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## Issue #23 – October 11, 2025

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### Loading Screen

My focus this week is on the scariest games I've ever played. Okay, not *all* of them may be at the top of the horror food chain, but there's something about each game in my main feature that I found to be tense and disturbing – games that made me be extra careful and think twice before entering a new room, or before wasting my last few bullets, or before straying too far from a safe room.

Some of these were games I could only play a little at a time because of their dread-inducing nature, before taking a break or playing something else.



Rather than present it all in my usual matter-of-fact manner, I'm stretching my creative writing muscles once again. I hope you find it all as amusing to read as it was for me to write. I kind of went overboard.

# Recent Events

## Mina the Hollower Is Delayed

One of the games I wrote about in [issue #17](#) in my most anticipated upcoming game releases features, *Mina the Hollower* from Yacht Club Games, has been delayed. I'm so backlogged on recent releases already, not to mention a few from earlier this year I still need to play, that I'm not too inconvenienced by this. Even if I was, big deal. It's rarely (if ever) worth the crunch and stress for developers when they need a little more time to wrap things up.

It's also easier, probably, to delay a digital release in the 11<sup>th</sup> hour (*Mina the Hollower* was due out on Halloween) than to push back a physical release (although that happens too, even during release month). This is one of the few that I'd probably buy digitally at release, without waiting on a sale. A physical copy is more my thing, but I'm not sure I'll wait for an announcement of one that might never come.



Source:

<https://www.gamesradar.com/games/action/the-actual-biggest-game-of-october-the-shovel-knight-devs-zelda-like-mina-the-hollower-gets-delayed-as-devs-say-its-so-close-to-being-done/>

Images: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IT8suGTzYN0>

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## Nintendo's Close to You Animated Short

Maybe it's a slow news week, but I wanted to mention this little video Nintendo released earlier in the week, featuring a baby and his or her magical flying pacifier:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsufGY5l8jA&list=RDrsufGY5l8jA>

I don't know if it made the rounds on most other podcasts and websites, but I first heard about it on Kinda Funny Games Daily. They were speculating about what it might mean.

The leading theory, based on tone, context, and (apparently) music cues, was that it had something to do with *Pikmin*. I've only played a few minutes of any *Pikmin* game, so I don't know the lore and backstory, but I guess humans can't see Pikmin, which would serve to explain what was happening in the video.

The next day, they put out an updated version of the same video, available only in the Nintendo Today app, this time with those playful Pikmin in full view:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhdtMJvirZI>

It looks as though the baby can see them, and I say that based on some of the things the baby does, like patting the chair to make the Pikmin bounce (which he/she might not have done if just seeing a floating pacifier).

This led to more speculation. Is it a teaser for a new game? No, Nintendo later clarified that it's just a fun animated short created by their new animation division, Nintendo Pictures.



Source:

<https://www.ign.com/articles/nintendo-finally-comments-on-this-weeks-closer-to-you-pikmin-videos-reveals-theyre-the-first-short-films-from-nintendo-pictures>

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## MindsEye Developers Aren't Happy

What a fiasco, and I say that as somebody who really enjoyed *MindsEye* and doesn't see it as the unplayable mess some others do. It's a story of crunch, burnout, and management issues leading to a bad launch and layoffs.

Source:

<https://thisweekinvideogames.com/news/mindseye-devs-call-out-build-a-rocket-boy-for-mismanagement/>

# The Spooky Month Vacation Guide

Hello again. I'm Mike. You may remember me from [issue #15](#) where I told you all about ten great schools that were accepting students for the new semester. At the time, I worked as a recruiter for the Vocational Graduate Guidance Network (VGGN for short). My efforts to entice new students into enrolling at any of those academic institutions failed, and so I have moved on to a new career.

I'm now a travel agent for the Vacation Grand Getaways Nexus (VGGN for short). Our agency specializes in vacation destinations that are struggling to attract guests. It's my job to see that tourism flourishes, so I present to you these 44 wonderful getaway spots.

I present these in no particular order. First up is the delightful small town of...

## Silent Hill

As seen in the *Silent Hill* series (PS + Xbox).

This picturesque New England town has a lot to offer the discerning out-of-towner. Book a room at the LakeView Hotel. If you're on a tighter budget, try Jack's Inn.

If you need extended stay accommodations, you may find vacancies at the Wood Side Apartments or the Daisy Villa Apartments. It might be best if you avoid the Southside Ashfield Heights apartments in nearby South Ashfield, though. The rooms there are known to develop, er... large holes in the walls that might, er... lead to alternate dimensions.



While you're there, enjoy a fun day and evening at the Lakeside Amusement Park, or shop 'til your heart's content at the Central Square Shopping Center. Hungry? Try a meal at the world-famous Happy Burger or dine with drinks and jukebox music at Neely's Bar.

Interested in movies? You can't beat the comfortable seating at the Reverie Theater.



If you suffer any injuries during your visit, the trained medical staff at the Alchemilla General Hospital or Brookhaven Hospital will patch you right up.

You may be wondering, at this point, why you would need to worry about injuries in this quaint, peaceful, friendly town? It's really no cause for concern, I promise, but the town has recently been covered in fog, or maybe smoke. It's hard to say.

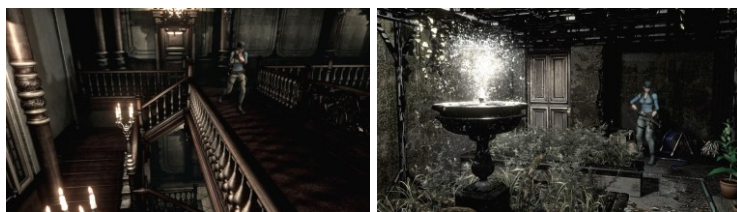
Sometimes, the town even takes on a more sinister form with faceless monsters and twisted nurses and even a menacing hulk of a guy with a pyramid-shaped hat that covers his head completely (affectionately referred to by the locals as a "pyramid head"). My best advice is to avoid *Silent Hill* if you're bringing emotional baggage. Otherwise, welcome!



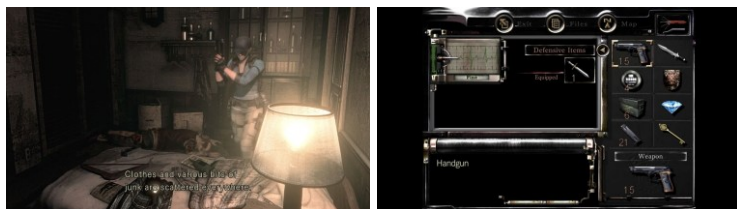
# The Spencer Mansion

As seen in **Resident Evil** (PS4).

Nestled away in the Arklay Mountains near Raccoon City, this sprawling estate has been retrofitted with a variety of clever puzzles and locked doors that will make any budding escape artist drool. As you collect keys adorned with various symbols, you might just find a way down into the secret research laboratory hidden beneath the mansion.



You'll also find plenty of loot scattered around the mansion and its grounds.



Amateur herbologists will absolutely love the plant variety. Can you collect all three colors of herbs? Mix and match green, red, and blue to see what happens. Just be careful to avoid any larger plants – especially ones that move.



It's also advisable to brush up on your firearm training before booking your vacation at the Spencer Mansion. A quickly spreading virus dubbed the "T-Virus" has created an undead army that has laid siege to the mansion.



Your stay at the Spencer Mansion can be subsidized by the friendly and altruistic folks at the Umbrella Corporation. Just sign a simple waiver and agree to certain biological experimentations, and this trip can be much more affordable than you might expect.

## Raccoon City Police Dept.

As seen in **Resident Evil 2** and **3** (PS5).

This art museum was repurposed for use by the R.P.D. in 1969, and its interesting roots remain in the form of secret passages, elaborate locking mechanisms, special keys, and creepy statues. Wait, did I say creepy?

Well, never mind that. It may seem that a police department is a strange place to vacation, but it is indeed open to the public given the extraordinary circumstances unfolding in Raccoon City right now.

Remember that T-Virus I mentioned before? Well, it *might* have spread to the greater Raccoon City area, making the R.P.D. one of the few safe spots in the area. Okay, "safe" is stretching it a bit, since it's overrun with its fair share of zombies. On the positive side, your liaison, who simply goes by the name "Mr. X", will be happy to show you around the... wait, I'm being told that "Mr. X" is actually a supercharged Tyrant-virus variant dead set on eliminating you. Huh. Ok. Well, let's move on.



# An Isolated Uillage in Spain

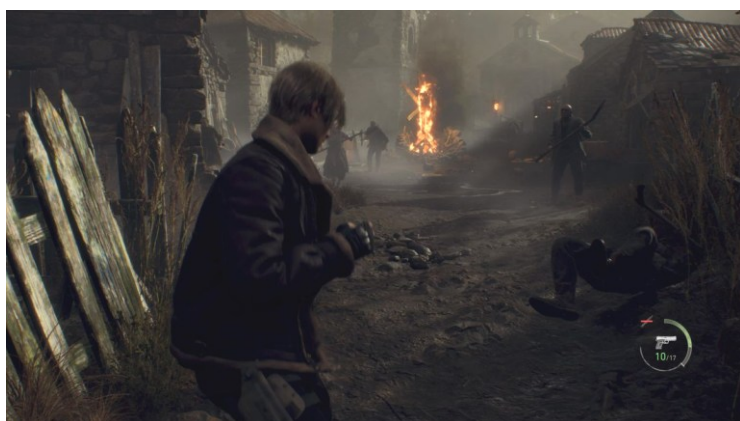
As seen in **Resident Evil 4** (PS5).

The Umbrella Corporation is one of VGGN's premier sponsors, so I'm obligated to tell you about other exciting vacation destinations. If neither the Spencer Mansion nor the Raccoon City Police Department appeal to you, let me recommend a trip to scenic Spain!



I already know what you're thinking. That big bad "T-Virus" sounds like a bummer, and you want nothing to do with it. That's exactly why this option may be ideal for you.

That old crusty virus is a thing of the past. Here, villagers are instead infected with an insidious parasite called Las Plagas, which not only makes them violent, but introduces bizarre and grotesque mutations that often cause their heads to rise up out of their body on long tentacle-like stalks.



After you've seen everything this pleasant village has to offer, you can visit the lake, the island, and an incredible sprawling castle.

If you're looking for even *more* excitement during your trip to this secluded region, you're in for a real treat with a game of "rescue the President's daughter". No, not the one you wouldn't *want* to rescue. I'm talking about Ashley Graham, codename "Baby Eagle".

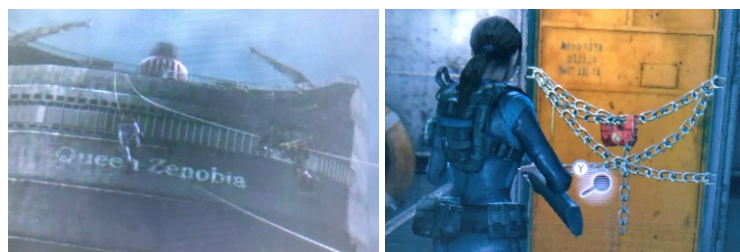


There she is, looking a little under the weather. Is that the onset of Las Plagas, or just the common cold? Book your trip today and find out!

## The Queen Zenobia

As seen in **Resident Evil: Revelations** (3DS).

If a journey at sea is more appealing, the massive Queen Zenobia cruise liner is ready to help you tour the Mediterranean Sea.



A variant of the T-Virus, dubbed the T-Abyss Virus, has put a damper on the demand for Queen Zenobia cruises, so we're able to offer this exciting adventure at an unbelievably low price. Just beware of the aquatic monsters.



# Baker Family Estate

As seen in **Resident Evil 7: Biohazard** (PS4).

In the swamps of Dulvey, Louisiana, you'll find the rustic estate of the Baker family, which now serves as a destination getaway. Think Airbnb, but without the appealing amenities.



Let's meet the Bakers, each of whom you'll get to know well as they host your stay.



**Grandma Baker** is always around. There may be more to her than meets the eyes.

**Lucas** has a penchant for traps and may seem a bit sadistic, but he has a heart of gold.

**Jack Baker** leads the family. He's pretty handy with a chainsaw and might just engage in active home remodeling during your stay.

**Marguerite** is Jack's wife. She has the power to control insects. The chance that she'll use that power *against* you is, I don't know, 50/50?

If you're injured during your stay, just splash water on it. It even heals broken bones!



You'll enjoy delicious home-cooked meals during your stay with the Bakers.



You won't want to miss the chance to mingle and socialize with other guests.



**Don't wait.** Book your Baker vacation today!

## Castle Dimitrescu

As seen in **RE8 / Resident Evil: Village** (PS5).

This eastern European castle is situated near a village of werewolves. Did I say werewolves? I meant normal friendly people who won't try to kill you. But yes, they really are werewolves.



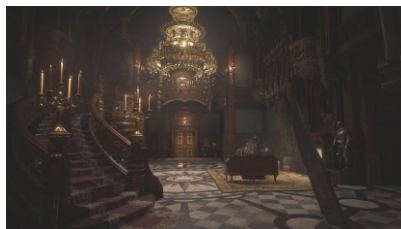
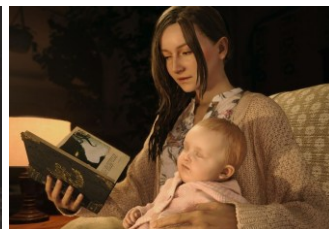
The lady of the castle, Alcina Dimitrescu, is usually joined by her three daughters. You wouldn't know it from this promotional tourism image, but Lady Dimitrescu stands at over 9 feet tall, and her daughters can turn into troublesome swarms of flies.



After exploring the castle and seeing the village sights, visitors on an extended stay should make their way to House Beneviento, where dolls and puppets (none of them creepy or disturbing at all) adorn this... ok, sorry, yes, they're creepy and disturbing. You may also encounter the cries of a baby that lead you to... no, no, we should move on.

Nearby, you'll find Heisenberg's Factory, with tours provided by Karl, the factory's owner. If he invites you to a game of cat-and-mouse, you absolutely must accept. It's really fun!

With all these wonderful destinations in close proximity, this is one vacation spot you won't want to miss. Bring the whole family!



