



Monster hunting perfected

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Have you ever had the urge to trudge through jungle environments, a giant weapon strapped to your back, hunting strange and wondrous dinosaurs-like monsters more than twice your size? This is the premise presented by *Monster Hunter: World*, the newest entry in the long running Japanese *Monster Hunter* series.

Joined by your trusty cat companion, or Palico, you're a hunter who travels to the new world, joining the Research Commission to study and hunt the monsters found in the region's untamed wilds. The Commission specifically studies the wave of monsters migrating to the new world, attempting to discover the reason for their migration.

As per the name, the majority of your time in the game will be spent hunting the various monsters found in the new world. The two major activities found within the game, hunts and expeditions, both task you with entering the world map, tracking and hunting the various monsters while also gathering the regions various plantlife to craft into consumables used to heal or buff yourself during fights.

Hunts are the game's formal missions. Split into several varieties, including assignments, the game's story missions, optional, and event, accepting any of these will send you straight to the world map with the objective of hunting a specific monster within a set time limit.

Expeditions, on the other hand, are more free form. Instead of having a set objective, expeditions allow you to enter the

world map without a specific goal. Instead, you hunt the larger monsters you have already taken down during the various hunts, explore the game's large, open world and gather the various materials that can be found throughout the world.

The core gameplay focuses around a variety of weapons used to hunt the game's various monsters. Currently there are 14 different weapons available in the game, which are accessible from the first missions. Each weapon type offers a number of variants, each balanced to take on different types of monsters.

The game also features a robust upgrade system for your weapons and armor. Using parts from the monsters you hunt, as well as different materials that can be scavenged from the open world, players are able to upgrade their gear in a number of ways, creating specialized versions of their weapons better suited to fight specific kinds of monsters.

The game's monsters are varied and interesting, all presenting a unique challenge. Some are huge and intimidating, such as the Deviljho, a T-Rex like monster, and some are more ridiculous looking, though no less dangerous, such as the Kulu-Ya-Ku. Each type of monster requires different strategies to take down depending on their capabilities.

As with the previous entries in the series, *MH:W* also features a robust multiplayer offering. Allowing for drop-in, drop-out multiplayer, meaning it is possible to join or leave in-progress missions, the game allows for friends to join in on each other's hunts, though there are some limitations. During many assignments, for example, you are not able to join some hunts until the main player has reached a certain

point in his or her hunt.

Expeditions are also only accessible in single player, though there is a workaround. Optional missions, found on the job board, where you register for any of the game's hunts, do allow for multiplayer. Once an optional hunt is completed, the party will be given an option to return to camp, or return to the main hub. Returning to camp will allow the party to continue on an expedition in the same region.

There is one additional workaround to this limitation, involving the game's SOS system. This system, which is designed to allow the player to call for help from other players who are searching for SOS signals, can be exploited to allow access to another player's expedition.

Graphically, *MH:W* is absolutely gorgeous. From the environmental design, which features several different archetypes, to the design of the monsters themselves, the attention to detail found in *World* is incredible. Each new area offers new wonders to see, new areas to explore, and all of them are incredible to view. Whereas the previous several iterations of the *Monster Hunter* series were released as handheld titles, limiting the graphical possibilities, it's obvious that the development team wanted to take advantage of the increase in power offered by the return to home consoles.

Overall, *MH:W* is an interesting experience. Those that are familiar with the series will recognize many of the game's elements, as the core gameplay remains mostly intact. Sporting solid gameplay and impressive graphics, *MH:W* is an excellent choice for any who find the premise intriguing in the least.