

Wanderlust Station, Fernweh & Isonautics

Wanderlust Station

Type of habitat: double torus
Orbit: Earth-Mars Cycler
Population: 5000 (total capacity 20,000)
Orbital period: 2.135 years
Allegiance: Planetary Consortium
Gravity: 0.5 G



Wanderlust Station is a double torus habitat orbiting in an Aldrin cyclor orbit between Earth and Mars. The orbit lasts for 2.135 years, during which time it meets Earth, reaches Mars after 146 days, then spends 16 months outside Martian orbit and then returns to Earth in 146 days. Wanderlust and its sister habitats Fernweh and Tourn e were owned by Isonautics Corporation, who used them for transporting colonists and Earth-made equipment to the martian terraforming projects.

During the Fall the station was close to Mars. A sizeable number of corporate and government employees decided to evacuate to the station, riding out the Fall far away from the danger zones of Mars and Earth in relative safety and comfort. The other two stations were not so lucky. Fernweh was destroyed by a nanoweapon and Tourn e turned into a scum barge as it was crammed by refugees during its pass of Earth.

The isolation of the habitat limits its material economy. There is only so much mass around, and grabbing new supplies from Earth or Mars only occurs occasionally. Wanderlust has found a niche in slow speciality transport Earth-Mars, for goods such as encryption qubits, bulky Earth or Lunar artefacts and biological samples (including the occasional well-off emigrant and uplift family). The real business is in being out of the way: spending most of the time far away from major population centres, yet reachable by inner system egocasts with relatively short delays. It is a home, country club, kindergarten and redoubt for the very conservative well-off. Many of the richest inhabitants egocast-commute to Luna and Mars while their families spend most of their time on Wanderlust. In addition it serves as a good out-of-the-way development office for a few morph design and software companies in the "company campus" in torus A.

The habitat has a zero-g spindle with docks, minifactories and the remnants of the asteroid that was used to build the habitat (mainly used as anti-meteor coating). Connected to the spindle through fullerene spokes are two counterrotating toruses. Both toruses have about seven levels of habitats under the parklands and lakes that form the "outdoor" areas. Torus A is the more "urban" torus, while Torus B is more of a country estate (including the only 18 hole golf course in solar orbit). The ecology and style is mirrored on traditional/idealized New England, with very few aesthetic deviations allowed.

The habitat is not defenceless - it does pass by Earth and through the inner reaches of the asteroid belt. It is surrounded by a small constellation of killsats and has a pretty adequate defence grid. Internally it has extensive nanosecurity and discreet protection robots. But to most inhabitants the only visible security is the friendly local constables.

Wanderlust society is cosmopolitan but attracts certain values - conservative, quiet, tasteful and long-term oriented. It is a place of polite families where the height of youth rebellion is to

wear an unfashionable morph. It is not uncommon for family members to go off for wild holidays elsewhere but back on Wanderlust their cultural experimentation and debauchery quickly melts away and they reintegrate. Quiet garden parties, artistic competitions and sports like golf and jai alai are common local recreations. By hypercorp standards the place is downright reactionary.

The local culture is a low context culture: people are clear and explicit about what they mean. Understatement, irony or hints are uncommon - perhaps due to the large number of lawyers present.

Neodyn Shinto was invented on Wanderlust. It is an artificial religion based equally on traditional Shintoism, memetics, and minimalist aesthetics. It is more of a set of tasteful habits, community get-togethers and meditation techniques than a real religion, but among the inhabitants (and a surprising number of Martians) it fills a need for spirituality. Isaoka Fulani, its inventor, gives regular lectures and retreats that are popular as XP elsewhere.

Recently the "software sufis", a community of local programmers, may have had a cultural breakthrough. They have apparently found a theory of how to combine the kind of artificial spirituality Neodyn Shinto provides with social optimization software to create designer cultural stabilization. If this actually works in real tests, it would help cultural experimentation and social stability enormously - and make the sufis very rich. People are talking.