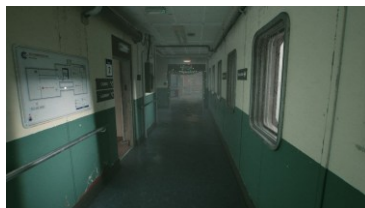
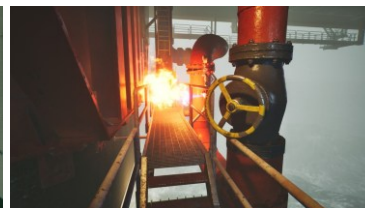
**Disclaimer:** Lady Dimitrescu is a vampire, and no, she's not interested in [stepping on you](#).



## Beira Delta Oil Rig

As seen in **Still Wakes the Deep** (PS5).

Seasoned travelers looking for the biggest of scares might not find it on Biera-D, but you could do way worse than a visit to this famous oil rig in the North Sea, just off the coast of Scotland. Something dangerous and otherworldly might be on board with you...



...but hey, these guys aren't bothered by it. You shouldn't be, either. Plan your trip today.

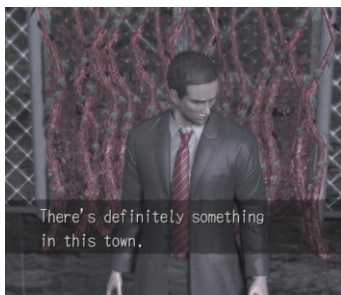


## Greenvale

As seen in **Deadly Premonition** (Xbox 360).

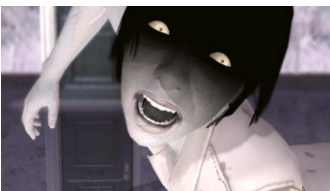
If you're looking to vacation in the Pacific Northwest, consider the quaint little town of Greenvale. Greenvale has the best food, the best fishing, and the best coffee.

**Don't take** my word for it. Here's a testimonial from a recent Greenvale tourist, Francis York Morgan of the FBI, told in photos taken during his own vacation to this lovely scenic town.



The town's residents are a welcoming sort. Do you remember that TV show *Twin Peaks*? The residents of Greenvale would be right at home there. There's even an elderly woman who carries a mysterious pot around, drawing constant attention to and questions about its contents, much the way the log lady did in *Twin Peaks*. They call her Roaming Sigourney.

**A word of advice**, though. Be on the lookout for a murderer known as the Raincoat Killer. While you're being careful, also be on the lookout for various apparitions, demons, and monstrosities. Honestly, we don't quite know what they are, except that they're bad news.



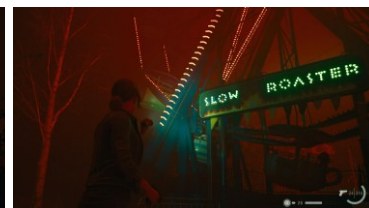
## Bright Falls

As seen in **Alan Wake** (Xbox 360) and **AW2** (PS5).

Another popular tourist destination in the Pacific Northwest is the pleasant, relaxing town of Bright Falls. The Oh Deer Diner should be your first stop. It's world famous for its food, beverages, and obsessed waitresses.



**When you're ready** for a day of pure fun, visit nearby Coffee World. Ride the Espresso Express, the Slow Roaster, the Percolator, and drift through the Latte Lagoon. Be sure to visit the Fresh Pot Gift Shop on your way out.



**What is it** with small towns in the Pacific Northwest and FBI agents? Well, that's a mystery for another day, but I'm told that Bright Falls gets a seal of approval from the FBI's own Saga Anderson.



**Wait, sorry**, I had that backwards. Apparently Ms. Anderson does *not* approve. The town has now become a twisted nightmare full of shadowy ghouls and creepers thanks to the writings of popular horror novelist Alan Wake, which have been manifested into reality somehow.

## Borr Corp Facility

As seen in **Apsulov: End of Gods** (PS5).

Have you ever wanted to visit the realms of Norse mythology, such as Jotunheim and Niflheim, but thought such a trip was out of your reach (because myths aren't real)?

Recent events at the Borr Corp Facility resulting from research into something called the "Apsulov" have left this expansive underground complex mostly abandoned, so that dream is now within your reach.



The talented researchers at Borr Corp have discovered pathways to those realms of Yggdrasill. The facility serves as your hub of exploration, offering cozy amenities like dimly lit hallways, malfunctioning machinery, and nightmarish monsters that only want to ensure you have the best, most entertaining experience during your visit.



As it turns out, the gods are real, and they're not very nice. To help make your stay more enjoyable, and to give you a fighting chance, your right arm will be removed and replaced by an artificial limb, granting you abilities to interact with Norse technology. Cool, right?



## Roivas Estate

As seen in **Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem** (GameCube).

While we're on the topic of impossible vacation destinations, why not plan a visit to scenic Rhode Island? Yes, I know that's a real place. What I mean is, visit the Roivas Estate and learn all about the Tome of Eternal Darkness. It's your gateway to not one but two exciting vacation experiences.



First, you'll get to experience the lives of people who lived decades or centuries ago, as you're whisked through time on a thrilling adventure. You'll be those people for a time, letting you take in the sights and sounds of Persia, France, Cambodia and elsewhere over a span of some two millennia.



Second, you'll be driven mad in the process, and begin to hallucinate all manner of frightful possibilities. Those whispers may not be real. The room may seem to be upside down. The blood dripping from walls and ceilings may be a figment of your imagination. You may be attacked by zombies and find yourself unable to move. It may even seem as if somebody pressed "mute" on the world or deleted your save game (whatever that means). If this all sounds enticing, make your reservation today.

## Metro City

As seen in **Condemned: Criminal Origins** (Xbox 360).

The record-holder for the city with the most criminals, drug addicts, and homeless citizens for seven years running is Metro City.



It's full of exceptional tourist attractions such as the Metro City Library, the Weisman Office Building, Burnback Alley, Central Metro Station, and St. Joseph's Secondary School, but the one place you can't afford to miss is Bart's Department Store.

This trend-setting destination has enemies posing as mannequins, mixed in among real mannequins. You may be walking down a hallway past a few perfectly still dummies, hear a scraping behind you, quickly turn around, and those same mannequins are now in different poses and considerably closer to you than they were before.

Sure, the "boos" do that in *Super Mario World*, it may bring to mind *Doctor Who*'s weeping angels, and it's been used to good effect more recently at a bioweapon research facility (as seen in *Call of Duty: Black Ops 6*), but it has rarely been more effective than it is at Bart's.



## Innsmouth, Massachusetts

As seen in **Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth** (Original Xbox).

When you visit Innsmouth, you'll think you've stepped back in time to the 1920s, to a time without television and cell phones, to a sleepy fishing village where the residents gradually undergo fish-like mutations in service of their worship of the sea god Dagon.



I use the term "mutation" loosely, since it's more accurate to say that the age-old Esoteric Order or Dagon has been breeding with the bizarre fish-like "Deep Ones" for generations.

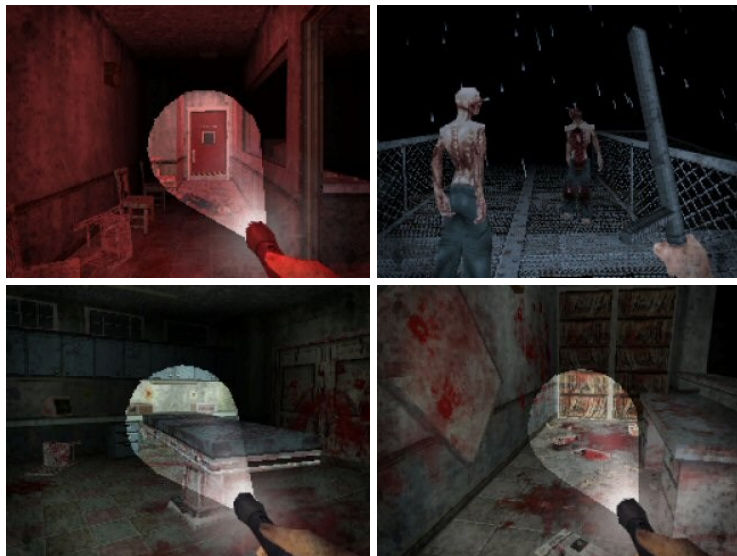
The residents of Innsmouth love nothing more than entertaining and welcoming visitors to their town. They express this by stalking and capturing tourists. It's all in good fun, of course. They might seem a little murderous to the uninitiated newcomer, but those who survive win their game of cat-and-mouse are treated with a trip to Y'ha-nthlei, home of the Deep Ones. See if you can pronounce that.



## The Ward

As seen in **Dementium: The Ward** (Nintendo DS).

This appealing vacation destination is best suited to medical professionals looking for a day trip. Tours are offered Monday through Friday, where visitors are treated to an inside look at the hospital's achievements in interior decoration and the innovative treatments for its many patients.



## Niwa Workers' Resort, Poland

As seen in **The Medium** (Xbox One).

Until now, you may have wondered why I'd suggest so many exotic locations that weren't originally intended as tourist destinations. To that, I say, take a look at the Niwa Resort. Yes, it was originally a Soviet-era worker's retreat, and yes, the more psychically-attuned you are, the more horrific your experience might become, but you're bound to have fun there.



## St. Dinfna Hotel in Treze Trilhas, Brazil

As seen in **Fobia: St. Dinfna Hotel** (PS5).

One of the most sought-after resorts in Brazil accommodates its guests at the nearby St. Dinfna Hotel. This unique hotel is known the world over for its labyrinthine layout and its many puzzles, not to mention a great breakfast bar and an expansive ballroom.



They're offering a special rate for new guests this month, as the hotel remains open to the public during a period of renovation.



You can safely ignore the negative reviews on Yelp and Google, where prior guests often cite the appearance of a disappearing little girl wearing a gas mask, lanky gray monsters with large claws, and a phenomenon that allows a person to peer into the past. The hotel staff is aware of these complaints and have worked hard to address them.

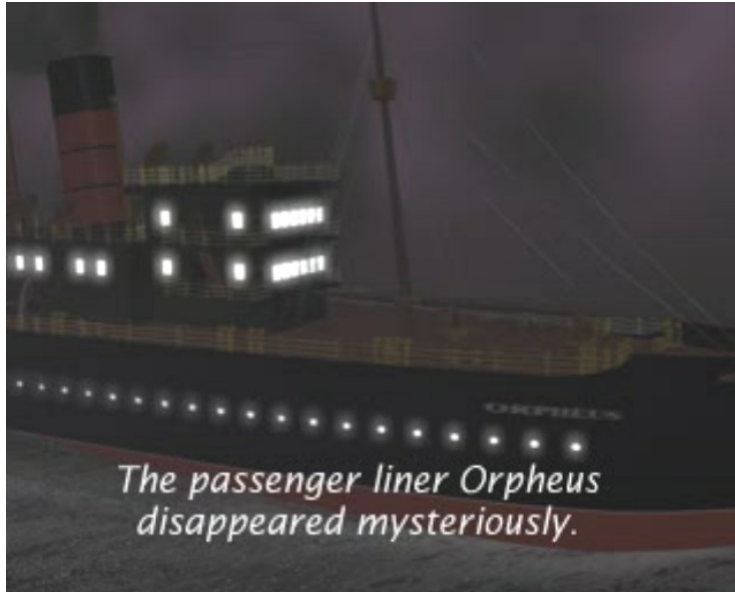
Now, every guest is issued a complimentary hand pistol, a few bullets, and a hearty "good luck" upon arrival. If that isn't enough, other weapons and additional ammo are hidden throughout the hotel, like a scavenger hunt!



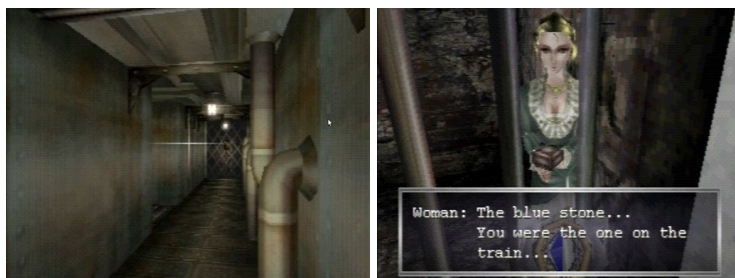
# The Orpheus

As seen in **Echo Night** (PS1).

Vacationers often return from the Queen Zenobia (see more about it in one of my prior recommendations) yearning for yet another cruise on the high seas. I always recommend The Orpheus. This ship was designed by the masterminds at FromSoftware, predating many of their other iconic constructions.



This is a real, honest-to-goodness haunted luxury liner, now adrift at sea and offering an unparalleled supernatural experience. The ship is full of ghosts, most of them of no danger to anybody. They just need help. Be on your guard for hostile spirits, though, which flock to dark, unlit areas aboard the ship.



If you come into contact with a “red stone”, please report it to any steward you encounter. This magical artifact is known to be highly dangerous and may even be the source of the troubles plaguing the Orpheus. Don’t try to understand it or use it in any way.

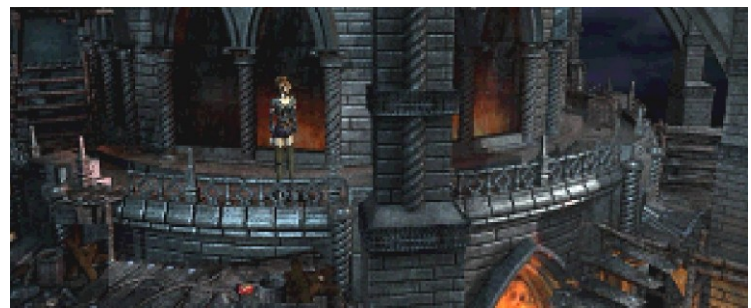
# Nemeton Monastery

As seen in **Koudelka** (PS1).

This expansive gothic-styled residence has been many things over the years. Originally built as a monastery in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, it later became a prison and an asylum. It stands now as an abandoned mansion that was once home to alchemist Roger Bacon’s research into the occult.



It's no accident that “Koudelka” is also the name of a side character in the video game trilogy *Shadow Hearts*. Those games serve as a fictionalized follow-up to the real Koudelka’s experiences at Nemeton Monastery. Follow in the footsteps of Koudelka, Edward, and James as you explore this historic landmark and engage in turn-based battles against the evil denizens roaming its many rooms and halls.



