

Why 'Animal Crossing: New Horizons' is the ideal video game escape right now

March 25 2020, by Brett Molina



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My biggest worry so far in "Animal Crossing: New Horizons?" Whether I remembered to water my newly-planted pear trees.

As we navigate a terrifying pandemic where even a trip to the [grocery store](#) can wrack our nerves, Nintendo's latest video game for the Switch is a sanctuary. It's joyful, simple and the ideal escape for our current climate.

The game begins with your customizable character earning a trip to a deserted island from Tom Nook, a charming, raccoon-like entrepreneur who gives you the opportunity to mold this piece of land in your image.

Once you customize your character and name your island, you pick a spot to place a tent. Then it's time to explore. Tom and other inhabitants will gift you with "DIY" recipes to craft your own tools such as fishing rods or axes.

"New Horizons" is like a video game vacation: you spend most of your time fishing, catching insects, strolling the beach for sea shells, planting flowers and trees, or making your own furniture with resources from the island. This discovery leads to expansion, such as the creation of a museum where the island's native creatures are exhibited.

During their adventure, players can earn Bells—the game's currency—by selling resources like wood or goods you've crafted. Those Bells can go toward buying clothes for your character, furniture, or other wares. As you upgrade from a tent to a home, you can also buy things to decorate including wallpaper and rugs.

New to the Animal Crossing series is Nook Miles, which is the game's take on a frequent flier program. You earn miles by completing specific tasks, like catching fish or chopping down trees. Players track their miles through their own smartphone, which includes a Nook Miles "app" and other tools such as an encyclopedia of fish and insects and a list of recipes.

You can redeem your Nook Miles for more recipes or the coveted Nook Miles Ticket, which you can use for a mystery tour of another island.

These mystery tours prove valuable, as you can find things not native to your current surroundings. My island features countless orange trees. Thanks to the Nook Miles Ticket, I was able to find [islands](#) with pear and coconut trees I brought back to plant.

"New Horizons" takes place in real time, with seasons that match where you live. So, once it's nighttime you might see more moths flying around, while butterflies glide between flowers during the day. Some creatures are even available at specific months of the year.

You can settle for socializing with your island's charming and informative inhabitants, or venture to a friend's island through online play. If you have a friend nearby with their own Switch, you can enable local play to pay them a virtual visit.

This new "Animal Crossing"—part of a longstanding franchise dating back to 2001—could not have arrived at a better time. It's a soothing journey video game players (really, everyone) could use right now.

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