle around the dead man's ship. Someone wants to go inside, but no one wants to do so, and after a few hours a spaceport officer makes a generous offer to anyone willing to board the mystery ship. If the heroes take her up on it, what will they find – and will it endanger the spaceport?

### Inside the Wall:

A group of thieves is after something inside the Wall, and they decide that the best way to get it is to shut down the spaceport. They disable the elevators, cutting off the control center from the eye of the Wall, and position weapons in several of the bombed-out turrets on the cliff face. While their companions undertake a robbery deep within the wall, these rogues hold off anyone who tries to come into the Wall after them. What the thieves do not know about, however, is the backup access shaft that runs from the control center down into the Wall – a narrow, cramped 500-foot-long tube, but still a way in. . .

### Building the Raiders:

During the recent attack on Charon's Wall, one of the attackers was shot down by a defense turret. He managed to guide his ship into a controlled crash several miles away, and eventually recovered enough from his injuries to limp back to the spaceport. When he arrives, he is dehydrated and near death, and many of the spaceport's staff would no mind leaving him down that path. In a moment of lucidity before passing out, however, he tells those around him – including the characters – that in exchange for aid, he will set a small force on the trail of those who attacked Charon's Wall.

## DESTINATIONS: Charon's Wall



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