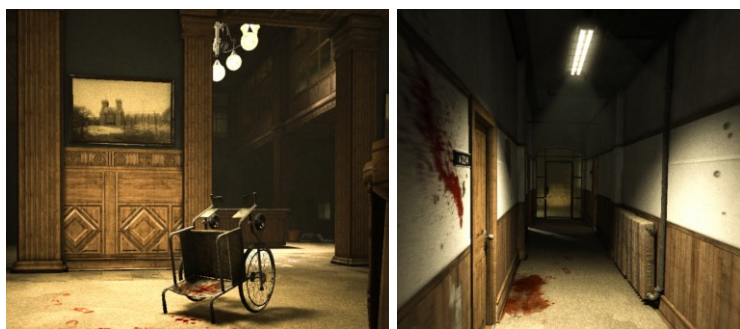
One moment, my boss is trying to tell me something. Uh huh. Okay. Sure, I guess.

Sorry for that interruption, but I’ve been told to avoid referring to those entities as “evil”. I’m also to avoid terms like “ghoul” or “zombie” or “monster” and instead use neutral terms like “reanimated corpses” and “misunderstood abominations resulting from experimentation into the arcane arts” and... wait, no, I’m being told that’s not OK either. Just think of those inhabitants as your fellow guests.

## Mount Massive Asylum

As seen in **Outlast** (PS4).

If you've ever wanted to visit a creepy, dark old asylum that's been taken over by its homicidal patients, this themed destination spot is for you. The theme is survival. You'll be issued a camcorder with night vision, but absolutely no weapons. It would be a travesty if anything were to happen to any of the asylum's many residents, and prior attempts at spicing up the experience with shotguns and shovels invariably led to unfortunate mishaps.



Instead, you'll need to lurk in the shadows, crawl through vents, peek around corners for the perfect moment to move, and use that camera's night vision to see in the dark as you stealthily make your way through the asylum and its surrounding areas.

It's perfectly safe. We thrive on repeat business, after all. Just check out this photo of one of the many doctors overseeing the asylum and the wellbeing of all visitors.



## Aranearium Island

As seen in **Choo-Choo Charles** (PS5).

We get mixed reactions from visitors to this island paradise. Some say it's one of the most existentially horrifying experiences of their life, while others describe their stay as a goofy and comical series of encounters involving ventriloquists, with accommodations that feel run-down and in need of a better transit system than the island's sole train engine.



All visitors, however, tell the same story about a second train engine; this one possessing a demonic face and huge spider legs, without the need to travel along train tracks at all.



## Krakow, Poland (near future)

As seen in **>Observer\_** (PS4).

Visit this Class C Apartment Block and go equipped with the cyberpunk technology and talent to explore people's minds as you also explore the many halls and rooms there. Will things get a little creepy and surreal? Book your vacation now and find out for yourself.



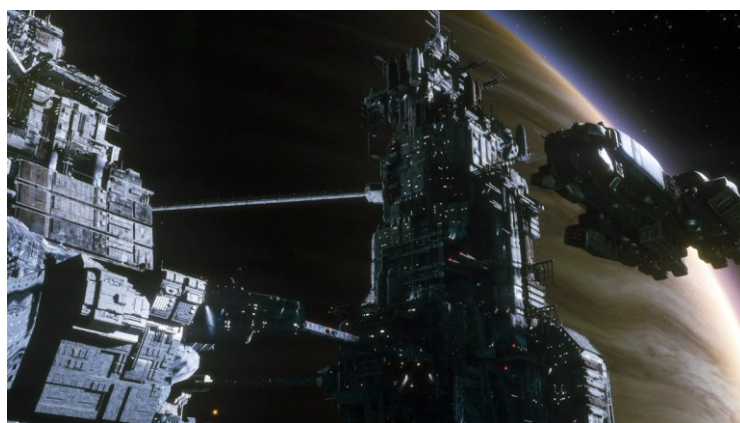
# Sevastopol Station

As seen in **Alien: Isolation** (PS4).

**I'll level with you.** These next few vacation packages don't come cheap, and they require more thought and planning than your typical summer getaway might. Some involve years of cryosleep, while others incur the expenses involved in using best-in-class faster-than-light travel to reach your destination without taking unnecessary years off your life.

**I call this** the "space travel" block. While cost prohibitive to many, these luxury packages are always a hit with the absurdly wealthy or the discerning corporate planner looking to book a group discount for that next holiday party.

**Sevastopol Station** orbits a gas giant in the [Zeta Reticuli](#) binary solar system.



**While aboard**, visit the Lorenz Systech Spire, the San Cristobal Medical Facility, Gemini Exoplanet Solutions, Seegson Communications, and stay in lovely, well-furnished accommodations at the Solomons Habitation Tower.

**Have you ever** mingled among synthetics? If you haven't, now's your chance. You'll find Working Joes throughout the station.

**Also**, there's a xenomorph. It's big. It's deadly. It will hunt you down without remorse.

**If you do** encounter a xenomorph, your best option is to hide. Try not to breathe. Try not to move. Wait until it leaves and above all, don't panic. Those things are not to be taken lightly. Check your map and plan your escape wisely.



**If you encounter** an Emergency Telephone, use it. Rest assured, the station's staff is aware of the problem and will probably have it under control before the next group of guests arrive. Maybe. Xenomorphs are pesky critters.



## The Planet Leng

As seen in **Signalis** (Xbox Series X).

**This one** is a bit of a mystery, which for some would-be travelers may be part of its charm.

**You'll stay** at the Sierpinski Facility, where something isn't quite right with the crew; or the facility itself, for that matter.

**How much** of what you experience is real vs. imagined is up to your own interpretation, but when I visited Leng (and this was before becoming a travel agent for VGGN), it was a chilling, memorable experience filled with death, doubt, and monsters. Many monsters.



## USG Ishimura

As seen in **Dead Space** (Xbox 360).  
(There's a current-gen remake too.)

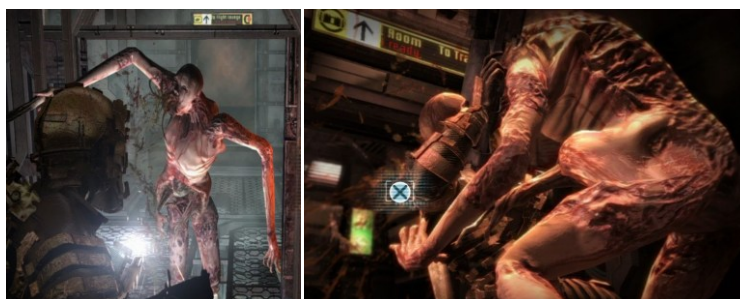
I mentioned before that space travel is expensive. The fine folks of the USG Ishimura are offering a special deal for visitors with engineering experience. Grab a plasma cutter and work part-time during your stay on this planet-cracking mining ship.



You'll be outfitted with a cutting-edge RIG suit, which monitors your vitals and offers protection against... well, against anything.



No, of course I'm not saying this vacation getaway is *dangerous*. Of course not. Just look at these guys. We call them Necromorphs. They wouldn't harm a fly, I can promise you.



## Titan Station aka The Sprawl

As seen in **Dead Space 2** (Xbox 360).

The cult church of Unitology has a presence on The Sprawl, and they're looking to increase their membership. When you book your trip to this station built into the ruins of Saturn's Titan moon, you'll have a chance to attend their seminars and recruitment drives to find out more about Markers and their role in ensuring everlasting life for humanity.

Best of all, this package doesn't require any interstellar travel. Saturn is just around the corner, after all.

If the sparse amenities of the USG Ishimura were a deterrent, you'll be pleased with all that The Sprawl has to offer.

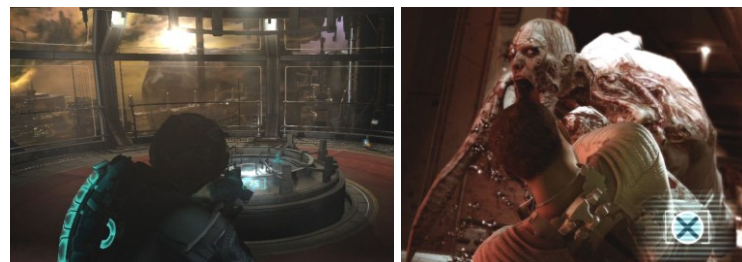
Stay at Titan Heights or Cassini Towers.

Visit the Concourse, a jaw-dropping two-story shopping mall that's bound to have just what you're looking for.



Make a trip to the Government Sector and see just how a functioning government works.

In full disclosure, The Sprawl was also home to a Marker, and so you're likely to see those wacky, persistent Necromorphs there too.



## Tau Volantis

As seen in **Dead Space 3** (Xbox 360).

If two separate encounters with Necromorphs weren't enough, let me invite you now to the frozen, inhospitable planet Tau Volantis; so remote that even we don't know where it is.



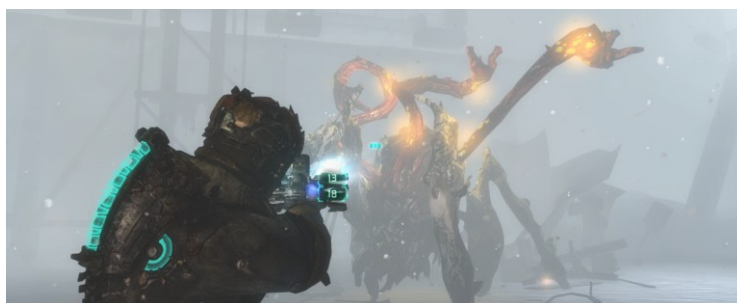
This all-inclusive package comes with a once-in-a-lifetime spacewalk experience, where you'll be dodging debris and floating far above the icy planet below.



Meet new friends.



Meet new enemies.

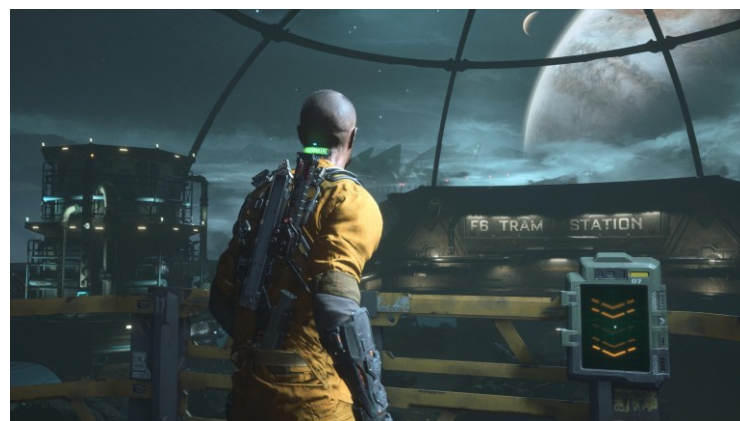


As silver linings go, you probably won't be as scared this time around; just a little cold.

## Black Iron Prison, Callisto

As seen in **The Callisto Protocol** (PS5).

If you're looking for that *Dead Space* experience without the *Dead Space* name, look no further than Jupiter's moon of Callisto. It's home to the Black Iron Prison, a trendy tourist spot that's all the rage with Earth's most dangerous, hardened criminals.



Don't let the naysayers sway you from this fantastic destination experience. For my money, it lives up to the hype and it's a journey well worth taking. Check out my mini-review of this fun vacation spot in [issue #11](#).

## Shakhter-One

As seen in **Hollow** and **Hollow²** (Switch).

This vacation experience comes in two parts.

The first part is a truly unsettling and scary experience that invites you to explore a derelict, monster-infested industrial mining ship as you begin to question your sanity.

The second part is *DOOM*, if *DOOM* was just a competent but blurry action game that never gave you a moment to breathe. Okay, maybe *DOOM* is that, aside from the blurry part.

Did I say game? I meant vacation destination.



# Mars City

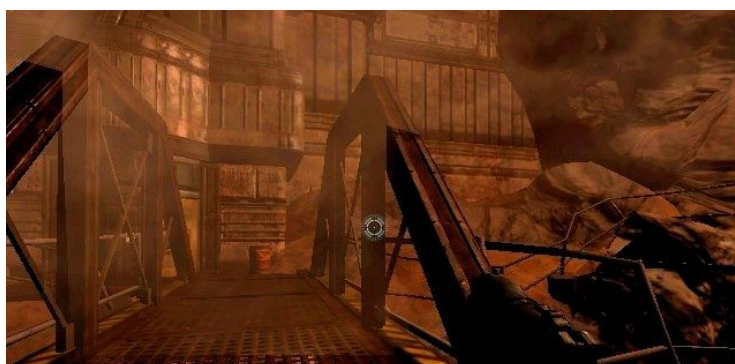
As seen in **DOOM<sup>3</sup> BFG Edition** (Xbox 360).

Union Aerospace Corporation (UAC) built this self-sustaining base on the surface of Mars, originally for research and development, but now as one of the premier vacation spots for visitors of all sorts.

Plan your company's next team-building exercises there. Meet up with that special someone for a private, secluded rendezvous; nobody will ever look for you in Mars City.

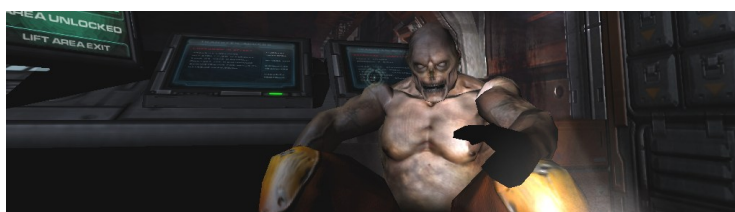


Enjoy breathtaking views of the red planet up close. Do you just need a relaxing get-away? Bring your whole family to Mars!



For the religious among you, Mars City offers something that no other off-planet resort can claim: a portal to literal Hell.

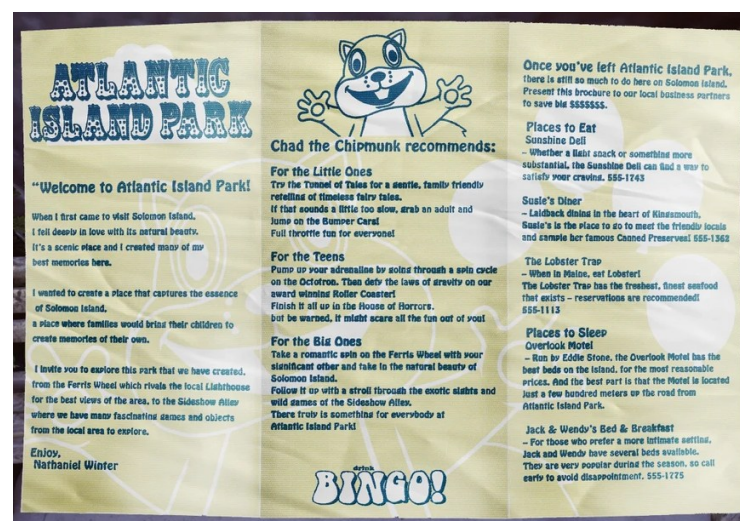
You'll be bumping elbows with cyberdemons, hell knights, revenants, cacodemons, and the ever popular mancubus when these spawns of Satan infiltrate swing by for one of the only true horror experiences in the series a nice game of Parcheesi in the Alpha or Delta labs.



