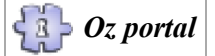


Emerald City

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The **Emerald City** is the fictional capital city of the Land of Oz in L. Frank Baum's Oz books, first described in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.



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Fictional description

Located in the center of the Land of Oz, the Emerald City is the end of the famous yellow brick road, which starts in Munchkin Land.

In the first book, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the walls are green, but the city itself is not. However, when they enter, everyone in the Emerald City is made to wear green-tinted eyeglasses; this is explained as an effort to protect their eyes from the "brightness and glory" of the city, but in effect makes everything appear green. This is yet another "humbug" created by the Wizard.^[1] In this book, the Wizard also describes the city as having been built for him within a few years after he arrived.^[2]

In the second book, *The Marvelous Land of Oz*, however, the characters are required to wear the glasses at first, but half way through the book, no more eyeglasses appear, no more mention is made of the brilliance, but the city is still described as green.^[3] This is continued throughout the series. The only allusions to the earlier conception appeared in *The Road to Oz*, where the Little Guardian of the Gates wears green spectacles, the only character to do so.^[4] Furthermore, although at one point, the character Tip describes it as being built by the Wizard, at another, the Scarecrow explains that the Wizard had usurped the crown of Pastoria, the former king of the city, and from the Wizard the crown had passed to him; the book, in fact, quickly concerns itself with finding the rightful heir to the crown of the city.^[5] Ozma remained the heir to the king, though both she and the original king were transformed to the ruler of all Oz.^[6] The story, however, reverted to the Wizard having built the city in *Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz*, with the usurpation of the king's power being done by the four



Audio-animatronic versions of characters from *The Wizard of Oz* sighting the Emerald City in The Great Movie Ride.

witches before his arrival.^[7]

The Oz books describe the Emerald City as being built of green glass, emeralds, and other jewels. In the earlier books, it was described as completely green, but in later ones, green was merely the predominating color; the buildings were decorated with gold as well, and people added other colors to their costumes.^[4]

In the first book, one scene of the Emerald City is of particular note in the development of Oz: Dorothy sees rows of shops, selling green articles of every variety, and a vendor of green lemonade, from whom children bought it with green pennies. This contrasts with the later description of Oz, in which money does not feature. Interpreters have argued that money may have been introduced into the city by the Wizard, but this is not in the text itself.^[8]

The Emerald City of Oz is the title of the sixth book in the Oz series. In it, the city is described as having exactly 9654 buildings and 57,318 citizens.^[9]

Sources

Baum may have been partly inspired in his creation of the Emerald City by the White City of the World Columbian Exposition, which he visited frequently, having moved to Chicago in anticipation of the event. W. W. Denslow, the illustrator of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, was also familiar with the White City, as he had been hired to sketch and document the exposition for the *Chicago Herald*; Denslow's illustrations of the Emerald City incorporate elements that may have been inspired by the White City.^[10]

The quick building of the White City, in less than a year, may have been an element in the quick construction of the Emerald City in the first book.^[2]

It is also likely that Baum's favored haunt, the Hotel Del Coronado, influenced its description in later books.

Interpretations

Scholars who interpret *The Wizard of Oz* as a political allegory see the Emerald City as a metaphor for Washington, D.C. and unsecured "greenback" paper money. In this reading of the book, the city's illusory splendor and value is compared with the value of paper money, which also has value only because of a shared illusion or convention. It is highly likely that the Hotel del Coronado influenced its description in later books, as well as in the artwork by John R. Neill.

Adaptations and allusions

In Gregory Maguire's revisionist Oz novels, *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* and *Son of a Witch*, the Emerald City is a much darker place than in Baum's novels. It does have splendid palaces and gardens, but also sections beset by crime and poverty. *Son of a Witch* introduces Southstairs, an extensive political prison located in the caves below the Emerald City. The green glasses that are worn by the citizens are often used as a way to stop them seeing what is going on around them.

David Williamson (Whose brother-in-law wrote the Oz-inspired musical *Oz*) wrote a play in 1987 called *Emerald City*. The term is used as a metaphor by the character Elaine Ross, describing Sydney as "the Emerald City of Oz", where people go expecting their dreams to be fulfilled, only to end up with superficial substitutes and broken dreams. The 2006 Sydney New Year's Eve Festivities were entitled "A Diamond Night in Emerald City" also in reference to Williamson's play and the "Diamond Night" alluding to the 75th anniversary of the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 2007. (The bridge was the centerpiece of the celebrations). Subsequently "Emerald City" has occasionally been used as an unofficial nickname for the city of Sydney. The Sydney based investment banking and private equity firm Emerald Partners which sits on top of the Museum of Contemporary Art building located right on the Sydney Harbour foreshore was appositely named after Baum's book and the David Williamson play.

The city of Seattle, Washington, of the United States uses "The Emerald City" as its official nickname, because of how green it is in that region of the world. (Note: Washington State is also known as the "Evergreen State").

A "Central City" is one of the chief settings of the 2007 Sci Fi television miniseries *Tin Man*, a re-imagining of Baum's world that makes allusive references to many of the locales of Oz. The "Outer Zone" (O.Z.) is described as a bleak rendition of the beautiful world of Oz.^[11] Central City is a completely computer-generated set, one of the largest for a television series of its time, according to the production designer, Michael Joy.^[12] Its scenic design features heavy elements of steampunk and also pays visual homage to *Blade Runner*, according to co-creator Craig van Sickle.^[13]

References

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- ¹¹ ^ "A Touch More Evil: Azkadellia's World", *SciFi Pulse* video (Atom Films mirror) - November 13, 2007 (http://www.atomfilms.com/film/scifi_a_touch_more_evil.jsp)
- ¹² ^ "Brick by Brick: Bringing *Tin Man* to Life", *SciFi Pulse* video (YouTube mirror) - November 16, 2007 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ht1oQfEuHI>)
- ¹³ ^ "*Tin Man* Postshow: Peek Behind the Curtain, Kristin Dos Santos - December 5, 2007 (<http://www.eonline.com/gossip/kristin/detail/index.jsp?uuid=8bb15243-3851-47ba-aed6-618cb945b6e8&sid=fd-kristin>)

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