

The wedge shaped, 85m long Python is one of the larger tramp freighters to be seen in charted space. It has a distinctive low profile, and has a reputation for being well armed and armoured. With a total cargo capacity of almost 400t, it far outstrips the trade capacities of typical tramp freighters.

Overview

The Python is one of the largest trade ships that is commonly used by small crews or family run businesses. It is quite outdated by modern standards, and isn't considered a particularly glamorous ship. But it is tough and practical.

Unlike the larger *Boa* or *Anaconda* class vessels, the Python is considered an actual tramp trader, and has room set aside for passengers as well as cargo. It also carries a single Worm class landing shuttle, for ferrying passengers to their final destination, or for a quick trip down to a planet. Whilst the Python is capable of landing on a planet, it's length means it often exceeds the capacity of a lot of smaller E class starports.

Crew quarters tend to be cramped, though many Pythons have had their electronics and computer systems updated since they were first purchased. Not many are being made now, so the number that still exist are a testament to their durability.

Crew

As standard, a Python requires a crew of at least half a dozen.

This makes them more complicated to crew than a typical tramp freight such as a Cobra or Adder, which are capable of being flown by a lone multi-skilled trader, with some help from automated systems.

The extensive engineering systems require several engineers to keep things running smoothly. It is also recommended to have a mechanic around, especially for maintaining the complex cargo airlocks and lifts which have a reputation of being high on maintenance.

The full complement of turret gunners requires another eight crew, though most ships try to rely on software, or reduce the number of turret emplacements to bring down the purchase and running costs.

A sensor operator, whilst not required, is highly recommended according to the owner's handbook. The Python comes equipped with a full suite of civilian sensors. Whilst these aren't up to military standards, they are better than the bare minimum some trade vessels operate with.

A Python can be run by a family or close knit small crew. They may find themselves overworked and forced to take on multiple roles, but that is the life of a trader.

Source: Elite (1984)
Company: Whatt and Pritney ShipConstruct
Technology Level: 11
Total Tonnage: 800t
In Service Date: 715
Cost: MCr202.41

2 Python Trader

TECHNICAL BRIEFING

TL 11	Python	TONS	COST
Hull	800t Streamlined hull	-	40
	Crystal iron armour 6	72	14.4
M-Drive	Thrust 2	16	32
J-Drive	Jump 2	40	60
Power Plant	TL8 Fusion Power Plant, 350 Size Reduction -20% tonnage	28	26.25
Fuel	2 Parsec Jump	160	-
	4 weeks operation	3	
Bridge	Bridge	20	4
	Sensor station	1	0.5
Computer	TL 11, Computer/15	-	2
Sensors	Civilian sensors	1	3
Weapons	Dual pulse turrets x7	7	17.5
	Dual missile turret	0	0.85
Craft	Docking Space (10 tons)	11	3
	Worm Shuttle	-	2
Systems	Staterooms x12	48	6
	Common areas	16	1.6
	Fuel Processor (160tons/day)	8	4
	Fuel Scoop	-	1
Software	Manoeuvre, Intellect, Library	-	-
	Jump Control/2 [10]	-	0.2
	Virtual Gunner/0 [5]	-	1
Cargo	Cargo Bays	313t	-
	Cargo Airlock	56	5.6

Common Roles

Trader

The Python is most commonly used as a trading vessel. Smaller than the typical freighters that big shipping lines use, it is still one of the largest tramp freighters. Its high levels of armour, and optionally weapons, also makes it a firm favourite for those trading in unsafe systems on the borders of civilised space.

Its size is also its main disadvantage. Running costs are

considerably higher than something like a *Cobra* or *Adder*, and unless there is sufficient trade to fill its cargo hold, it is possible for traders to quickly go bankrupt whilst trying to keep it running.

For this reason, Pythons often stick to more mundane trade routes where trade levels are high. This makes the heavy armaments of the ship unnecessary, though.

