

Citadel Gate (Plaza)

Citadel Gate Plaza, usually just shortened to Citadel Gate, is the open area that exists at the base of the lengthy stairway that leads up from the Huascar Ring to the Citadel proper. Named for the large stone gateway (architecturally cited as a *triumphal arch*) that guards the entrance to the bastion of Selen's enigmatic protectors, the plaza is home to some of the most vibrant celebrations and the most arduous protests.

The gate itself stands thirty (30) meters tall, its planar piers constructed from the same alabaster stone blocks that comprise much of Estle City's more aged construction. Large double doored gates — thick wood, studded and layered over with bronzium — remain open at all times except for the most dire of circumstances. Stone statues flank the gateway; artistic representations of the ancient Selenian deities of justice and knowledge. The great arcades above the gate are just as decorated, with reliefs of native flora and fauna framing the curve of the arch just beneath the lip of the flat roof. Just beyond the Gate, using more modern and temporary means, is a military checkpoint that regulates the flow of foot traffic onto the Citadel stairway. This is a recent addition that was constructed due to recent social turmoil, and is not intended for permanent presence, with preference to the former ceremonial guard that would watch over the Gate's — and thus the Citadel's — entrance.

The plaza outside the Gate is a large, well-maintained pad of stone slabs. At even intervals, beech trees have been planted to provide shade and color to the scene while still maintaining the orderly appearance of the Gate. The only break in this orderly arboretum is immediately in front of the gate, leaving a large open space. Opposite the Gate, at the edge of the Huascar Ring, is a large swathe of grass and trees, forming a park that overlooks the rest of Estle. Gardeners need only trim the vegetation, as natural mountain springs feed a constant trickle of water into the planted ground. Thus, everything takes on a vibrant hue all year long, and especially so in the autumn when the color of the leaves change.

Despite the Gate's ornateness, the most archaic piece of construction is the fifteen (15) meter wall that flanks either side of the Gate itself. This wall provides a small protected area, outside the public eye, for guards to rest and menial administrative work, including troop inspections and paperwork for admittance into the Citadel. The wall is only four (4) meters thick, compared to the Gate's

thirteen (13) meters of depth (and 27 meters' width), still large enough for a sizable contingent of soldiers to mount a defense from.

A Brief History

Much of the Citadel Gate's history is shrouded in the anonymity of time. It is estimated that it was built as a commemoration of the military conquests — possibly against the old Taureen enemies of the modern Selenians — and eventual peace within the Dajorra System that the Citadel seemed to permanently memorialize as the bastion from which the Arconans secretly controlled the government. As the city grew, so too did its grasp of and desire for splendor. Aging buildings were cleared away to create the plaza, which morphed over the years from a simple flat pad of stone to the organized garden and gathering area that it is today.

Local rumor has it that the day the gates close will be the darkest day in history for Selen. No record speaks of it ever closing, though recent events have brought consideration to the idea. Most fresh in the minds of Estle's inhabitants were the *Plague Riots*, a condition of severe unrest resulting from a severe combination of plague and famine. During the upheaval, rioters stormed the gateway and attempted (and failed) to fight their way past the Dajorra Defense Force unit(s) that had taken to the Citadel's defense.