

There's loads of variety in what, where, and why you're clambering around.



# Horizon Call Of The Mountain

Shadow Carja don't skip arm day

**Y**ou've got to hand it to Horizon COTM, when it comes to making you put your digits to work few games are quite as good as this clamber-'em-up. While it might be a bit of a one-trick Strider, that trick is constantly presented in new and interesting ways across its lengthy (especially for a VR title) single-player campaign.

You play as Ryas, a Shadow Carja who's been broken out of prison and offered a chance to redeem himself for the role he and the rest of the Shadow Carja had as antagonists in Zero Dawn. While you never get to see yourself, he's full of character as he grumbles to himself through the adventure, on the tracks of his brother who went missing while investigating strange occurrences taking place on – you guessed it – a mountain.

## BIT OF A REACH

At first, COTM introduces itself like a theme-park ride. While visually the world is amazing, the boat ride introduction feels a bit old-school. And when Aloy makes a cameo early on to give you some information, it almost feels like when a theme



### INFO

**FORMAT** PSVR2

**PRICE** £59.99

**ETA** Out now

**PUB** Sony

**DEV** Guerrilla Games, Firesprite

**PLAYERS** 1

**LENGTH** 7-8 hrs

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Extensive, including: seated/standing mode; auto-load arrows; slow time in tool selector; aim assistance options; modify climbing reach; visual vignette modes; dominant hand toggle; subtitles

park employs a lead actor to perform a piece to camera in the middle of a licensed movie ride.

However, when characters aren't speaking at you between missions, everything is very hands-off, leaving you to get hands-on, and into the groove of what you'll be doing: climbing, and a whole lot of it.

Prepare to look up a lot and wave your arms in the air like nobody's business. While standing and seated modes are available, we can't imagine playing any way other than seated, given how constantly looking up and around for handholds comes close to making us fall over when standing. Simply reach out and hold down one Sense controller's trigger and you'll lock into place, then reach out with the other to grab the next

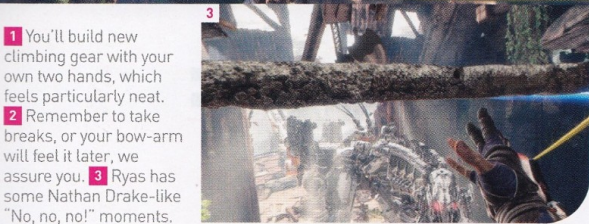
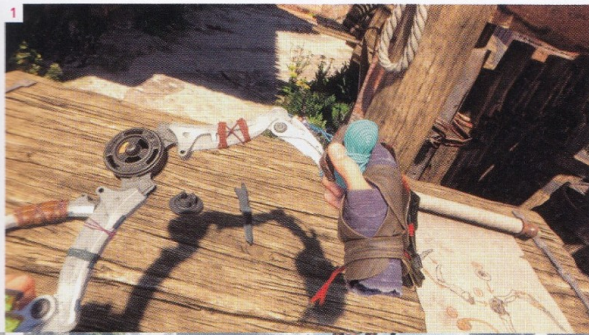
handhold and use its trigger to switch between the two.

Finding where to grab next, and working your way across surfaces, forms the bulk of the game. As you progress, varied surfaces, from icy cliffs to rusted machines, add complications, as do the different types of climbing tools you use. You can get quite quick when you get used to it, stretching your arm out for the next bit of ledge or even risking a hop into the air to gain an extra couple of inches.

The first tool you'll employ are the climbing axes, which you pull out by reaching over your shoulder mid-climb and grabbing. After that, it's just a matter of sinking them into the rock. There's a delightful heft to striking surfaces.

Other climbing tools are more hit-and-miss, mostly due the





**1** You'll build new climbing gear with your own two hands, which feels particularly neat. **2** Remember to take breaks, or your bow-arm will feel it later, we assure you. **3** Ryas has some Nathan Drake-like "No, no, no!" moments.

cumbersome inventory management system that requires you to press a button to bring up an equip menu for your hand, then hold the trigger for a while to summon the item you need out of the air. With multiple grapples, a bladed boomerang, and other tools to choose from, it feels bloated rather than elegant, and the menu weakens the sense of immersion. We'd have preferred fewer, more readily available, choices to avoid breaking flow.

**BOW WITH ME**

Combat does feature, but it's barebones, locking you into moving in either a circle around an arena or a straight line (exclusively for flying enemies). Pull out your bow by reaching over your shoulder, and grab an

arrow to nock using your other hand. Just lift, pull, and shoot. While aiming can take some getting used to, it's surprising how quickly you can take to it, adjusting your aim in the moment. It feels very cool to swiftly pull out your bow, nock, and score a critical hit (Legolas, who?). That said, given your arms will probably be sore with all the climbing, holding out the bow can only add to it.

COTM is at its best when it's giving you interesting structures to climb. And, fortunately that's the bulk of what you do, throughout all sorts of thrilling (almost Uncharted-like) set-pieces. With collectibles and optional paths to entertain or revisit as you poke around each distinct mission, you'll climb, climb, and climb again.



Barebones combat doesn't get in the way of the genuinely interesting clambering to be had throughout the story. Just be careful your arms don't get sore. **Oscar Taylor-Kent**



**THE PLAYBOOK**

**WHAT YOU DO IN: HORIZON COTM**



**HOW TO... CRAFT ARROWS**



Need to refill your quiver? Rustle around random crates to pick up materials, then flip your bow over to view the types of arrows you're able to make. Hit **X** to craft the sort you want, picking up and placing two or three of the components to build your ammunition yourself.

**STATPACK**

**02**

Primary traversal modes: free movement with the stick, and 'gesture based' movement where you wave your arms up and down.

**12**

Missions to climb through, some taking you through different slices of the same larger area, but all with unique climbing routes to enjoy.

**05**

Types of arrow to collect and craft (see above), plus extra ammunition for a second weapon you pick up partway through the game.

**LOVING/HATING**



**HORIZON VIEW**

While you can't go far off the path, many stunning environments lay in wait to ogle over. Machine Safari mode is all about taking it in.



**CHILLY RECEPTION**

Get hit by ice thrown by an enemy and you have to rub it off your face. Just, er, don't keep whacking the headset like us.

**TROPHY CABINET**



**BRONZE**  
Complete a 'legendary climb'. Flex those muscles, this one's within reach!



**SILVER**  
Track down and shoot all of the hidden Warning Beacons in each level.



**GOLD**  
'Nuff said. Go ham on the ol' robo T-Rex. It's a challenge, but one you'll enjoy.



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34

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