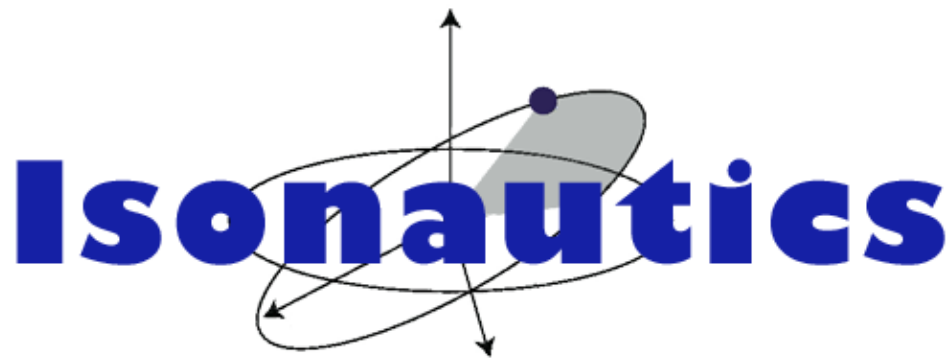
Fernweh station

As noted above, Fernweh was infected during the Fall by a nanoweapon and all beings onboard killed. It still remains in a cycler orbit bringing it close to Mars and Earth but everybody tends to stay away from the visibly warped wreck.

Some corporations and civic networks might fund an expedition to simply get rid of it - it could contain dangerous spores, and it would be good if the orbit got changed. The station also contained pre-fall cargo and possibly passenger stacks, so there is some chance of interesting finds, Earth memorabilia and pre-Fall VIPs.

Just blowing it up using Martian or Lunar planetary defence systems would likely spread a cloud of possibly infected wreckage along the orbit, making it an unpalatable solution. To properly dispose of the station a rocket engine needs to be attached to the spindle and fired long enough to put the station into an orbit with high inclination (or perhaps a direct collision with Earth).

Fernweh is still owned by Isonautics (unlike Tournée, which was sold to ComEx for a pittance - maybe one day ComEx's lawyers will be able to evict the squatters, but that day is far into the future). So far Isonautics has resisted the idea floated by ComEx and Fa Jing to hire a scrapper crew to dispose of the station, mostly on cost grounds. It is likely that someone will get sent sooner or later anyway, given how the cycler and its surrounding quarantine zone messes up logistics near Mars and Luna from time to time.



Isonautics was a space transport and engineering corporation closely tied to the Luna-Lagrange Alliance. Profiting from interplanetary expansion it strongly supported Martian terraforming and built the cyclers in full expectation of a growing stream of profitable passenger and cargo transports. When the Fall struck Isonautics was hit hard, losing most of its assets in the Earth-Luna system and several of its owners.

The surviving board members and managers, led by the new Chairwoman Beatrice Warren, did some drastic changes. They sold off their transport and logistics concerns to ComEx, reducing their competition and gaining liquidity. They used this to buy up construction equipment from several floundering Mars-orbit companies, gambling on that when the dust settled there would be a booming market for habitat construction. They succeeded admirably, and the nearly destroyed company has now become a thriving, minor hypercorp with a secure position within the Planetary Consortium.

Isonautics kept Wanderlust and use it as official headquarters. Most practical activity occurs in ASIPO (AreoSynchronous Industrial Park Orange, usually just called Orange) where the company maintains most of its construction capacity. It also has a mobile engineering yard ("Devonport") that is moved in Mars orbit to support habitat construction efforts.

The company, like many others, has problems with unclaimed ownership. 54% of the original stock was owned by people or entities that did not survive the Fall. The solution has been that until AF12 (when by UK law the unclaimed shares can be declared void) the company is run by a board appointed by the surviving shareholders (in this case mainly Beatrice Warren). Any heirs or creditors identified before that can unfreeze their voting shares. Nobody is expecting any heirs to show up by now.

There are some whispers that Beatrice Warren did not fully survive the Fall either: that she is actually a beta-fork who has taken up the alpha identity. One reason for this is that without the beta there might have been nobody able to legally run the company board during the restoration of the company, and it could have become *res derelicta*. Hence a cabal of senior executives and family lawyers maintained the deception to save their own positions. According to these rumours, the main reason Fernweh has not been scrapped is that a stack with the alpha remains onboard and the beta does not want her to be found.