



Far Cry 3

The best Far Cry game yet—
but it's not without flaws

THERE WE WERE, driving down a bumpy, pothole-ridden dirt road, when the on-screen indicator for enemies suddenly lit up like the muzzle flashes from the car we had just driven past. Several of the other car's passengers fired some rounds into our beater car's engine block, forcing us to bail out while the aggressors flipped a U-turn to come back and finish the job.

We watched as the car full of enraged maniacs approached, and then giggled as it careened over the edge of the rocky path, its driver unable to control the car's rapid acceleration on the narrow road. Curious about their fate, we sauntered over to the area where the vehicle swerved off the path and suddenly heard the engine of *another* car coming toward us from just up ahead, so we instinctively ducked into the bushes since we were low on ammo. As we watched the second car stop right next to our now-burning vehicle, we saw the bad guys dismount to

have a look-see; then our car suddenly exploded, which caused their car to explode as well, killing all of them and creating a massive, bloody fireball. As we stared at the smoldering wreckage and bodies strewn everywhere, we were just about to congratulate ourselves for a well-executed skirmish when from out of nowhere a royally pissed-off Cassowary—think Big Bird, but blue—appeared and mistook us for a human scratching post. After putting him down as fast as we could, we took his pelt then leapt off the nearest cliff, gliding in our wingsuit to a camp down below to replenish our ammo.

Of course, none of this was scripted or even part of the game's main story; it was just a random encounter we had while en route to an actual part of the game, and it's what makes Far Cry 3 one of the most entertaining—and unpredictable—games we've played since Skyrim. This is one game that, like Skyrim, will be different

for everyone who plays it, and the game excels at the times when it lets you do whatever the heck you want to do, which is about 90 percent of the time. Sadly, you can't always do whatever you want, and are forced to jump through very specific hoops a lot of the time, or sit through cutscenes and boring dream sequences way too often throughout the game's lackluster main storyline.

Once the main story cuts you loose, you get back to the real meat of the game—hunting wildlife and clearing enemy outposts. However, in order to unlock all of the game's special skills, such as running faster, taking less falling damage, etc., you *must* progress through the game's story, which by the end leaves you cold and ready to leave Rook Island, never to return. To put it bluntly, this is a game that starts out extremely strong, and slowly gets worse as you progress through it, though it is punctuated with some of the



Blowing up enemy vehicles with a grenade launcher is an orgy of explosive carnage.



Just like real wildlife, the animals in the game don't take too kindly to strangers.

best first-person combat we've ever experienced on the PC.

The game begins with one of the best opening sequences in recent memory, as it shows you and your friends living it up on a tropical island, only to pan out to discover you're watching a video of your exploits from the confines of a bamboo tiger cage, held captive by an extremely well-acted psychopath named Vaas. After a harrowing escape from the prison camp and some hand-holding by one of the locals, you're set free to pursue the main quest, or just explore on your own. And explore you will, as you must climb radio towers to remove scrambling devices that obscure the island's map, which also allows the local gun shops to receive new shipments. Pirates control local outposts, too, so you have to clear those in order to buy new weapons, replenish your ammo, configure your weapon loadouts, and fast-travel from base to base. Clearing outposts is easily the most thrilling part of the game, and you can clear them at your leisure, too, or not—the game doesn't punish you either way, but creeping up on a base undetected, tagging all the enemies with your camera, then moving in stealthily to take them out one by one before any of them hits the alarm—or disabling the alarms first—is the highlight of this game. And each of the 34 outposts are a serious challenge and a thesis

on open-world gameplay done right.

In addition to clearing outposts, climbing radio towers, and the main quest, you also must hunt wildlife in order to upgrade your ammo packs, wallet, holsters, arrow quiver, and syringe holder. Each lets you hold more ammo, health syringes, grenades, Molotovs, and more. This isn't Deer Hunter, either, as hunting is a challenge—you have to bag leopards, Cassowaries, rabid dogs, tigers, bears, and lots more. Additionally, clearing outposts opens up Wanted Dead and Path of the Hunter quests that require you to kill certain animals with specific weapons and take down a nearby kingpin using only your knife, but sadly, once all the outposts are clear, not only is the world devoid of bad guys but there are no more of these quests, either.

The main problem with the game is that you spend the first half of it going on epic adventures to upgrade your packs, open the map, and increase your skills, but by the time the game is half over, we found ourselves almost maxed out completely in every area possible. We had a huge wallet that was constantly full, all the weapons that were available, and almost every skill on the three separate trees, giving us little motivation to keep exploring. You can also find 120 scattered relics and 20 randomly located letters from WWII-era Japanese soldiers, and

compete in contests such as knife-throwing, shooting, and driving, but they provide little benefit aside from a test of skill and extra money, which is usually unnecessary. The game also provides a dozen side missions that are so boring a lot of them left us wondering why the developers even bothered including them.

We absolutely loved this game for the first 15 hours or so, and were even considering it as the Game of the Year. But after plodding through the second half of the game, repeating a lot of the same tasks over and over, and suffering through the game's hackneyed story and deplorable ending, our opinion changed. We still highly recommend it; just savor your time on the first island—it's one of the best FPS experiences we've ever had. —JOSH NOREM

VERDICT **9** **Far Cry 3**

■ **VAAS** Pulse-pounding gameplay; superb weapon selection; satisfying gunplay; gorgeous graphics.

■ **HOYT** Peaks too early; main story is weak; too many cutscenes.

\$60, ubi.com, ESRB: M

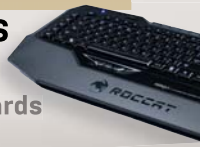
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