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## [The Sims 2 Castaway](#)

*No Tom Hanks, but still a decent shipwrecking adventure*

What would you do if you were shipwrecked on a deserted island? What if your only way of entertaining yourself was a PSP? And what if the only UMD available was [The Sims 2 Castaway](#)? In this ocean of possibilities, one thing is for sure: we're dealing with another Sims-branded blockbuster and this time it will only be made available on consoles. It's a strange choice, considering that the minute my girlfriend saw the game on the PSP she claimed that she'll rather wait for a PC version, than play it on the portable device. However, there are enough PS2, PSP or Wii consoles out there to boost the sales of Castaway, one of the most original [The Sims 2](#) titles I've seen lately. **Concept**The Sims is the best selling game in the world and this goes to show that it's pure quality and it captured the attention of both gaming experts, FPS fans, girls dressed in pink, hardcore rockers, mom, grandma...basically everyone. Maxis stays true to the legacy of the previous titles delivering something more than your average expansion pack. Everything's been revamped and "consolized" if you can allow me to patent this verb of mine.. While some of you may prefer to play the PS2 or the Wii versions of the title first, discriminating the PSP for its graphics, I decided to go the other way and give Sony's portable wonder a chance. Doing that, I was stunned that the living sim still manages me to draw me to a unique gaming experience spiced up by a multitude of new options, a great atmosphere and the constant feeling that there are many more features to uncover. Basically, you'll have to select a crew from the start and be shipwrecked on an exotic island. Selecting the crew is in fact the process that allows you to create your character and some of the other people you'll interact with. While in the other The Sims titles all the objects and appliances you needed were always available, now you'll have to harvest and pick up a lot of resources in order to make your own tools, prepare food and make your life more comfortable. You'll evolve as time passes, unlocking new skills, building a house of your own, befriending chimps, learning how to cook or make your own clothes. There is some sort of main storyline that guides you from one island to the other in search of salvation and the other crew members, but you're not forced to follow it strictly. The experience is in your hands and the open world is available from the start, provided that you reach parts of the Sims 2 Castaway universe with the aid of your hand-made boats. You control the character you've created in the beginning and there are tons of options to customize, ranging from the person's looks to his/her garments, zodiac sign and abilities. My greatest fear before playing the game was that the controls had been poorly implemented. I has half right, as you'll have a hard time adjusting to the camera angles and the constant rotation of the view angles, which becomes a must when you're trying to figure out what to do next. The famous list of needs associated to your character is available at all time on the left side of the screen and it will greatly influence your play and actions. If you've played a The Sims title before, you might know that you'll always have to keep your eyes on a hunger meter, a comfort meter, a hygiene meter, a sleep meter and many other gauges that dictate the mood of your character. **Gameplay** What I loved about this game is that it manages to amuse me, after a long tiring day of playing Halo 3. As I made friends with chimps and set my hut on fire (by mistake) I couldn't help smiling and enjoying the experience. One of the essential tasks you'll always be trying to complete is building a raft, boat or canoe in order to move on to another island or even reach civilization again. In order to do that you'll need mechanical skills, time, tools and some materials. You'll increase your mechanical skills by building tools, a hut and even a rudimentary house. "What about the basic needs, like going to the bathroom?" some of you might wonder. Well, finally Maxis implemented a resource that would amuse me if this were