Pirate

The Python makes for a good flagship for small pirate

Crew

2 Pilots, 1 Astrogator,
3 Engineers, 1 Mechanic,
1 Sensor Operator, 8 Gunners

Hull: 320 Armour: 8

Costs

Maintenance Cost

Cr 16,868 / month

Purchase Cost

MCr 202.41

Power 350

Basic Systems

160

Manoeuvre Drive

160

Jump Drive

160

Weapons

63

Sensors

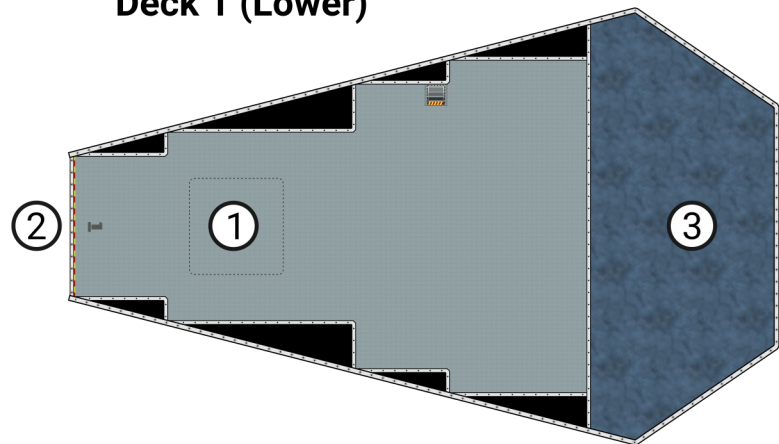
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Python Trader 3

TECHNICAL BRIEFING

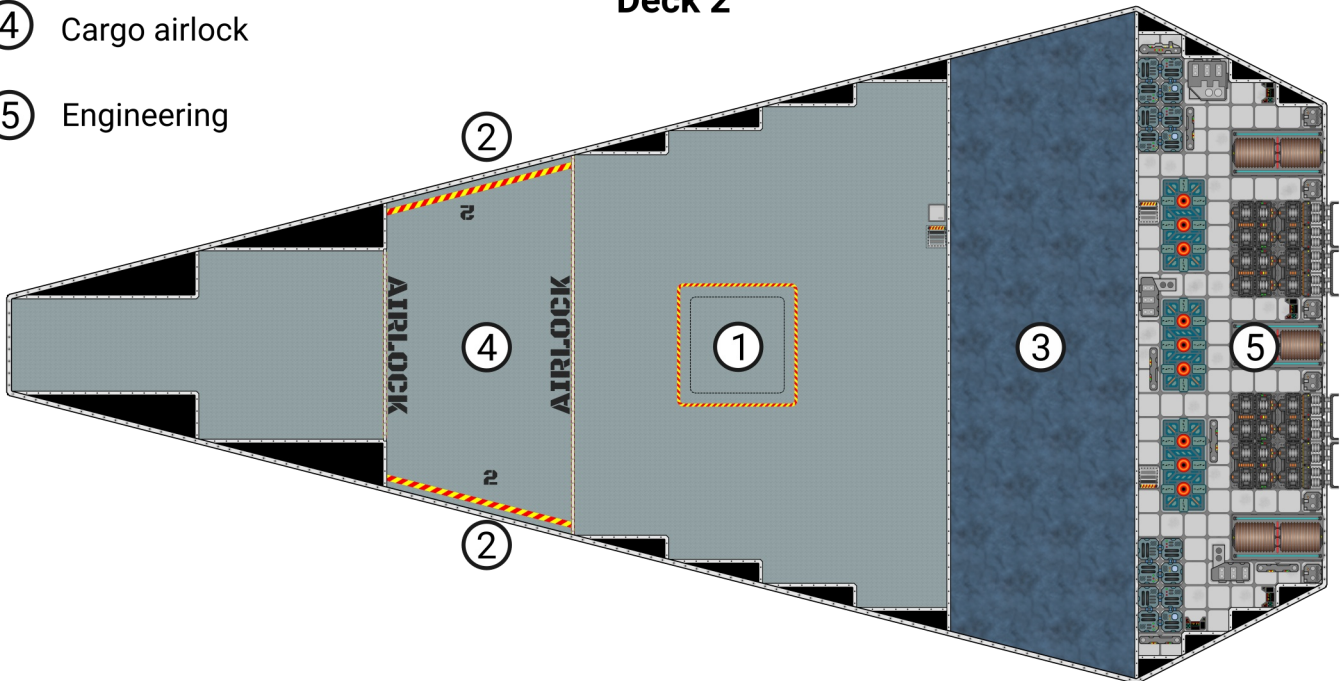
- ① Internal cargo lift
- ② Cargo hatches
- ③ Fuel

Deck 1 (Lower)