# Atlantic Island Park

As seen in **The Park** (PS4).

Let's get back down to Earth with this popular tourist destination. Chad the Chipmunk will guide you through the park's many attractions and nearby amenities. Stay at Jack & Wendy's B&B or the Overlook Motel. Dine at Susie's Diner, the Sunshine Deli, or The Lobster Trap.



When you're ready for adventure, bring the whole family to the Tunnel of Tales where this month, they're featuring Hansel and Gretel.

Take a ride on the Ferris Wheel, get behind the wheel in a Bumper Car, go for a whirl in the Octotron, scream with delight on the Roller Coaster, or try your luck in various games of skill in Sideshow Alley. If you're feeling really adventurous, step into the House of Horrors. Just don't bring the little ones. It's a real fright!



Rumors that Atlantic Island Park was shut down many years ago after the park's mascot Chad the Chipmunk violently murdered at least one teenager with an icepick are unfounded. Well, unproven, at least.

## Rose Garden Orphanage

As seen in **Rule of Rose** (PS2).

The historic Rose Garden Orphanage is now a tourist attraction. While the events that transpired there in the 1930s are better left to the history books, the site remains a place that brings back strong memories for many, making it an ideal spot for that special niche getaway. What will you remember, as you step through the halls and explore the grounds?



Will it be a lost pet? Will it be your parents perishing in an airship crash? Will it be the cruelty of the kids you once called friends?

Will it be an unstable foster parent with a loose grip on reality? For that matter, will you keep your own grip on reality, or sink into the abyss of your own nightmares, unable to discern fact from fiction?



## SS Ourang Medan

As seen in **Dark Pictures: Man of Medan** (PS4).

So, you braved the zombies aboard the Queen Zenobia and helped the forsaken ghosts on the Orpheus. You're a vacationing pro!

Now, you're ready for another seafaring adventure, but you don't know where to go.

The VGGN recommends a trip to the South Pacific, aboard the SS Ourang Medan. This massive freighter was once a flagship for the United States military during World War II.



Now, after years of work and retrofitting<sup>1</sup>, it's a luxury cruise liner<sup>2</sup> with a friendly crew<sup>3</sup> of well-trained sailors and staff<sup>4</sup> who are ready to show you a wonderful time<sup>5</sup> at sea.



The SS Ourang Medan is a particular favorite of the twenty-something trust fund crowd, for whom the thought of finding Manchurian Gold said to be hidden aboard the ship is just too tempting to pass up. Will you join the search? What if I told you it's something else entirely?



<sup>1</sup> No actual work has been done on this ship.

<sup>2</sup> It's mostly a ghost ship adrift in the South Pacific.

<sup>3</sup> There are no crew to speak of; dead bodies, maybe.

<sup>4</sup> Anything living aboard this ship is highly untrained.

<sup>5</sup> You are unlikely to be shown a good time.

## Little Hope, New England

As seen in **Dark Pictures: Little Hope** (PS4).

If you visited *Silent Hill* and found it to not be dark and foggy enough for your tastes, look no further than Little Hope. You won't be able to see *anything*! In fact, tourism is only allowed at night, because that's when you're able to see visions of the town's past. Okay, so I guess you will be able to see *something*.

It's a troubled past, to be sure, with its eerie connection to witch trials of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. What's more, you may even see yourself – or somebody who looks just like you – in those visions. How cool is that? Sure, it may feel like you're "trapped" there, and sure, everything's closed at night so there isn't much "fun" to be had, but it's all for the "experience" right?



Interested in knowing more? I'm about to spill the beans on *this* destination *and* the prior one, the (SS Ourang) Man of Medan. If you're averse to **\*SPOILERS\*** then stop reading now.

Again, **\*SPOILERS\*** for the *Man of Medan* and *Little Hope*. This is your final warning.

**Real final chance** to stop reading. Skip to the next vacation destination now, otherwise...

You won't be in any real supernatural danger. If anything happens to you, it'll be the result of your own folly, panic, and mistakes, or perhaps those of the friends you bring.

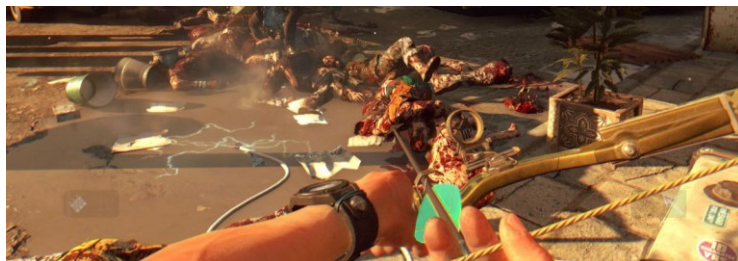
**Why?** Because "Manchurian Gold" is a psychoactive biochemical agent that causes you to hallucinate all the horrors aboard the *Medan*, and all your friends in *Little Hope* are nothing more than manifestations of your own fractured psyche – a split personality, if you will. Yes, in both instances, it's more or less "all a dream", but on the Medan, those mistakes at least do lead to real deaths.

It's all still pretty darned scary, though.

## Harran, Middle East

As seen in **Dying Light** (PS4).

By day, Harran is a city of beautiful sights and sounds, marred only by an ever-present horde of zombies, but that's almost not even worth mentioning. They're dumb and slow and truly no match for the fully outfitted tourist.



**Grab a baseball bat**, a bow and arrow, or your favorite rifle and explore the many wonderful places the city offers. The truly adventurous shouldn't miss climbing the city's tallest bridge. The view from up there is incredible.



By night, it's a different story. You'll need to move slowly (or really fast, maybe) and be prepared for anything. The worst trouble-makers come out at night, and they love nothing more than to munch on the brains (and frankly, any body part within reach) of any hapless tourist they can find. If you see the blue lights of a safe zone, head straight there.



## Krimson City

As seen in **The Evil Within** (PS4).

We're a long ways into this presentation, and by now you're probably thinking none of these places seem ideal as a vacation spot; most of them not even safe to pass within a hundred miles. To that, I would encourage you not to be so short-sighted. Sure, you might get hunted by an occasional monster, skewered by a faceless ghoul, robbed of your sanity, or even dismembered by an axe-wielding maniac (or a chainsaw-wielding maniac, or a maniac with long sharp claws), but where's the fun in life without a little risk?

If you're still not convinced, check out some of the gorgeous locations you can visit with a trip to Krimson City, like this unexplainable sunflower field, or this merry-go-round with nobody on it.



Are you still worried about monsters? Don't be. Krimson City is happily monster-free. Well, that is unless you consider *these* friendly folk to be *monsters*.



## Union (Town)

As seen in **The Evil Within 2** (PS4).

If you thought something was a little off with Krimson City, I have good news. Your trip to Union begins with a full explanation that also serves as a spoiler for the experience you can have in Krimson City, so either visit there first or go in knowing that it may not hit the same way now that you know. And now you know.



## Moscow Metro System

As seen in **Metro 2033** (Xbox 360) and **Metro Last Light** (PS4).

If you're short on cash but you're sitting on a stockpile of bullets, this one-of-a-kind experience is for you. Trade those bullets for the vacation of your dreams with a trip to the underground tunnel systems of Moscow.

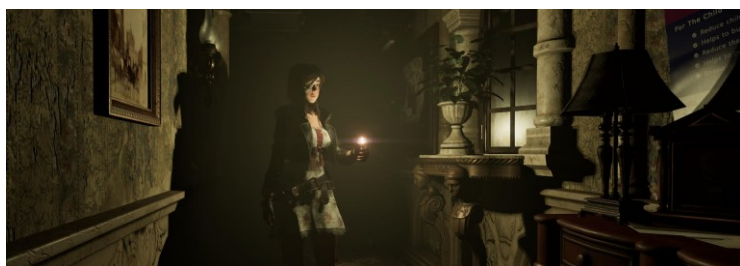
You'll meet downtrodden survivors, militant guards with itchy trigger fingers, and more mutated creatures than you can shake a heavily cracked gas mask at. Dress warm and bring extra filters. The metro awaits.



## Winterlake Mansion, Canada

As seen in **Tormented Souls** (PS5).

For the traveler who can't decide between a trip to the Spencer Mansion (*Resident Evil*) or the peaceful vibes of *Silent Hill*, why not take a vacation to Winterlake Mansion and get the best of both? Some say – me included – that this mansion-turned-hospital is a surprise hit when it comes to similarly-themed tourist destinations. It's so good, in fact, that the owners are opening up *another* location later this month. I can't wait to visit there too.



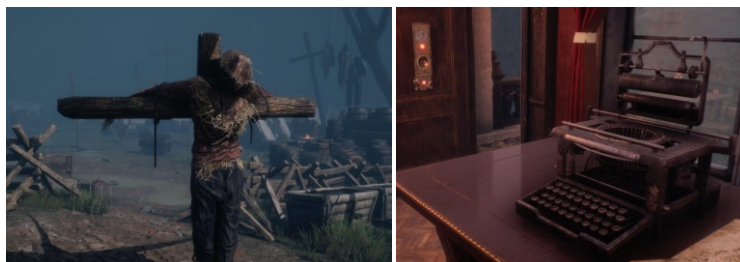
We do advise caution, however. Recent guest Caroline Walker reports that she just sort of woke up there one night, in a bathtub, topless and with one eye missing.

## Wakefield Uillage

As seen in **Shame Legacy** (PS5).

When it comes to low-budget spooky vacation spots, you often get what you pay for: cheap scares, accidental comedy, and the feeling that your time would be better spent on a more polished experience. As low-budget destinations go, this one is worth a look.

At *Wakefield Village*, you'll feel as though you've stepped back in time to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, into a village run by cultists, where you'll need to keep your wits (and skills in stealth) to survive.



## London, England

As seen in **ZombiU** (WiiU) and **Zombi** (PS4).

Mind the gap, old chap. Fancy a cuppa? Jolly good, I say. Pip pip, cheerio, and all that.

Now that you're yearning for a trip to London, let me sweeten the deal by offering this guided tour of the biggest attractions this popular destination has in store for you.

You'll begin your day at the Brick Lane Market, but the tour will take you to Green Park, the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace, St. George's Church, and... uh, the underground sewers, among other exciting stops along the way. Learn all about London's rich culture and history while... uh, battling zombies.



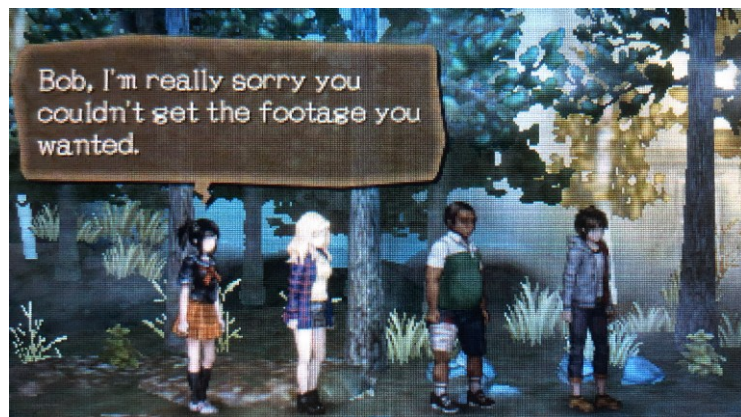
What sets this experience apart from so many others, and why does it come so highly recommended, at least by me? The reasons are plentiful, but highest among them are:

1. If you come equipped with a "second screen" (who needs just one?) you'll get the true experience. It's one of tension and suspense, where managing the contents of your backpack can leave you vulnerable to attack.
2. Ever wondered what your afterlife would be like as a zombie? When you die in London, another survivor simply takes your place, and might just track you down and fight you, to lay claim to the loot and gear you were carrying. That other survivor (surprise) is also you!
3. Melee combat never felt so satisfying, once you get the knack for its heavy, purposeful, fatigue-inducing rhythm.

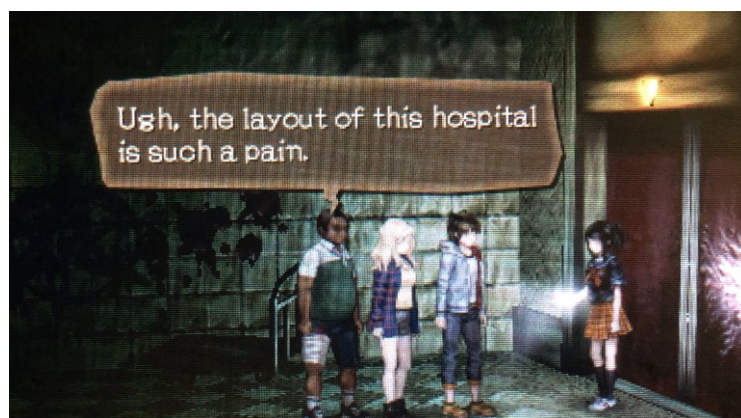
## Abandoned Mansion & Hospital

As seen in **Creeping Terror** (Nintendo 3DS).

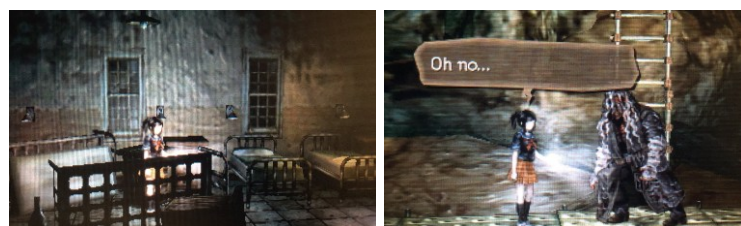
Are you planning your next big class trip? Are you looking for an exciting, secluded spot to take a small group of students on a field trip? Are you a teenage trend-chasing would-be believer in all things paranormal, looking for the perfect place to film your next viral video sensation? Are you a thrill-seeker?



If any of this applies to you, look no further than this abandoned mansion with a nearby abandoned hospital, sitting atop a network of abandoned tunnels. Where is this perfect private getaway? Even we don't know.