any other game. Turns out that you'll have infinite toilet paper, as you seem to have been shipwrecked together with a mountain such paper rolls. Of course that you'll have to go to the so-called bathroom (in the midst of Mother Nature rather), after a serious meal. You'll prepare some major snack by using the fish, fruit and other edible things you can collect while strolling on the deserted island. Logically, not everything's edible, so you can see your character vomiting if he/she has eaten something gone bad or unfit for a weak stomach. Pick up berries and go fishing, but be wary as the fishing experience is difficult at first, specially if you're using a rudimentary spear to impale the fish. After achieving a couple more mechanical skills you'll build a decent rod and reel in the major catch, which equals a tasty lunch and a sudden urge for toilet paper. You can find exquisite food on any of the islands you'll explore, goodies like bananas, pineapples, almond nuts, berries of all sorts, mushrooms, onion and if you search long enough there's a boar running in the jungle and some chicken ready to be caught and fried. Aside from the vital bamboo spear you'll use to catch fish, one of the first things you'll build is the torch, which is rather a symbol of your claim on a certain area. Your character will obviously have to gather wood with the aid of a shell axe is he/she wants to build a raft. The wood is also used to light up the fire, build a shelter, a roof, a hut and God knows what else. The shipwrecked critter you control can turn into Armani if you're into fashion design as all the leaves you see hanging on trees are potential materials for future cool clothes. Design your own garments and use them to cover your body, specially if you're a girl and you're ashamed that you have to meet one of the crew members looking all dirty and totally not hot. The mood and loneliness meters are very important for your character and you'll have to keep him/her miming some socializing actions in case the chimps are not around. If they are, you can hug them, befriend them, talk to them or ask them to pick up stuff for you. The monkeys are extremely friendly and helpful, bringing you tons of objects you can use to build tools and even food. It's funny to watch them playing or waiting for you to wake up, because they've brought you goodies and they want to see your reaction. All the resources you can gather will regenerate as time goes by, so you won't find yourself starving or running out of wood for that saving raft. In order to increase the comfort and mood of your character you'll be able to mime a phone conversation by using a banana as a telephone or keep staring at a shipwrecked garden gnome. The good thing is that every once in a while you'll receive messages in bottles from the other members of the crew or from relatives and you'll become cheerful after picking them up from the sandy beach. The above-mentioned necessities will become available as you play the game, as the initial ones are basic, like the need to go to the bathroom or the urge to sleep and eat. After a while you'll want to listen to music, take a bath and feel comfortable. While taking a bath doesn't seem difficult, in order to listen to music you'll have to create your own instruments and play them in order to cheer up. One major flaw of the game is the fact that basic actions like lighting up the fire or sleeping can last a couple of minutes, but there's a neat fast-forward option to cancel the handicap. Just hold the L button and press Up on the D-pad to speed up time or hold L and press down to slow it down to a normal level. In case you're out to complete the goals you start with, you'll surely check out the menu often, searching for your next objective. They guide you through the exotic world and give you access to new areas, requiring you to complete actions like learning how to play music, learning how to fish or building a shelter. When you leave the first island available in the game, chances are that you'll meet one of the long gone crew members and fill up that socializing gauge. Also one of the weird aspects of Maxis' title is that you can cook up magical potions that can resurrect crew members or maybe other dead folks. I ran into a skeleton while taking a walk in the jungle, so maybe that's one of the guys I can bring back to life... Since you're (almost) all alone on a deserted island, you'll surely love doing quests of all sorts, like collecting pieces of a treasure map or relics. This gives a nice flavor to the experience and also chases away the frustration of only evolving and not being able to discover new stuff hidden within the game. Last, but not least, I'll mention the ability of hunting various beasts, ranging from birds to boars. You can also set traps and check them

out in order to see what's on the menu. **Video**The Sims 2 Castaway looks decent to say the least, specially if we take into consideration the fact that we're dealing with a PSP game that surpasses anyone's expectations. While the environments look good, your character will something lose a pixel or two when you move the camera and try to view him/her front a different angle. Also, the tropical setting is excellently portrayed, as you can stroll on a sandy beach and dip your feet in salt water or chase boars in the ripe green jungle. The interactions between humans and chimps or other humans are well-done and cuddling with a monkey has never been so much fun. Fishing, lighting a fire, the sleeping animation, they're all sequences that flow naturally, without any sort of lag and without graphical bugs. The only problem is that once you move from one side of the island to the other, you'll have to watch the same annoying loading screen, that seems to last forever. That's the tribute you have to pay for fitting a content-packed game onto a portable console. **Sound**The ocean waves can be one good lullaby in case you're a shipwrecked guy missing his home and friends. This ever-present sound combined with the jungle's noises create the perfect tropical atmosphere, complemented by a chimp's greeting or an exotic bird's song. Right from the start you're welcomed by some sort of Latino music, that will be in the audio background the entire game, ready to add some salsa in the mix. Other than that, the only audio content worth listening to is the sound of the falling rain and the music you can make. **Conclusion**The Sims 2 Castaway is a powerful statement coming from Maxis, bringing back the flavor and originality of the first titles in the series. It's a PSP title, mind that, once you start looking for bugs and flaws. Not that there aren't any, but the entire experience is rewarding enough to make you ignore minor setbacks. Evolving from a tired shipwrecked guy with torn clothes to a major "playa" who owns huts on the beach and a huge stash of fruit and fish is a pleasure and a reason to play Castaway for months.