

# TAU CETI

<b>Star:</b>	τ Ceti, G8.5V. 11.9 LY from Sol in Cetus, (Central Sector).	
<b>Planet:</b>	III	
<b>Diameter:</b>	11 112 km	0.87 D <sub>⊕</sub>
<b>Gravity:</b>	7.8 m/s <sup>2</sup>	0.79 g <sub>⊕</sub>
<b>Day:</b>	42.6 hours	
<b>Year:</b>	120.1 local days	0.583 a <sub>⊕</sub>
<b>Atmosphere:</b>	0.64 bar (thin)	<b>Oxygen:</b> 0.14 bar
	<b>Scale height:</b>	10.4 km
<b>Oceans:</b>	84% water	<b>Tides:</b> 1.7 m
<b>Climate:</b>	9 °C (cool)	<b>Obliquity:</b> 26°
<b>Illumination:</b>	101% as bright as Earth	
<b>Spaceport:</b>	5 T	
<b>Escape speed:</b>	9.3 km/s	
<b>Low orbit:</b>	178 km	93 minutes
<b>Population:</b>	5.91 billion	
<b>Density:</b>	97 people/km <sup>2</sup> compact mid-rise cities	
<b>Households:</b>	monogamous nuclear	
<b>Social unit:</b>	neighbourhoods	
<b>Social quirks:</b>	levelling mechanism, tacit dress code, secular rituals, repugnant gourmetry	
<b>Values:</b>	moderation, accord with surroundings	
<b>Taboos:</b>	excess, slackness, aloofness	
<b>Economy:</b>	regulated market system with wage subsidies	
<b>Development level:</b>	<b>8.5</b> (The Suite)	
<b>Inequality:</b>	muted, with a inconspicuous few ultra-rich	
<b>Currency:</b>	écu	€ 1 = SVU <b>0.377</b> PPP = ₧ <b>0.377</b> exchange
<b>Government:</b>	amphictyony of self-perpetuating technocratic bureaucracies	
<b>Head of state:</b>	none	
<b>Chief exec:</b>	Heads-of-Governments conference	
<b>Legal quirks:</b>	judges find fact; lethal weapons strictly licensed; restrictions on private vehicles; mindwipe for violent crimes	
<b>Capital:</b>	none	

τ Ceti III is a smallish cool planet with frigid wastes above about 45° latitude, and extensive polar ice. A broad zone astride the equator is cool and largely oceanic; highly salubrious, it is studded with compact mid-rise cities set among vast plantations. Tau Cetians deal with their over-long day with a long siesta in the early afternoon, and socialise in the evening. Four local days make a “week”; the fourth is a for recreation and public participation.

Tau Ceti was the first of the colonies, and had the most cosmopolitan settlers. Now it is old, rich, and sophisticated, known for high culture, fine arts, stylish dress, and gourmet cuisine. In every Tau Cetian city each neighbourhood has some venerable cultural institution or public resort that is the centre of an ancient tradition and unique folkway. Gathering in local haunts and participating in neighbourhood and municipal activities is the basis of social life in Tau Ceti, while abstaining is resented as aloofness. When a person on Tau Ceti chooses where to live they choose a lifestyle and a social set.

Tau Cetians idealise doing everything “*lagom*”: just the right amount, appropriately, and in keeping with the surroundings. There are no formal codes of dress and behaviour, and no overt compulsion, but failure to act and dress, or to build and decorate, in keeping with the time, the place, and local traditions is derided as *gaucherie*; it draws snubs and put-downs. Persistent non-conformity is interpreted and resented as a criticism of the neighbours and their traditions. It is punished with mockery, boycotting, and other social retaliations. The same pressures are applied to strivers who try too hard, slackers who try too little, slovens, show-offs, and people seen as indulging too little or too much in food, drink, sex &c. for their age and by neighbourhood standards. Getting ahead of one’s neighbours is not a socially acceptable goal. Good fortune may be admired, but “excessive” hard work and enterprise are resented.

Among the cultural treasures of Tau Ceti are local culinary traditions, some with roots on Old

Earth. Tau Cetians eat and relish “natural” foods including plants and the flesh of animals. Fishing and hunting for food are acceptable and even popular pastimes.

Most of the economy of Tau Ceti is in private ownership and control. The governments charge high taxes on rents, interest, and profits, but they pay a subsidy on wages and salaries. Workers between thirty and 140 local years receive income matching at a rate of two to one up to a generous cap. Half is paid into the citizen’s retirement fund, which is invested in bonds and shares, and may buy annuities or pay withdrawals from age 140. Health care, and education to age thirty are free. Governments pay child support to the parents of children under thirty. Furthermore, each citizen is entitled to seven years of bed, board, and professional or vocational training by the age of forty.

150 million Tau Cetian undergrads attend over 13 thousand universities, academies, institutes, etc. All have numerous student residences; each of those has an immemorial tradition and more or less libertine social norms. From forty to sixty it is appropriate for a Tau Cetian to move a few times and have a few or several lovers. By sixty it is appropriate to have settled down to cohabit with a single partner; few neighbourhoods approve of polyamory, celibacy, or sleeping around by mature adults. Tau Cetians retire at 140, and sometimes migrate when they do.

