

# Caernguard

*Location · Major City*

**Population:** Approximately 55,000

**Government:** Council of Stewards (a body of seven drawn from the city's major guilds, military, and clergy; no single ruling family has held authority since the fall of the Weohstannuk Empire)

Caernguard is the oldest continually occupied city in Kyrell's recorded history, and it shows -- not in ruin, but in the particular quality of a place that has been destroyed and rebuilt so many times that the rebuilding itself has become part of the architecture. Walk far enough into the older districts and you will find walls of three or four different stone types standing side by side, each representing a different century's reconstruction after a different catastrophe. The city keeps its history in its bones whether it means to or not.

It sits at the only major crossing point of the Caern River navigable by an army in force, within a day's travel of the Blue Vale pass through the Drakepire Mountains. This geography is why Caernguard has been fought over for thousands of years. It is also why it keeps being rebuilt. A city in this position is too valuable to leave empty.

At its height, Caernguard was the capital of the Weohstannuk Empire -- the heart of the last great human alliance, the city from which the Emperor ruled a territory stretching from the Drakepires to the eastern coast. The Maygus's ideological war ended that empire, and Caernguard survived -- barely, and with scars it has never fully shed. The grand imperial avenues are still there, but the buildings that lined them thinned over the following centuries. The palace district still stands, but the Council of Stewards uses perhaps a third of it and keeps the rest maintained out of a mixture of civic pride and practical uncertainty about what to do with it.

The city that exists today is a working city -- trade hub, river crossing, regional market -- but one that is conscious of wearing clothes that were made for a larger version of itself. Caernguard residents tend toward a dry, unsentimental humor about their city's history. They have heard too many visiting scholars describe it as a ghost of its former glory. The standard local response is that ghosts don't charge harbor fees.