What we do know is that once you set foot inside, you won't be able to want to leave. If you encounter other guests, it's best to just run away and hide. So, ready to book a trip?

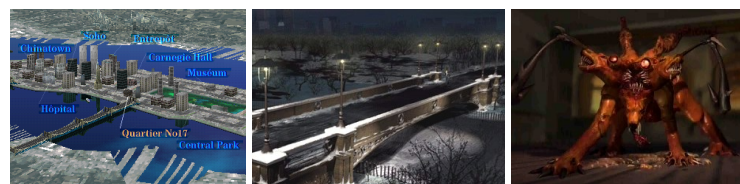


## New York City

As seen in **Parasite Eve** (PS1).

You're probably thinking "wait, I don't need a travel agency to help me plan a trip to NYC" but you'd be wrong. Would you have known to visit the American Museum of Natural History? How about Chinatown, or Central Park, or SoHo, or the Statue of Liberty, or Carnegie Hall? Would it even have occurred to you that Christmas is the perfect time to visit?

It's also the perfect time to get mixed up in a horrific biological calamity, where the very mitochondria in our bodies have gained sentience and is forcing its will and mutations on the citizens and animals of New York City.



## Dryfield, Nevada

As seen in **Parasite Eve 2** (PS1).

Why not follow up your New York vacation with a trip to the other side of the continent, with a visit to burgeoning tourist town Dryfield, nestled in the calm sands of Mojave Desert?



You'll be treated to amenities like beds with no pillows or blankets, a television without a remote control, and a variety of hideously mutated animals that will make you wish you were back in good old New York City.

Yes, it's the work of those wacky mitochondria again. Thankfully, MIST is on the job and will have the outbreak handled in no time at all.

# Collection Inspection - Zombies Part 2

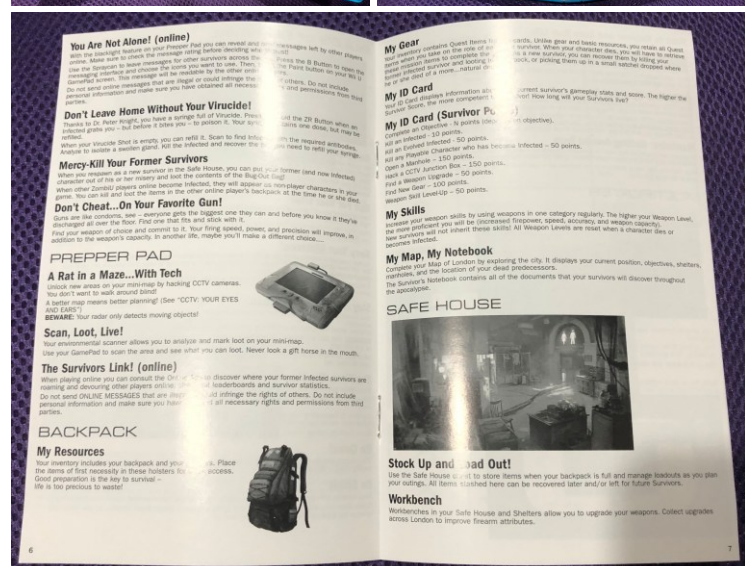
Last week, I had the idea to start including a few photos of the games in my physical collection. I started with zombie games for the zombie issue, but I prepared quite a few more than it made sense to include.

Is there a point to it? Not really. Sometimes I do play something from my library of older games, but most of it just sits on shelves in a darkened basement bedroom doing nothing but gathering dust (which is why I usually keep them in plastic bags or wrapped in plastic) or slowly aging in a way that might make a few of them more valuable and others impossible to play later (if what I've read about disc rot, or Switch and 3DS games suffering from data loss over time is to be believed).

## ZombiU

**Platform:** Wii U / **Edition:** Standard

**Comments:** If I didn't trust myself, I'd swear my game play log is wrong in showing that I only ever played 5 WiiU games (despite owning dozens). The first one was this WiiU launch game from UbiSoft. I loved it.



## Resident Evil 0

**Platform:** Nintendo GameCube / **Edition:** Standard

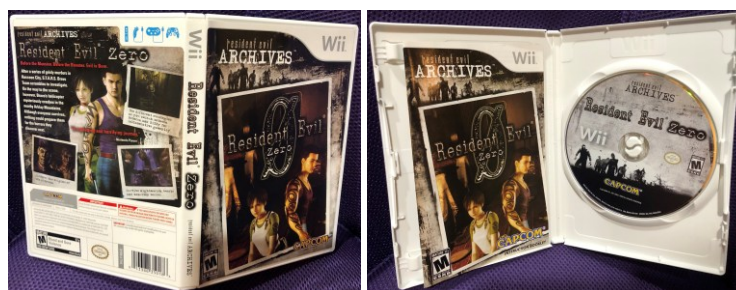
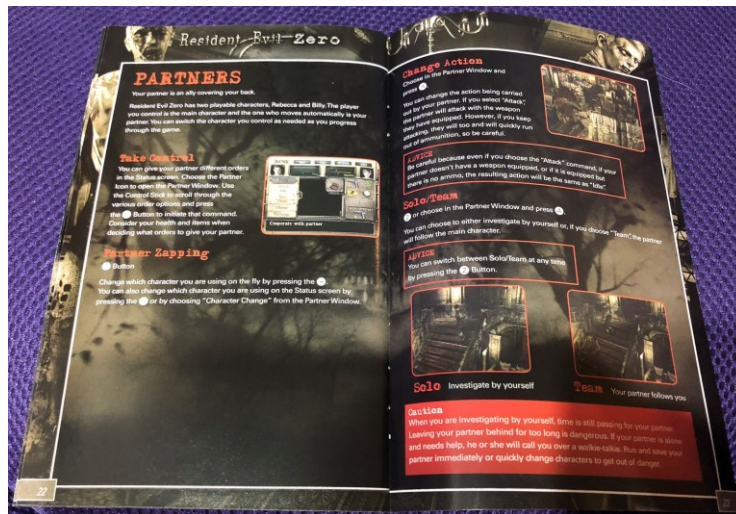
**Comments:** When I finally get around to playing RE0, it'll probably be the PS4 version on PlayStation 5.



## Resident Evil Archives: Resident Evil 0

**Platform:** Nintendo Wii / **Edition:** Standard

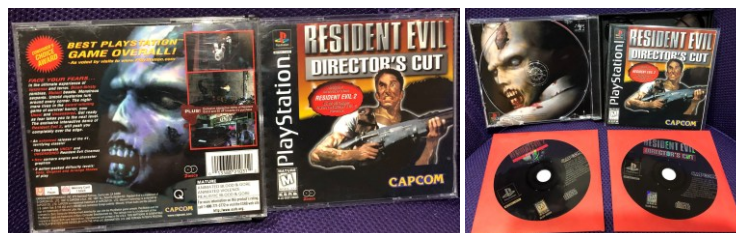
**Comments:** It's the Wii version Resident Evil Zero.



## Resident Evil

**Platform:** PlayStation 1 / **Edition:** Director's Cut

**Comments:** This version came with a demo disc for Resident Evil 2. I played the original Resident Evil for the first time ten years ago. It was the PS4 version.



## Resident Evil

**Platform:** Nintendo GameCube / **Edition:** Standard

**Comments:** Technically, this is a remake of that PS1 game, but Capcom was already avoiding the word way before they remade *RE2*, *RE3*, and *RE4*.



## Resident Evil Archives: Resident Evil

**Platform:** Nintendo Wii / **Edition:** Standard

**Comments:** Capcom sure likes re-releasing them.



## Resident Evil 2

**Platform:** PlayStation 1 / **Edition:** Standard

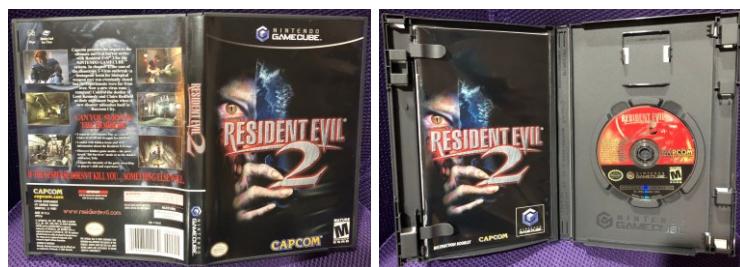
**Comments:** I also had a complete in box, perfect condition N64 version of Resident Evil 2, but I was a dummy and sold it for way less than it's worth now.



## Resident Evil 2

**Platform:** Nintendo GameCube / **Edition:** Standard

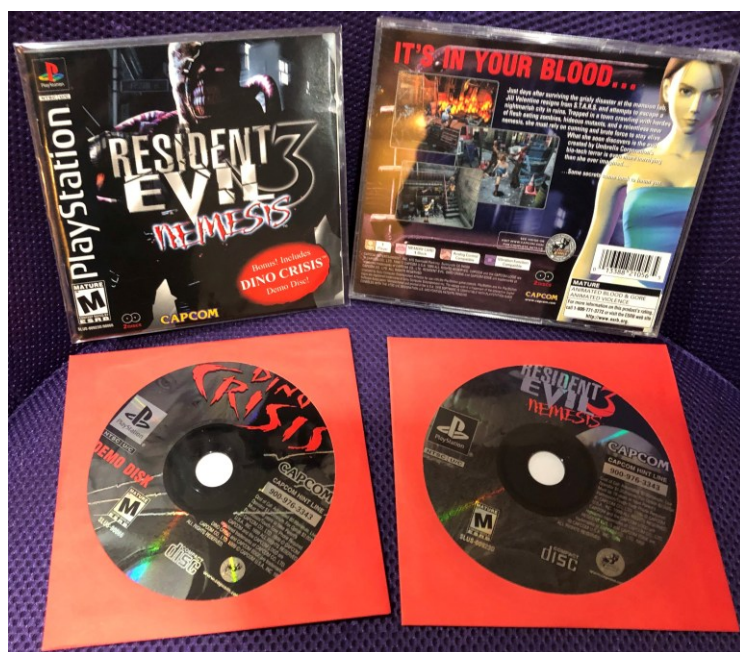
**Comments:** This one's apparently just a straight port.



## Resident Evil 3: Nemesis

**Platform:** PlayStation 1 / **Edition:** Standard

**Comments:** The one came with a *Dino Crisis* demo.



## Resident Evil 3: Nemesis

**Platform:** Nintendo GameCube / **Edition:** Standard

**Comments:** This one's also apparently just a straight port. My mini-review of the remake is in [issue #22](#).



**Next week**, it'll be part 3 for zombie games, because I'm only about half-way through all the photos I prepared. Or, maybe I'll set some of them aside for future use and include a few others, like *Koudelka*, *Parasite Eve*, *Parasite Eve 2*, *Eternal Darkness*, and *Rule of Rose*.

Anything from [my collection](#) you'd like to see?

# Mini-Review: Silent Hill 2 - Remake



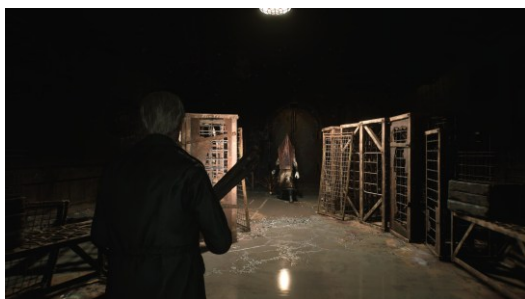
If a survival horror game is great, it's somehow fun and *totally not fun* all at the same time. If you finish it feeling like you've just gone through a nightmare - some huge ordeal you've somehow overcome - then it's probably a pretty effective one.



**The Silent Hill 2** remake looks and plays just like I remember the PS2 original, which was my favorite game in the genre. I played the first few minutes of the original to refresh myself on it, and it's funny how memory plays tricks on me.

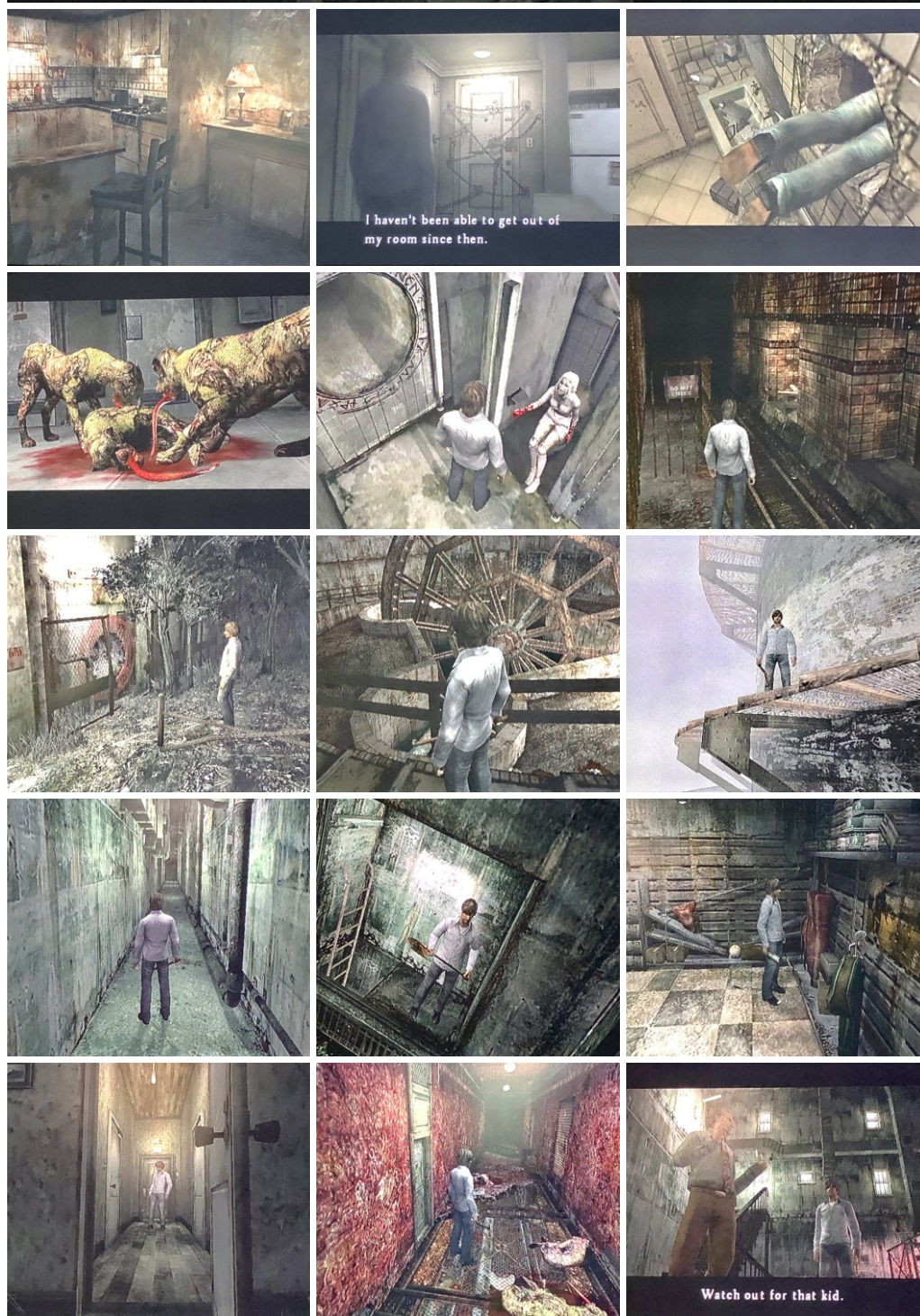


**Of course**, this remake surpasses it in every way. It *is* great, and it *is* effective, and with my slow, methodical playthrough of around 25 hours, it certainly felt like an ordeal. This is a must-play for fans of puzzle-filled, genuinely disturbing psychological horror games, and a must-pass for the squeamish and timid.