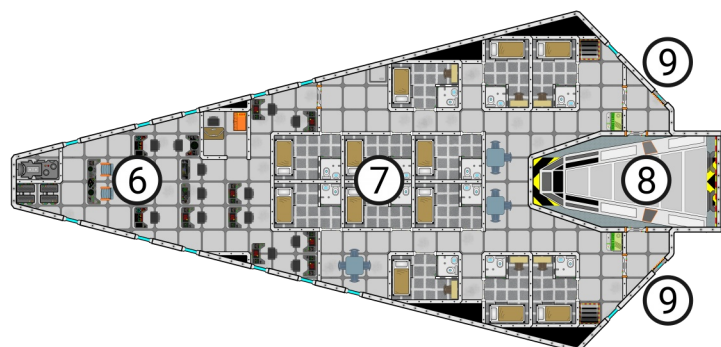
- ④ Cargo airlock
- ⑤ Engineering

Deck 2



- ⑥ Bridge
- ⑦ Staterooms
- ⑧ Worm landing shuttle
- ⑨ Airlocks

Deck 3 (Upper)



4 Python Trader

TECHNICAL BRIEFING

fleets. It lacks the thrust to be able to chase down prey, but it is large enough to act as the command ship for a small group of fighters.

Though it only has a single docking bay, its main cargo deck is large enough to carry a small flight of fighters. The Python is not built as a carrier though, and launching and landing fighters via the main cargo airlock is clumsy and best not done in a combat situation. Out of combat though, it's a workable process.

Refugee Ship

It has been known for Pythons to be converted into refugee or hospital ships in times of emergency. Its middle deck can be converted to temporary (or permanent) living quarters. Medical bays can be added, and cargo space can be filled with supplies rather than profit making freight.

Much like a pirate ship, shuttles can be docked on the lower deck for unloading and offloading of people and supplies.

Slaver

It is rumoured that some Pythons have been used as slave ships, for much the same reasons as it has been used for refugees. It is not hard to add room for barracks to house slavers to increase its crew complement, and grav vehicles to aid in ground assault and capture can be docked much like smallcraft can be.

Such usage is rare in civilised space, but beyond the borders of civilisation anything is possible.

Deck Layout

The Python has a long, flat design which can be deceptive. When viewed from the front especially it can appear smaller than it actually is. From the top or bottom, it appears larger than it is.

The majority of the turrets are visible from the front view as well, which can give the Python a very predatory appearance.

Deck 1

The first deck consists of fuel storage at the aft and the first cargo hold at the fore. The front of the ship opens out as a ramp to allow loading and offloading when on a planet's surface.

There is a lift between deck 1 and deck 2, as well as a ladder leading up to a vacuum proof hatch. The lift is vacuum sealed whilst positioned on deck 2.

Some owners turn Deck 1 into a fighter bay, installing repair facilities and launch rails to improve launching out of the front hatch.

The ship is not designed for this though, and it requires a routine (6) *Pilot (smallcraft)* check to launch or land without incident. If the Python is under acceleration, then this changes to a moderate (8) check.

Failure causes 1D6 damage to both ships, at +1 per point of negative effect.

Deck 2

Deck 2 is the primary cargo hold, plus the bulk of the fuel tanks and engineering. Engineering can only be accessed from deck 3.

