

10 Video Game Worlds to Get Lost in During Lockdown

For **WhatCulture** (commissioned but never used)

Another hour, another day, another week of lockdown ticks by. While our keyworkers continue to work hard out there, the best thing most of us can do is stay home. The problem with staying at home is that it gets boring pretty quickly.

But that doesn't always have to be the case.

While we can't run across green fields or bustle down busy streets right now, there's a whole virtual world waiting to be discovered. All you need to do is dust off your console, plug in, and press play.

Are you the sort of gamer who usually flies through each level? Does the thought of gaining XP excite you more than staring at a pixelated sunset? Now might be a good time to stop and smell the roses - virtually anyway. These days, countless in-game worlds are designed with careful consideration, often to beautiful results that deserve a double take.

This list features some of the most impressive virtual worlds that can be found in videogames. They're the type of settings that make you ask, "What quest am I doing again?" as you get distracted by scenery for the thousandth time. Although we might be trapped in our living rooms for the foreseeable future, there's a host of stunning worlds to explore at our fingertips.

1) **Animal Crossing: New Horizons**

Thanks to it being announced in the middle of the coronavirus lockdown, Nintendo's *newest Animal Crossing* release is the videogame of the moment. With its focus on a peaceful lifestyle of catching fish and chatting with your cute animal pals, this game seems like the perfect tonic to the chaos of 2020.

The newest release, available on the Nintendo Switch, boasts the franchise's most gorgeous game art so far. If you're familiar with the world of *Animal Crossing*, you'll know that gameplay has always taken place in a beautiful little village. This time it's no different. One thing has certainly changed, however: the team's designers have been working *overtime*. From glittering water to flowers waving softly in the breeze (no more static art), the environment is equal parts immersive and inviting. The best part is that the game clock operates in real time, meaning players get to watch the sun fall and the moon rise just as it does outside.

A lot of *Animal Crossing: New Horizon's* huge success has actually been attributed to the current global lockdown. Right now, it seems like a virtual, quiet island is the perfect spot to escape to.

2) **Red Dead Redemption II**

Just like *Animal Crossing*, 2018's *Red Dead Redemption II* offers you a sweet little spot of nature. Only it turns out *this* kind of nature is whole lot grittier. When players first dive into the rootin' tootin' world of *Red Dead*, the first thing they'll want to do is shoot up a rival gang or play Five Finger Filet at the local saloon. Who can blame them? Between *Red Dead's* riveting storyline and adrenaline pumping combat mode, it's easy to forget that you're surrounded by the lush landscape of the wild, wild West.

With a map spanning around 29 square miles, there's a lot of interesting scenery to explore in *Red Dead II*. Some of this game's most eye-catching beauty takes place when you play as Arthur Morgan, rambling through the tall trees on your Tennessee Walker. It's moments like these, when realistic

sun beams cuts through the treeline, that really make you appreciate the countless hours that it took to build this world.

3) Legend of Zelda Breath of The Wild

Released in 2017, this addition to *The Legend of Zelda* offers possibly the most awe-striking world on this list. The critically acclaimed *Breath of the Wild* has opened a world like no game before it, giving players the freedom to stroll wherever their hearts desire. Could you theoretically stroll straight to Hyrule Castle to fight Calamity Ganon? Yes. Will you die immediately? Also yes.

So, before you venture too far, make sure to take in the local flora and fauna that Hyrule offers. The game's gorgeous atmosphere is filled with curious landmarks and intriguing pockets of civilisation. Kakariko Village is the first Hylian hub that many players stumble upon. It's sweet design looks like it was pulled directly from a Studio Ghibli movie with a flock of cute chickens (sorry, cuccos) to boot.

Beyond the safety of this village lies the sprawling world of Hyrule itself, a realm containing countless lush forests and intriguing ruins. The game features an interactive environment and each gust of wind or flash of lighting offers more than increased immersion. These effects also enhance your gameplay, allowing you to catapult Link to a new area on his paraglider or destroy a heard of monsters. Where *Breath of The Wild* is concerned, Hyrule is a world that just keeps giving.

4) Fallout 3

No more Mr. Nice Nature. Actually, there's no nature at all. *Fallout 3* is post-apocalyptic RPG and its sort of like marmite. Whether you love it or hate it, there's no denying that Bethesda created an unusual, mysterious, and sometimes scary world to lose yourself in.

Fallout 3 is set within the dystopian ruins of Washington D.C. in the year 2277. After the US was catapulted into nuclear fire almost two hundred years ago. All that's left to explore is an empty husk. Though a far cry from the natural landscapes we've touched on so far, *Fallout 3*'s map possesses its own strange beauty.

The game begins in an underground vault, sheltered from the radiated ruins above. Upon escaping, the player is greeted to the beating sun (for the first time in their life) and a landscape seemingly paused in time. The robots, rusting cars, and Nuka Cola machines all appear suited for 1950's America which gives your dystopian exploration a nostalgic, eerie kick.

5) The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

Another classic created by Bethesda, *Skyrim* has players back on the nature trail. *Skyrim* is a game that players keep returning to almost ten years later and when you take one look at Tamriel's expansive landscape you'll understand why.

Like many open world RPGs, *Skyrim* has a lot to offer the player. When it comes to exploration, there's enough treasure-filled dungeons and mystical buildings to keep players busy for countless hours.

One of the most enchanting parts of *Skyrim*'s world is its ambient soundtrack, composed by Jeremy Soule. As you ride your stolen horse under a starry blanket of night sky, you might hear the sound of a choir pulling you along. Equally, one step into a cosy, firelit inn reveals the cheerful noise of lutes

and drums. Though soundtracks are a small part of the gameplay for many players, even the most hardcore of gamers can't help but get distracted by the music of *Skyrim*.