*Played on console: PS5.  
Originally posted: 02/11/2025.*

# Mini-Review: Silent Hill 4 – The Room



The first half is excellent. The second half introduces some frustrating bits, but it's still good. It holds up moderately well and is a worthy successor to the three prior games in this third-person survival horror series. I quite liked it.

To expand on that, the first half is a bit more chill and forgiving. In the second half, you revisit areas from the first half (but with some new twists), you can no longer auto-heal (the titular “room” is no longer as safe), hauntings start, and to top it off, it becomes an epic escort mission.

Combat is the game's weak point, but I got used to it. It's been too long since I've played the first three to remember, but it was probably always like this?

Environments and the story are the strong points. It also looks good for a game from two console generations ago (I use the Pound Xbox HDMI converter).

I had heard mixed things when *Silent Hill 4* originally launched, but I feel like it would have been great in its day. Even though the genre has evolved and some parts of 4 lack the suspense and surprise I remember from 1-3, it feels like the pinnacle of its genre for its time.

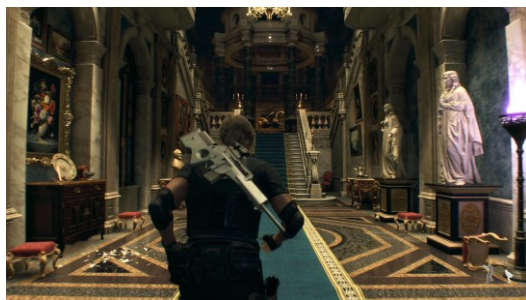
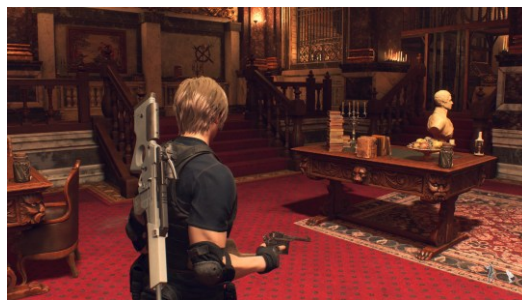
The puzzles involve items and clues and locked doors, much like the early *Resident Evil* series. Nothing is too hard. Camera is cinematic and fixed, but you can pan it some. It works fine thankfully, and normal third-person controls keep it very playable by today's standard.

Played on console: Original Xbox.  
Originally posted: 08/25/2019.

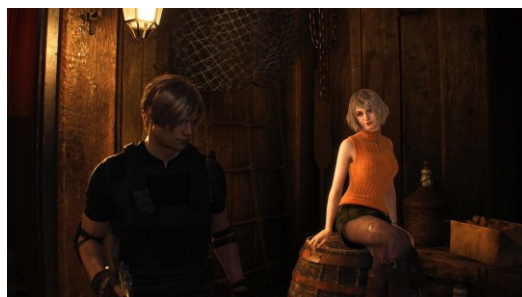
# Mini-Review: Resident Evil 4 – Remake



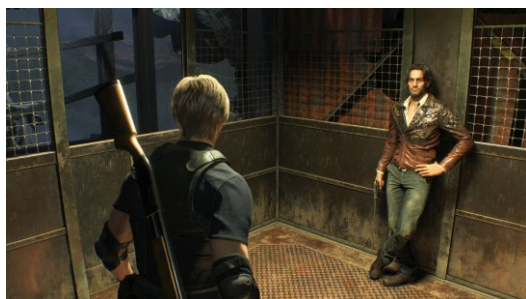
When I played the original way back when it launched on GameCube, *Resident Evil 4* became a top 5 favorite for me; if not my #1.



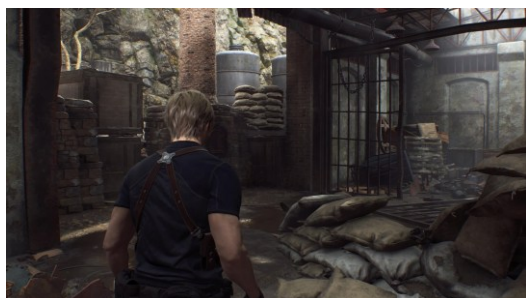
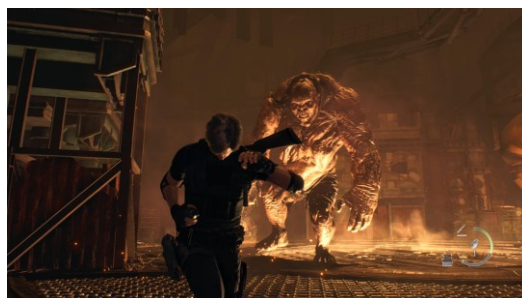
Many years and many games later, while I'd no longer say it's in my top 10, it remains a favorite.



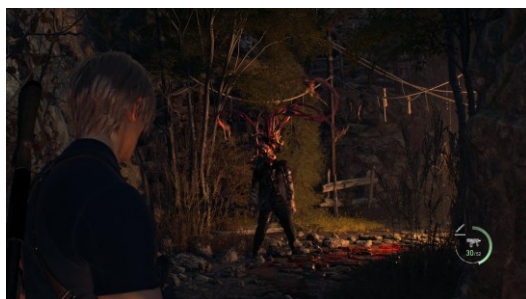
In the remake, I'm reminded of what made *RE4* so great. It strikes a balance between all the components that have gone into the series over the years; a few light puzzles, action, horror, a wild story, various monsters and infected, multiple large areas to explore and survive, stuff to collect and/or sell, an ever-growing arsenal, and constant variety.



So many years later, I only remember bits and pieces of the original, but this is certainly way more than a remaster. It's a whole new game, and it's great.

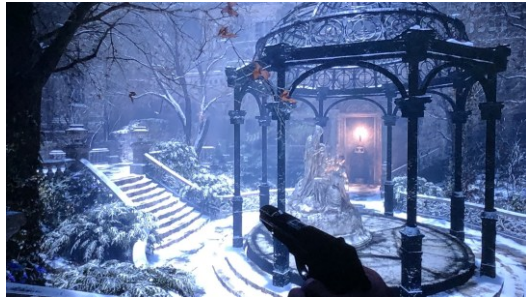
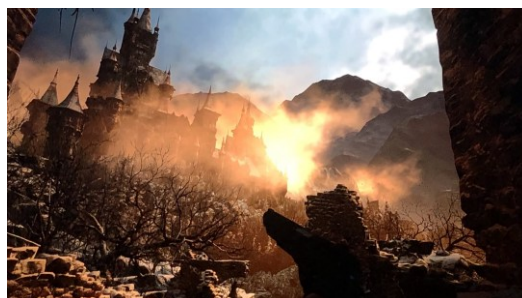


*RE4* remains the best entry in the series.



Played on console: PS5.  
Originally posted: 07/27/2023.

# Mini-Review: Resident Evil – Village (RE8)



Some survival horror games are difficult to play for long sessions when your character isn't equipped for the world and you can easily become trapped and overwhelmed. Some earlier *Resident Evil* has that, but *Village* isn't as claustrophobic (for the most part) or anxiety-inducing.

I found it pretty forgiving on Normal, and it's more about the adventure (albeit a nightmarish one), the puzzles (mostly of the find-a-key variety), and the story (in weird *Resident Evil* fashion).

Memorable boss battles and the environments in and around the creepy old village and castle help create a sequel to *RE7* that's fun and well worth the time. (A bit over 15 hours for me; exploring, hunting for hidden stuff, taking my time.) It leans into action more than survival.

**Recommended!**

Played on console: PS5.  
Originally posted: 05/10/2021.

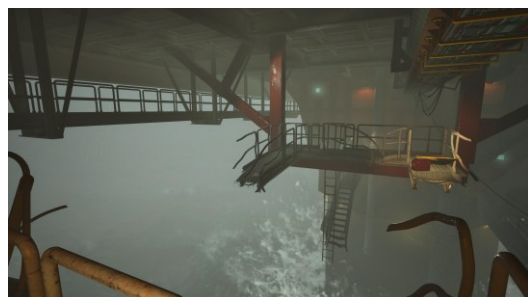
# Mini-Review: Still Wakes the Deep



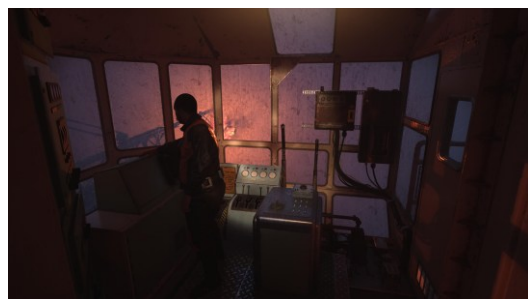
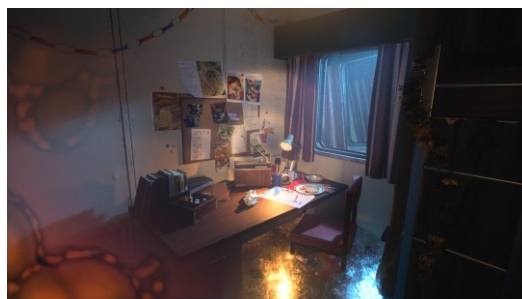
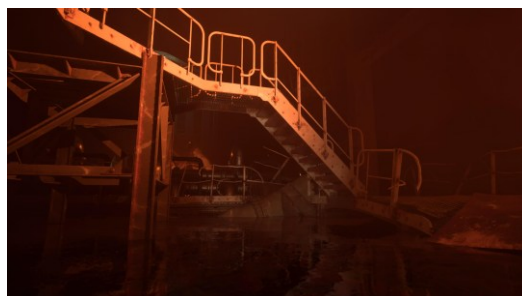
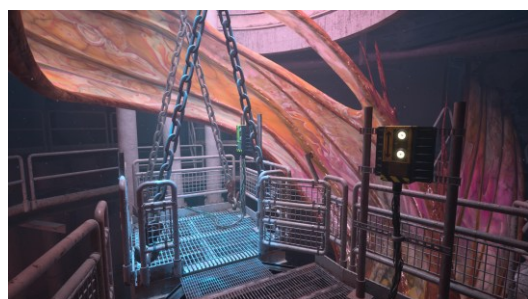
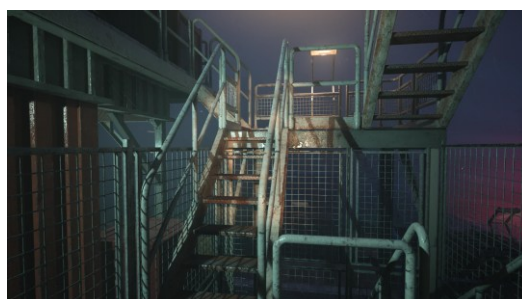
This game's ad on Kinda Funny podcasts inspired me to bump it up on my backlog; I'd already bought the physical version upon release.



**The Chinese Room** makes good games, and despite the advertising, I worry this one might fly under most folks' radar. It's a horror game set in 1975 aboard an ocean-based oil platform. While the premise itself has been seen many times before (hideous monsters stalking an unarmed protagonist), this one hit all the right notes for me.



There's less cat-and-mouse than, say, *Alien Isolation*, and it never felt oppressively scary the way an *Outlast* or *Silent Hill* or *Dead Space* can be, but it works well as a cinematic, narrative adventure that's on the shorter side (5 to 8 hours, depending on how you play).



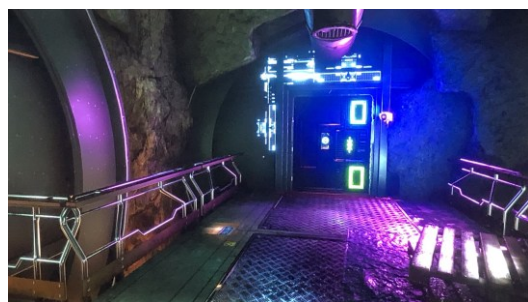
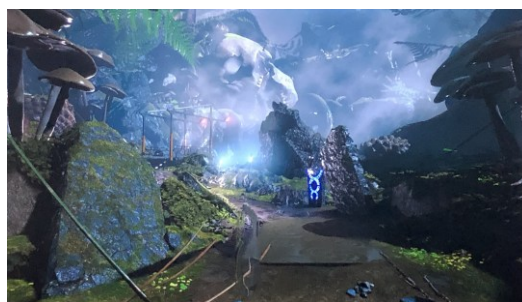
**The Scottish** voice cast is notably great in this.