By a legal fiction there are eight independent colonies on Tau Ceti, with separate governments and no federal authority except for space traffic control. The **Independency of Avalon**, the **Realm of Alcuin**, and the **Republic of New Sunrise** are ostensibly unitary parliamentary republics. The **Commonwealth of Hell** and the **Federated Liberties of Ys** are ostensibly federal parliamentary republics. The **Republic of Zinfandel** is ostensibly a unitary presidential republic. The **Commonwealth of Gogmagog** is ostensibly a federal presidential

republic. The **Patriarchate of San Pietro** is ostensibly a hierarchical theocracy. In practice policy and legislation are so enmeshed in co-operation treaties and harmonisation agreements that Tau Ceti is actually run by a single technocratic bureaucracy with unimportant idiosyncrasies in the octants.

Tau Cetians recognise stereotypes which suppose that people tend to a “national” character of their octant. **Alcunians** are supposedly imaginative and romantic, and often musicians; they play and sing in cozy bars, or gather to rehearse and jam. **Avalonians** are sophisticated and chic; they discuss literature, drama, and philosophy in salons, in cafés, and in the lobbies of theatres. **Gogmans** are phlegmatic and reliable, but inclined to be sentimental or pugnacious when drunk; they play pub and parlour games, which often turn out to reward cunning and experience to an unexpected degree. **Hellions** are vigorous and straightforward; they play team sports and pursue athletic competition, and gather in league clubs and sports bars to watch and discuss tournament games. **Newdawners** are formal, even staid; they pursue artistic hobbies, gather at art galleries and art classes, and there display in their artworks the flair that they suppress in their social conduct. **San Pietronians** are ardent and mercurial; passionate lovers and keen dancers, they gather in dance clubs and dance in cafés and restaurants. **Ythians** are *farouche*: wild and shy. They congregate in boating and sailing clubs, in hunting and fishing lodges, where they sit in inarticulate silence or sing ancient ballads and refrains. **Zinfandelians** are practical and persistent, affable but liable to be selfish; they cultivate arts of conversation and comic discourse, gathering in cocktail bars and at cocktail parties. Adherence to these stereotypes is slight at most; the supposed differences of national character are imperceptible to people from other worlds.

## Attractions

**The University of Eridu**, is the oldest, most famous, and most prestigious university in the universe. It attracts famous researchers to its faculty, and has notoriously Byzantine academic politics. But it is much too big to be good, amounting now to a middle-sized city. Universities on a dozen worlds doubt that it is the best university in the universe. The Erasmus Institute in Alcuin doubts that it is the best university on Tau Ceti III. The Avalon Institute of Technology denies it is the best in Avalon. The Municipal Selective College of Eridu says it isn't even the best in Eridu.

**Wildlife:** Tau Ceti was terraformed early and at a comparatively low biological tech level, and presented small challenges. Unmodified or little-modified natural species from Earth were used in the work; more were imported for ecoscaping after the gross terraforming was done. So Tau Ceti has a uniquely rich wildlife of natural species from Earth, including whales, migratory birds, and forest trees mentioned in old literature and poetry. Visitor treat these as natural wonders, and are appalled at the Tau Cetians who kill and eat the wildlife.

The River Celadon, which drains half a continent in Avalon, falls into a zig-zag gorge at **Thundering Veil National Park**, the oldest national park in the universe. The parkways built to let visitors view the falls from passing vehicles are a marvel of engineering.

The monument and museum at **Landfall** mark the spot where for the first time humans set foot on a habitable extrasolar planet. There has been a succession of monuments there, from a simple obelisk to a monstrous 6-metre statue group in stainless steel. The current marker is a life-sized statue group of Gwen Missahan and Willem van Zaanen hand in hand, which was carved from a block of chert from the Fig Tree Formation 1 in Africa, Old Earth, imported specially by the Missahan family. The group is over 650 years old,

but was moved twice before taking up its current position on the fifth centenary of the Landing, in 254 ATD. The original landing stairs from *Red Earth*, and other relics, are in a museum nearby, which includes the graves of Gwen Missahan, Willem van Zaanen, and their son Adam v.Z. Missahan.

**The Genealogical Society of Eridu** is a curious institution that collects genealogical records. It has a gigantic digital archive of birth and marriage records from Old Earth, and occasionally makes obscure announcements about the modern successions to historical titles from Earth.

**New Bayreuth** in Alcuin stages a Wagner Festival every other Tau Cetian year, alternating the *Ring* cycle with a program of other operas.

## A situation in Tau Cetian soap opera

Adhem Soter Neumann (a handsome, single, middle-aged billionaire from Zinfandel) buys a stately mansion in swanky Pemberley Park, and tries to settle in. Several neighbours need a spouse (or want a new one), including the cash-strapped heiress who sold him the estate; they vie for his affections and vacillate about his manners as he deals naively or shrewdly with successive shibboleths and faux pas. But Neumann has a dark secret: he did not get his billions from a lottery at all; he built up a trillion-écu tech firm from scratch, by fifty years of intense hard work. Can he hide that? Can he live it down?

## Imperial presence

In deference to the fiction that Tau Ceti is eight colonies, the Empire has a Residence and resident commissioner in each octant, plus a resident-general whose seat is in Portsmouth, a very large Imperial orbital habitat. The Empire has no aid programs on Tau Ceti, but its main naval dockyards are in orbit there, and it run vast procurement operations for naval and commercial spacecraft-building. Tau Ceti is the Imperial navy's main source of sensors and laser weapons.