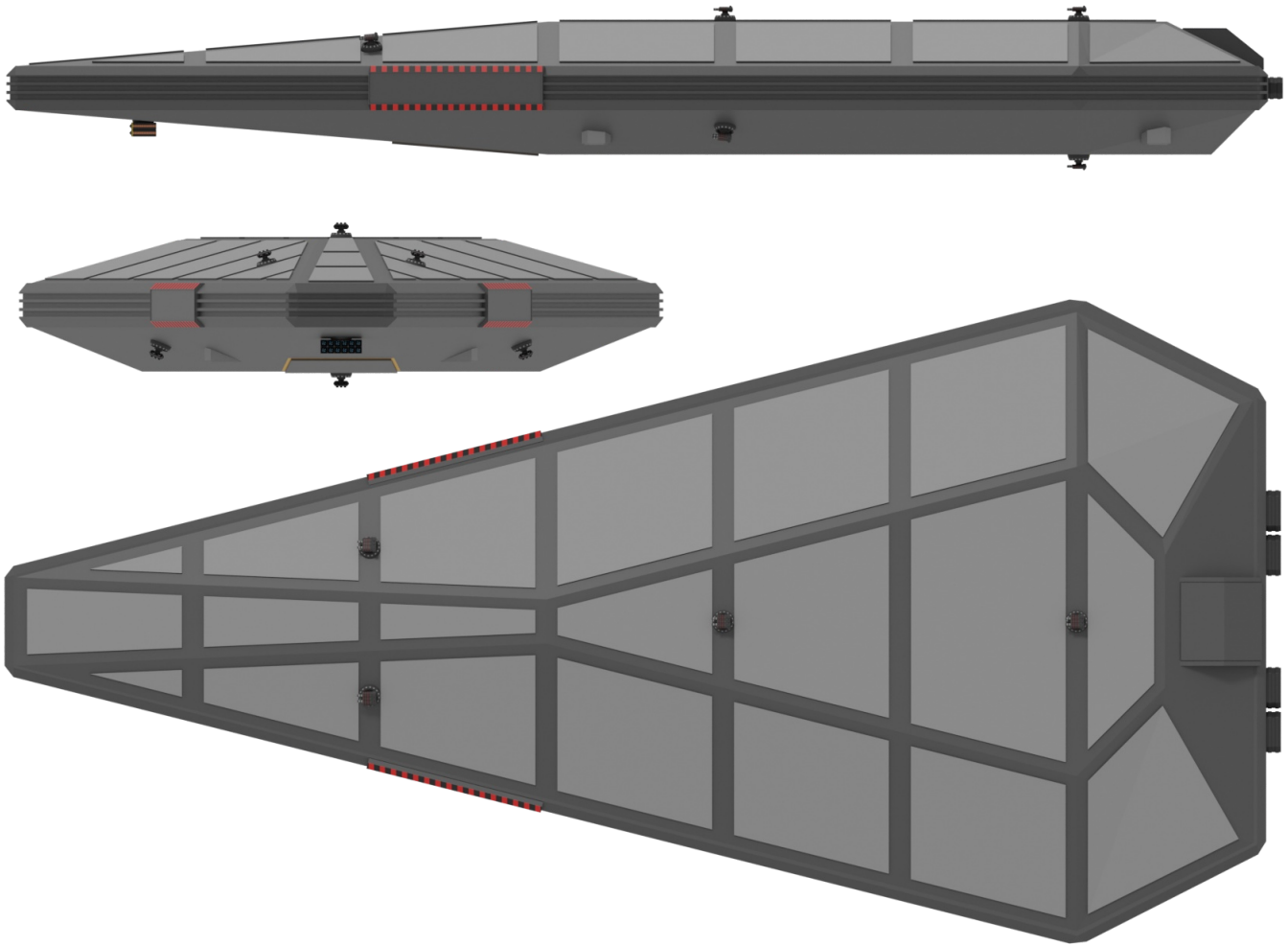
There are two side bay doors on this deck, as well as a cargo airlock between the two, which can hold up to 56t of cargo. A lot of the time, both inner airlock doors are kept open, so that the whole deck can be used as cargo space.

There is also a cargo lift that goes down to deck 1, though it can't be used if deck 1 is full.

Deck 3

The third and upper deck is given over to the bridge and crew quarters. There is also an aft docking bay for a Worm class landing shuttle, as well as two standard sized airlocks.

Since the two airlocks open onto the top of the ship, they aren't practical for disembarking when landed. However, in an emergency there are rungs set into the hull, and an extendable ladder, to give ground access.



The bridge is at the fore, and has good views to front and side. Directly behind the bridge are the gunnery stations, though these are only used when the turrets are being manually controlled.

Ships which have virtual gunner software will sometimes rip these gunnery stations out and replace with more crew space.

Though there are twelve staterooms, the crew space is disjointed around it, and crews often complaining of the living space being cramped. Therefore any excuse to increase this is generally looked on favourable.

Though there isn't separation of passenger and crew quarters, the twelve staterooms is generally enough to

allow passengers to be taken on board.