*Played on console: PS5.  
Originally posted: 12/29/2024.*

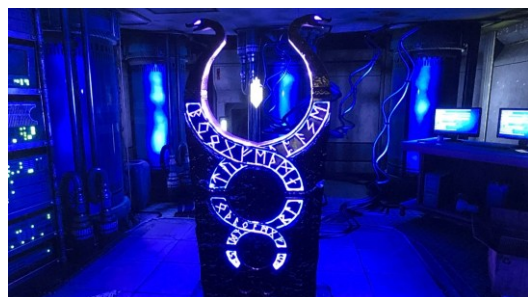
# Mini-Review: Apsulou - End of Gods



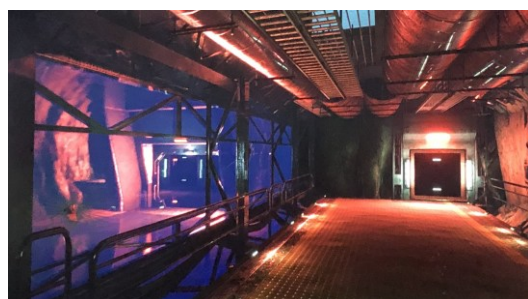
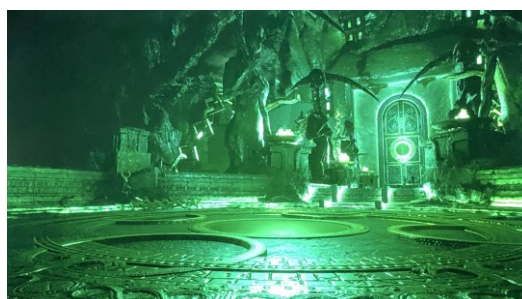
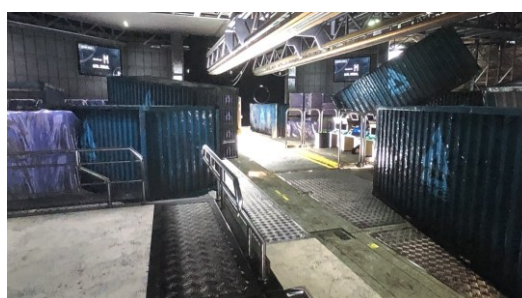
*Apsulou* takes Norse mythology and puts it into a near-future horror setting that's vaguely *Dead Space*-like; a dark, creepy facility with different wings and locked passages you open later.



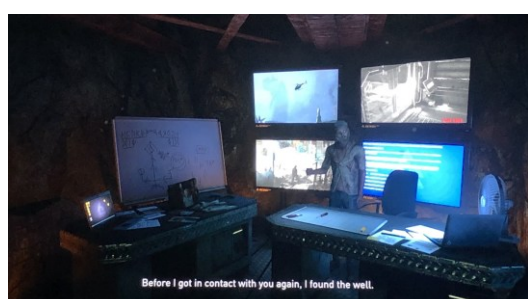
The first thing I noted about the game is that if you set the brightness where it tells you to, it's way too dark to see much of anything, let alone take screenshots. Up a bit, though, is great; spooky, but not washed out or anything.



You have a power that serves as a flashlight analogue, but your ability to fight back against the horrors along the way is limited until near the end (not entirely lacking earlier; just more limited). Certainly not *Dead Space*-like in that regard.

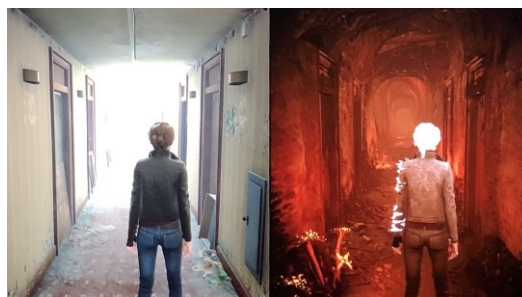
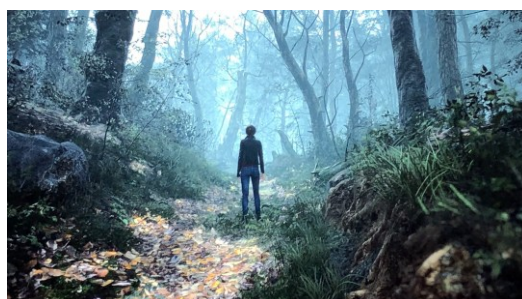
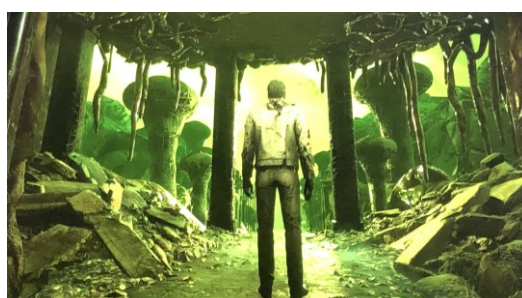
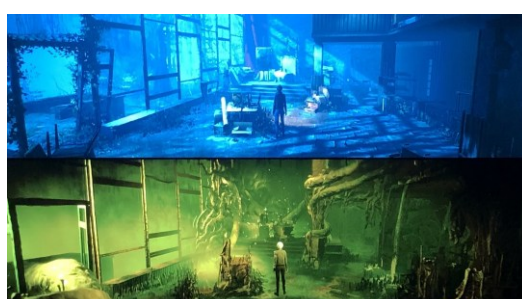


Interesting story. I enjoyed it more after finishing the first chapter. It's not amazing or inventive, but it's good.



Played on console: PS5.  
Originally posted: 05/21/2022.

# Mini-Review: The Medium



I finally redeemed a one-month GamePass trial I've had, and *The Medium* is on there. I've had an interest in it for a while but somehow thought it would be a first-person horror game.

**No...** it's actually more like *Silent Hill*, with third person gameplay, simple puzzles requiring you to find key items, dual worlds (material and spirit), and... the more I think about it, the more this has that *Silent Hill* vibe. It's less scary, but the story is interesting and the environments are visually impressive.

**Seems like** I've heard it's coming to PS5, too; in September, maybe?

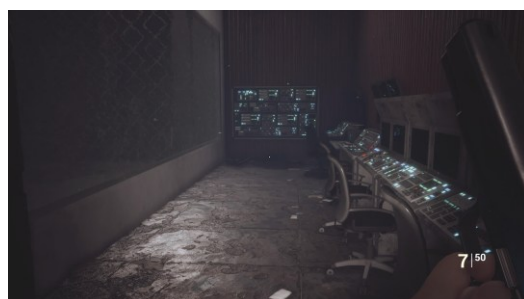
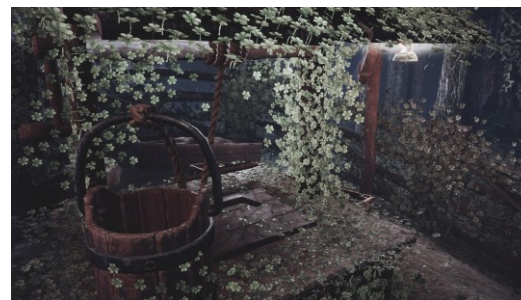
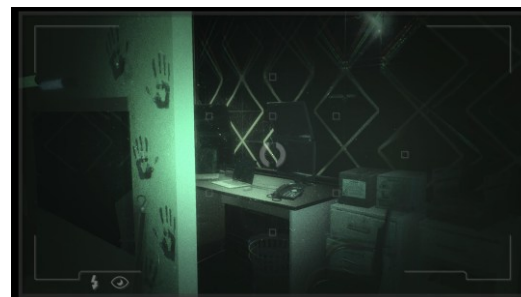
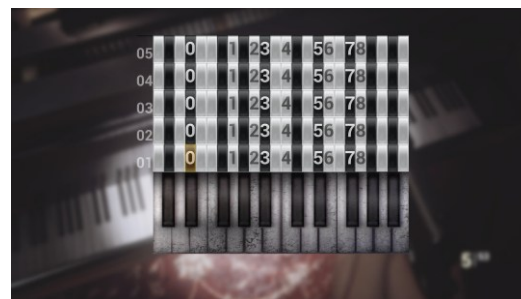
**Anyway**, I thought it was great, for many of the same reasons I've enjoyed the *Silent Hill* series (sorry; it's just the most apt comparison I can make). There are a few run/hide sections, but not really any combat.

**Recommended.**

*Played on Xbox Series X with GamePass. Posted: 06/19/2021.*

**Note:** Bloober Team later made the *Silent Hill 2* remake and now they're working on *Silent Hill 1*.

# Mini-Review: Fobia - St. Dinfna Hotel



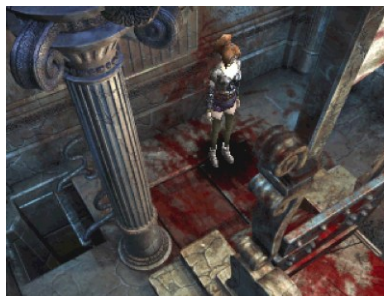
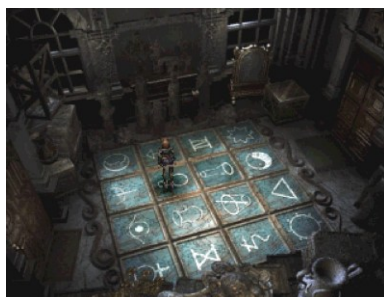
There are a lot of indie or double-A survival horror games out there. I've played very few of them. When I do play something in the genre, it's often more recognizable: *Resident Evil*, *Silent Hill*, *The Evil Within*.

I might try to dip in a bit more though, after being very impressed with this recent release. I do have a few gripes, but what drew me in is the sense of place, the puzzles and progression, and a story that really grabbed me (although if you make what feels like the right choice at the end, you miss a bit of extra context).

For negatives, the first boss fight seems impossible without ammo-assist turned on, and the main character's bad voice acting is immersion-breaking. Being thorough (collectibles, optional puzzles, playing cautiously) is 17+ hours. I really liked it.

Played on console: PS5.  
Originally posted: 07/31/2022.

# Mini-Review: Koudelka



Let's be real. Nobody reading this is going to play *Koudelka*, a cult classic PS1 RPG that's pretty pricey these days. It lacks the fame of the all-time PS1 greats like *Final Fantasy 7/8/9*, *Metal Gear Solid*, *Resident Evil 1/2/3*, and even second-tier gems like *Parasite Eve* or *Fear Effect*.

It also doesn't hold up as well as some others, lacking analogue stick support and other gameplay niceties (although thankfully, it's not tank controls).

That said, I found a lot to love about its dark story (a precursor to the *Shadow Hearts* PS2 series), the plentiful cut-scenes (both pre-rendered and in-engine, all fully voice-acted) and the *Resident Evil*-style sprawling monastery-turned prison-turned monster-filled home (but with RPG turn-based random encounters and bosses).

I really enjoyed *Koudelka*. I only wish I'd played it *before* playing *Shadow Hearts*.

*This PlayStation 1 game was played on PS3.  
Originally posted to social media: 05/30/2024.*

# Mini-Review: Choo-Choo Charles



It's everything I hoped it would be. I'll get a few complaints out of the way first, though.

It's fully voiced, but none of the characters' mouths move. In a visual novel or a pixel retro game, it wouldn't seem odd, but in a fully 3D world like this it stands out.

I would have preferred it if action/use (on the X button) was swapped with jump (on Square) instead of the other way around.

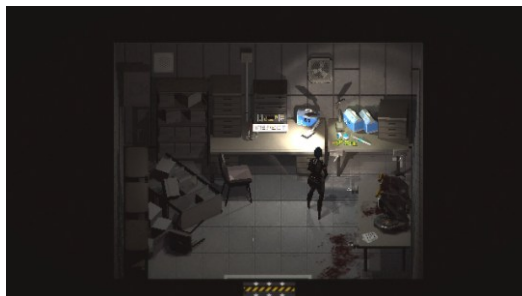
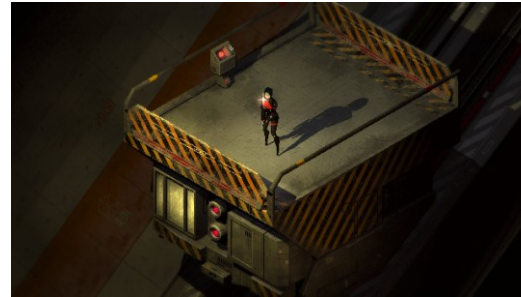
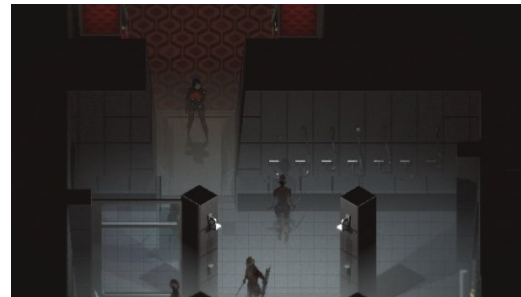
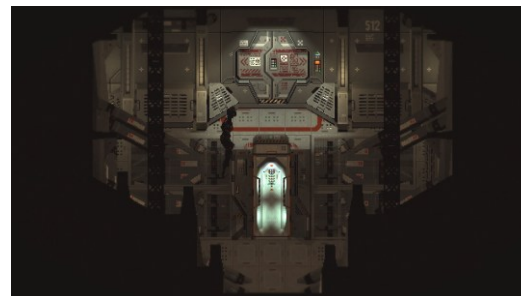
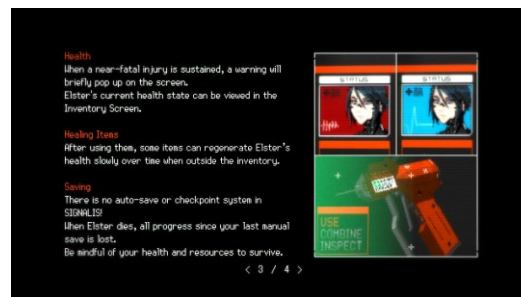
There's no way to fight human enemies when exploring off the train engine and stealth was a no-go for me, but at least I could usually get them to follow me back so I could use the train's gun.

Everything else was a big positive: the absurdity of a spider train monster, the small open world, the game length (less than 6 hours to 100%), side/main missions, and not a big penalty when dying (it's a fairly easy game).

Played on console: PS5.

Originally posted: 08/04/2025.

# Mini-Review: Signalis



I was drawn in by *Signalis* from the start, even though it isn't as oppressively scary as some bigger-budget horror games I've played over the years. I think that's due mainly to the presentation, which goes for a low-poly sort of isometric fixed viewpoint that's reminiscent of Playstation 1 era graphics.

