

No Man's Sky's Switch launch was a chance to 'focus on some of the fundamentals'

Since its launch in 2016, there have been several big, defining updates for *No Man's Sky*. 2018 saw the release of the massive "Next" expansion alongside a new Xbox version, while 2020's "Origins" update essentially doubled the variety in the game. With the game coming to the Nintendo Switch on October 7th, the team at Hello Games decided to use the launch as a chance to update some of the seemingly smaller – but still important – aspects of *No Man's Sky* for its 4.0 update, which will hit all platforms.

"What we want to do is focus on some of the fundamentals," Hello Games' Sean Murray tells *The Verge*. "It's lovely to sort of dig into that side of things and make the game nice for new players and for returning players. Really sort of tidy your house and then bring in visitors."

This means that October 7th will mark two important milestones, starting with the debut of *No Man's Sky* on the Switch. This isn't the first time the game has been playable on a portable, technically, since it's one of the most popular games on the Steam Deck. In fact, that success on Valve's handheld helped Murray to better understand the appeal of playing the game on the go. "I've always been a bit, not skeptical, but I've been curious," he says of bringing the game to the Switch. "I wasn't sure whether it would suit mobile play, and doing Steam Deck has made it click for me."

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One of his concerns was technical: it wasn't clear if the whole of *No Man's Sky*'s expansive procedurally generated universe and all of the many updates that have come out since

launch would fit on the Switch. Initially, the team thought they might have to create a separate branch; Switch players would be in one universe while everyone else played in another. That turned out not to be the case. “You can go and find a tree on the PlayStation 5 and then somehow go there on Switch and find the same tree,” he says.

That said, the Switch version is launching with some notable omissions. The Switch port won’t have multiplayer at launch, nor will it have the alien settlements that were first introduced in 2021. “The focus was on gameplay and performance,” Murray says of deciding what to include in the Switch version, “and making sure that we delivered something that was as close as humanly possible to its console brethren.” These features could be introduced in a future update, and Murray says the team will be looking closely at how Switch players experience the game to decide where to focus with regard to future changes.

Elsewhere, the 4.0 update isn’t one full of new content – so don’t go in expecting weird new additions like the space whales – but rather a series of significant quality-of-life tweaks designed to make it easier for both new and returning players to get into the game. The save system has been tweaked, for instance, to make it easier to jump in and out for short gameplay sessions (which should be ideal for the Switch). Murray also says the inventory system has been overhauled, and the in-game logs have been streamlined to make it easier to find what’s new *and* what you’ve done recently in the game. (The pace of updates in *No Man’s Sky* means it can often be overwhelming to return after a prolonged absence from playing.) There will also be a new “relaxed” mode that dials back the survival elements for a less stressful experience.



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Murray notes that, while the major expansions have been important, the biggest shift for *No Man's Sky* has been when the team at Hello started pushing out constant updates rather than saving everything up for one big launch. "That changed our fundamental interaction with the community," he says. "Seeing the reaction and then allowing ourselves to adapt to that has been motivational for the team."

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The major question, of course, is how long this can go on for. Hello Games has other titles in the works, and after six years' worth of updates, it's not unfair to think they might be getting sick of *No Man's Sky's* vast universe. Instead, Murray says that he feels "really lucky" to be able to continue working on something that has clicked with so many players. And the future of *No Man's Sky* depends not only on that community but also on the team making it.

Murray explains that development on the game will continue “while both of these things are true: the team is enjoying doing it and has ideas they’re excited about, and players are receptive and excited.” He adds that “I’m always working on the assumption this is too good to be true and the gig will be up next year.”

<https://www.theverge.com/2022/10/3/23380392/no-mans-sky-switch-launch-interview-sean-murray-4-0-update>