Armaments

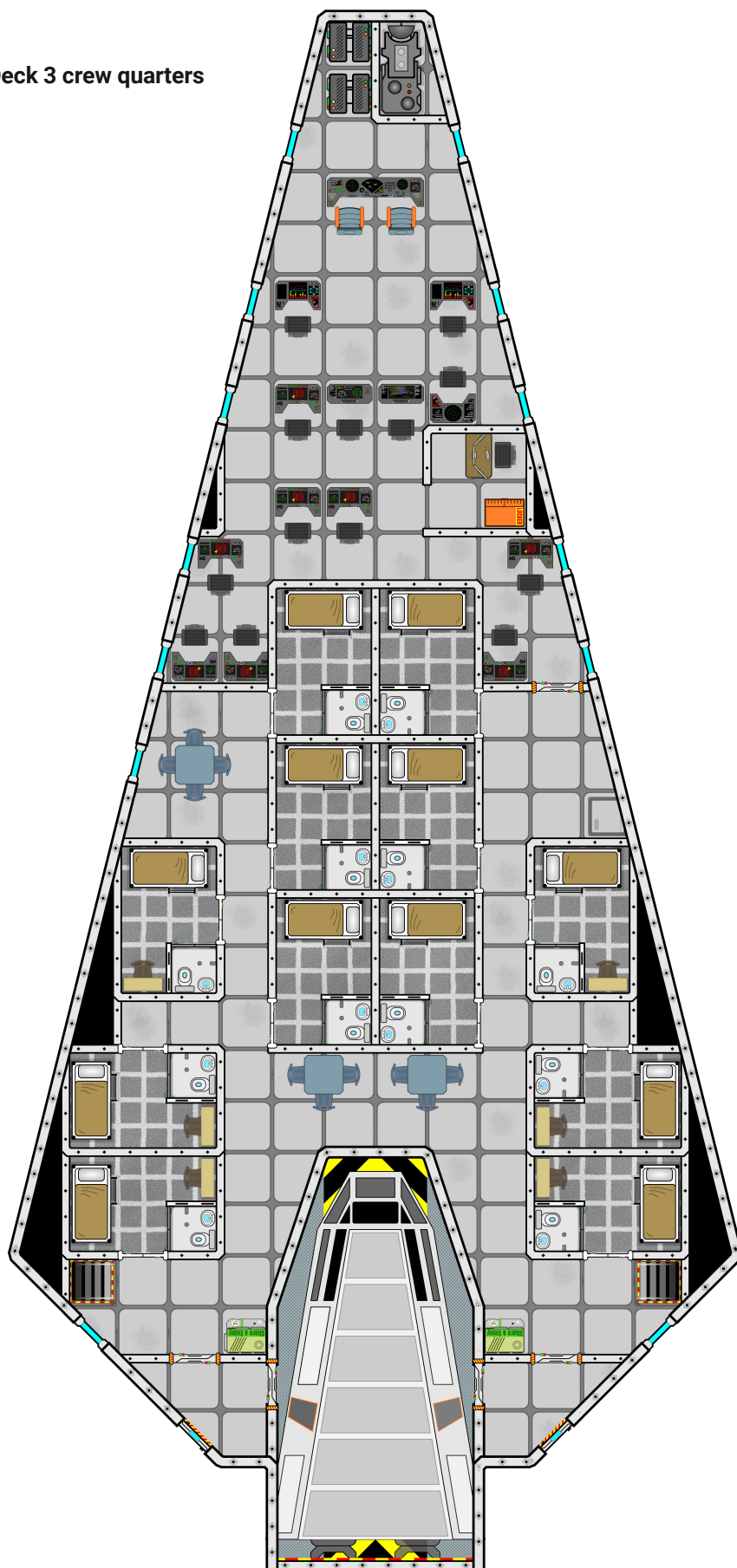
A Python is one of the most heavily armed civilian trading vessels in common use. It comes with eight turrets, and the standard configuration is as dual pulse lasers for seven of them, and dual missile racks for the last. Less aggressive owners have been known to travel with lighter armaments.

At the other end of the scale, it is not unheard of for a Python to have some of its turrets upgraded to barbettes. The mountings for these eat into the cargo hold, but it provides the Python with considerable hitting power.

6 Python Trader

TECHNICAL BRIEFING

Deck 3 crew quarters



The weakness of the Python though is that its fusion reactor isn't large enough to properly power all the weapons at its disposable, and upgrading them only makes things worse. The Python has to chose between manoeuvring and bringing all its weapons online - it cannot use the full thrust of its drive and power all of its laser turrets. Upgrading some to barbettes makes this even more of an issue.

For this reason, some captains fit high capacity batteries to allow the ship at least some amount of full activity in the middle of combat.