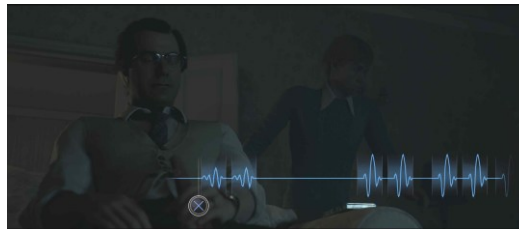
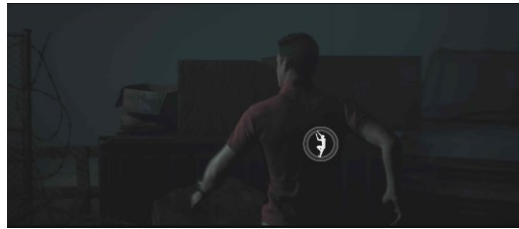
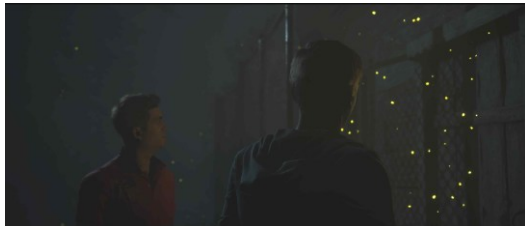
There are a few brief first-person bits (which are similarly PS1-like), but most gameplay has you walking (or running) through various dark environments either avoiding or shooting the things that want to kill you while solving puzzles (it does these super well) and managing a brutal 6-item stack inventory limit.

What it lacks in scares, it makes up in truly creepy, unsettling situations, sounds, and story

Don't stop after the (first) credits though. It's not truly over. Great game.

Played on Xbox Series X with GamePass. Posted: 11/05/2022.

# Mini-Review: Dark Pictures – Little Hope



The second game in *The Dark Pictures Anthology* seems to have a little more going for it.

Even though I managed to guess the mystery right from the beginning, it was just a guess until the final moments.

It has plenty of mystery and creepy horror to keep it entertaining the whole time.

Like the prior game (and *Until Dawn*), the characters look almost real. Some post-game special features make me think only the main guy was modeled after an actor. Odd if true, because I could have sworn I recognized others in the five-person group trapped by the night fog in the abandoned town of Little Hope.

Gameplay is familiar: a little exploring, some quick-time and decision-making, plenty of cut-scenes.

There are paths and decisions I haven't seen, but I enjoyed my one play-through.

*Played on console: PS4.*

*Originally posted: 11/08/2020.*

# Capsule Review: Resident Evil 2 – Remake



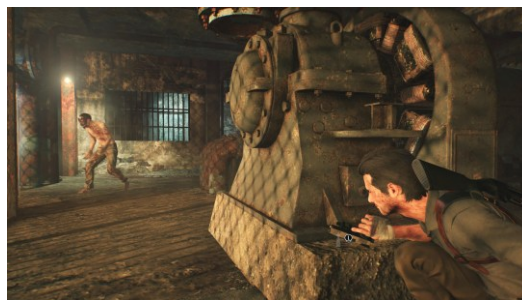
*RE2* succeeds with its tense horror atmosphere. I never played past the intro in the original *RE2*, but the many quality-of-life improvements boost this remake a lot. A second run is different enough to be worthwhile (plus the good ending). It really drew me in, but I'm relieved to be done. Whew!

*Played on console: PS4. Original version posted to social media on: 02/05/2019.*

# Mini-Review: The Evil Within 2



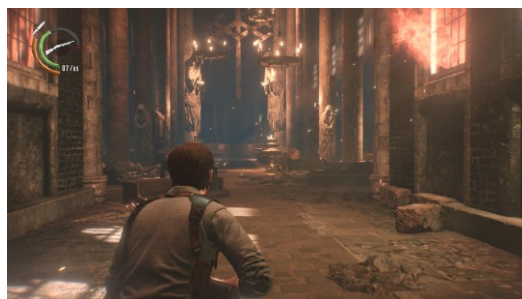
The first *Evil Within* was my 2nd favorite game of 2014 just behind Bethesda's other release that same year, the *Wolfenstein* reboot.



**TEW2** is in some ways better (and different) with some smallish open world levels mixed with its more linear levels, and a good mix of action, stealth, creepiness and horror.



It's more of the same in other ways, otherwise what kind of sequel would it be? No spoilers here, but the first game's twist is the foundation of the sequel, with the concept being more fully explored by a story that's pretty nonsensical when you try thinking about how it might actually work.



I played on Survival mode (Normal), which felt much easier (more fair?) than the first game, but at the same time less tense and less scary.

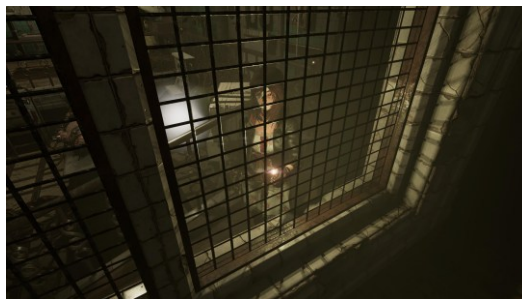
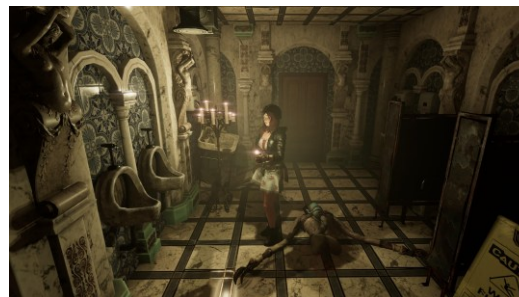
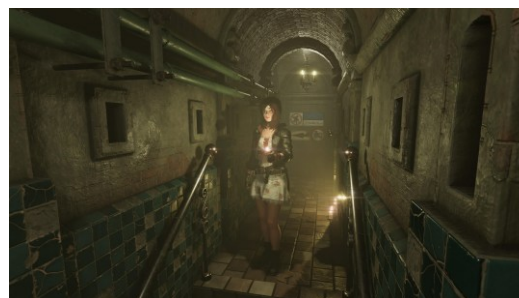


**Still, this is some excellent survival horror.**



Played on console: PS5.  
Originally posted: 07/09/2022.

# Mini-Review: Tormented Souls



This third-person survival horror game harkens back to earlier *Resident Evils* and *Silent Hills* with its cinematic fixed camera angles, inventory items to find and use for various puzzles, perfect moody music, and a few other things I wouldn't want to spoil here.

The voice acting for the main character is Bad with a capital B, but maybe that's by design? She sounds as though the developers asked one of their aunts to cold read a few lines, but somehow it adds to the authenticity and actually works.

Modern controls and great graphics elevate it above other wanna-be's. It even lets you do tank controls if you're so inclined, but why would you?

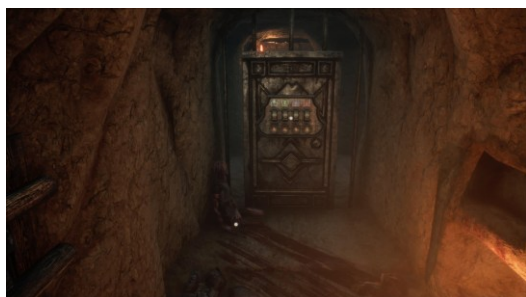
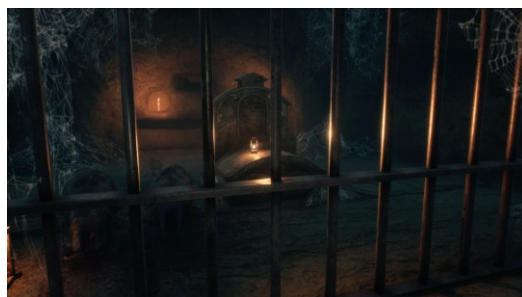
I could have done without the throwback system of consumable tapes to find, that limit your number of saves, but I had extras by the end.

It's a good game.

Played on console: PS5.

Originally posted: 09/17/2022.

# Mini-Review: Shame Legacy



To say it's better than I expected may seem like a backhanded compliment, but I didn't expect much from this first-person survival horror game when I started it. I wasn't sure I'd do much beyond checking out the opening, but I found it interesting and immersive enough to stick with it for the three or four hours it took to finish.

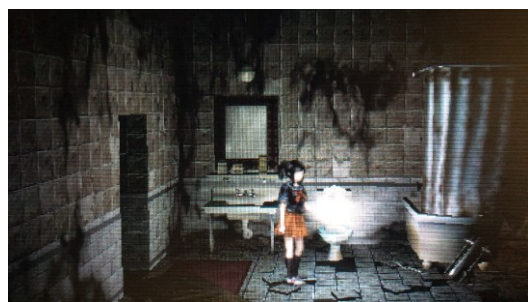
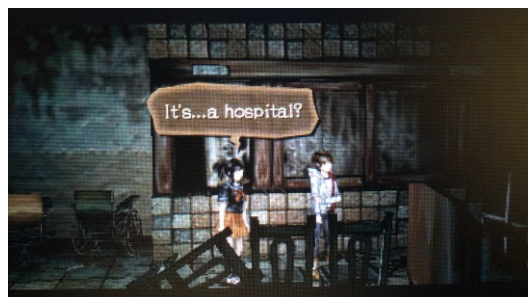
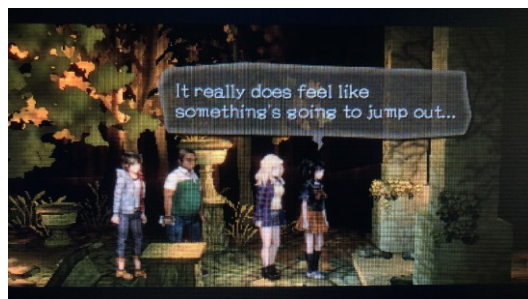
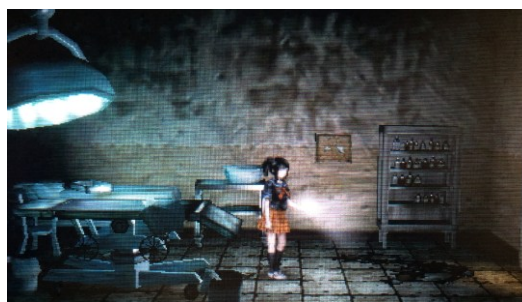
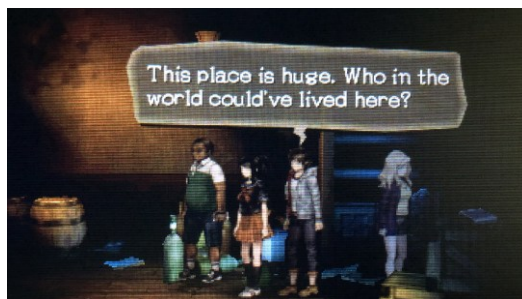
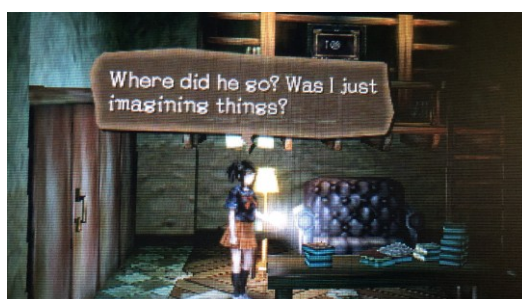
Nothing is particularly noteworthy about its few simple puzzles, decent enough voice acting, not-so-great stealth or the mostly forgettable story, but it's worth a look, especially if you can get it on sale like I did for \$4 a few days ago (it's normally priced at \$15).

It doesn't feel janky (aside from some audio glitches in certain dialogue) despite being an indie horror game.

With several systems at work and a polished look and feel, it succeeds where some others I've seen don't.

*Played on console: PS5.  
Originally posted: 01/24/2024.*

# Mini-Review: Creeping Terror



Unlike some digital-only games from the 3DS, this game isn't forever lost to time (the 3DS shop is closed) since it's also on Steam. I'm a sucker for the 3D gimmick, though, and I happened to already own this one.

It's a side-scrolling horror game about four dumb teenagers (you play as Arisa, a Japanese transfer student) who decide it's a good idea to test their bravery by visiting a creepy old abandoned mansion (which also has a creepy old abandoned hospital nearby) to film a streaming segment for Bob's fans.

You won't guess what happens next, unless you guess that they get separated, two different killers pursue Arisa who must flee, hide, and find a few useful items (such as chargers for her phone's flashlight), and ultimately escape to safety.

It's a decent 4 hours of low-res horror.

*Played on console: 3DS.  
Originally posted: 10/06/2025.*

# The Final Stage

## Vacation Guide Wrap-Up

By the time I finished writing this week's "Vacation Guide" feature, I started wondering if the joke had gone on for too long. At least I got a few good laughs of my own out of it.

Picking the scariest games I've ever played was a challenge, for several reasons. One, it turns out I've played a lot more horror games than I thought.

Two, some of the earlier games I played may have seemed scarier than they actually were, since I didn't have as much of a basis for comparison then. That includes games like *Parasite Eve* and *PE2*, which didn't seem as scary when I watched snippets from video playthroughs while writing this feature.

Three, and on the flipside of that, maybe it's possible to build up an accidental tolerance to horror games. I feel like last year's *Alone in the Dark* reboot (not featured, but my mini-review can be seen in [issue #11](#)) would have hit the mark for me a lot more if I had played it fifteen or twenty years ago (and I never played any of the originals, unfortunately).



## Pondering a Version Without AI Artwork

I can't prove it, but I doubt that the few images made by [openart.ai](#) are what's keeping people from the VGGN. It's like 0.005% of the total newsletter, with the other 99.995% being AI-free writing and screenshots that represent dozens of hours of hard (but fun) work.

There's a logo, a title image (based on an original I created), and usually one or two little pictures depicting a vaguely me-looking guy doing silly stuff, but I'm considering doing a second alternate version that removes the AI-generated images. Still thinking.

## Next Week

Scary topics will continue next week, in the third of my four planned "spooky month" issues. My original idea was to write about the things in games that are normally associated with horror but are often used in more light-hearted ways or in comedic games (vampires, zombies, mummies, and so forth), so I could highlight games like *Vampire Survivors*, *Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy*, and *Costume Quest* (which my kids played, but I never did).

I still think that's a good angle, but I cut quite a few games this week for simply not being very scary (maybe they tried and failed, like *Fear of BIOSEC* or *Don't Knock Twice*), or for sitting somewhere in the middle, not really horror but not light-hearted or funny either – games like *Slitterhead*, *Evil West*, *Ghostwire Tokyo*, *Little Nightmares*, and the whole *F.E.A.R.* series.

Maybe I'll stick to the original plan and cover the rest next October. I don't know. That's the fun of this newsletter. I sometimes decide on the specifics at the very last minute.

Until next week, happy gaming!

## End Credits

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