

A 20th anniversary for Pokémon wouldn't mean much if it didn't go out with a bang. That being said, we celebrate Pokémon Sun and Moon with the most revolutionary changes that will satisfy longtime fans as well newcomers to the series. While we celebrate these changes with much jubilation some things never change -- and that's not a good thing. Changes you will expect to see in Pokémon Sun and Moon are battle, trials, mounts and the Hawaiian theme. However, Pokémon still haven't found a way to make the story engaging.

You, the trainer and your mom move to the warm and colorful island of Alola. You have come to Alola to travel to the four islands and defeat the mighty Kahuna trainers at each island. Defeating the Kahunas is done entirely different from the previous Pokémon games. Previous Pokémon games made you go to gyms, defeat about eight Pokémon trainer bodyguards before facing the gym leader. Your reward would be a gym badge that proved your skills as a trainer, allowing you to travel to your next destination. This has been completely revamped in Pokémon Sun and Moon. Now your trainer must complete a series of trails, usually three before facing the Kahuna.

Trails consist of different task such as clearing out a cave of Diglett before facing the trial boss, berry gathering with your Pokémon mount Stoutland, experiencing your very own Old Man and the Sea with your buddy Lapras and hunt down the biggest fish and other various of mini-puzzles. After finishing these smaller tasks for a trial, you go up against what is called a Totem Pokémon. Usually they are just the evolved form of the other Pokémon's you were fighting. These trials albeit not challenging but was refreshing from previous Pokémon gym formula and was more fun.

After defeating the Kahuna you won't be receiving a badge, instead you will now have what is called Z-crystal. Z-move works almost the same way as TM disc. Any Pokémon can obtain Z-move as long as their type skills match the Z-power. If, you obtain a fire Z-move only Pokémon who have fire spells can learn the fire Z-move. If you have a Pokémon who can cast two fire spells they have the option of casting that spell as a Z-move spells. Of course, there's always a catch in Pokémon Sun and Moon. Z-move moves can only be cast once per battle. You must make it count, because if you use the Z-power on a Pokémon that isn't very effective with it does surprisingly very little damage. Even if you are a few levels above the Totem Pokémon. For that reason alone, I hardly used Z-moves. Sure they looked cool with their epic animation but unfortunately I found them to not do much damage. Along the way of doing your trails you will get snippets of the storyline, which should be no surprise to anyone that the story can be a yawn. Even worse than the story is Team Skull. These quirky wannabe thugs, dressed in predominantly punk and black are around Alola island doing the usual. Interfering with other trainers' travels, stealing Pokémon's and of course just being mischiefs.

On the positive side, you have character like Hau who is as warm and cheerful as Alola. He is your best friend and is completing his trials and therefore follows you along your journey. Then there's Lillie, the mysterious girl who you encounter from the beginning. She too follows you on your journey. Although she is not a trainer, her goal is to help a Pokémon that she found called Nebby back to his home. No Pokémon game would be complete without a professor, professor Kukui gives you your first Pokémon and tags along on your journey.

As a Pokémon trainer who only started with Pokémon X one of the few things that was still hard for me to memorize was which type did the most damage to whom. Sure some of it you could use logic. Water beats fire, fire beats grass, ground beats electric, but what is psychic good against? Or ice, fairy, bug, flying? What happens when your Pokémon is both types? Now finally Pokémon Sun and Moon has made it easier on everyone. Your Pokémon's spells now show how effective their spells are during a battle. Spells will either show that they are super effective, effective, not very effective or no effect at all. This little cheat sheet makes it easier for you to know which Pokémon to use, but there's a catch. This wonderful cheat sheet only works if you have encountered the Pokémon you are fighting.

There are a few ways a trainer can encounter a Pokémon in Sun and Moon. Of course, the typical way to encounter a Pokémon is through the ticket of the bushes, Wonder Trade which trades with another trainer from around the world, GTS trade where you can either request or seek which Pokémon you want from other players and last but not least Pokémon QR. Where you can use the camera on your Nintendo DS to scan Pokémon from another player's DS for your Pokédex. The new battle mechanics that allows me to know which spells are effective motivated me to always keep trading and scan people's QR code of Pokémon that I did not have. QR codes may be useful to those who want to complete their Pokédex, especially of Pokémon who are exclusive to their Sun or Moon.

There are many additional things about Pokémon Sun and Moon. There's the Poké Pelago, the camera to take snapshots of Pokémon in the wild, PvP, breeding, mounts and so much more. While some of these additions to the game are interesting and should probably be left for another game, some features were essential for gameplay -- particularly mounts. After defeating a Kahuna to an island you receive a mount in a form of a Pokémon. Mounts usually allow you to reach other places on the island that you weren't able to explore before originally arriving at an island. You will have mounts like Tarus who can break through big rocks, Larpas who can help you swim on water, Stoutland who is useful for sniffing out berries and herbs, Charizard who can fly anywhere you have previously been and other Pokémon who you can call for help during your travels. Or use them to go back to previous places that you were not able to reach before.

Pokémon Sun and Moon is arguably one of the best Pokémon games in the series. It has made some of the most remarkable changes that streamlines gameplay and encourages trade among friends. Pokémon Sun and Moon is packed with activities, keeping you entertained. Although the story was not impressive, the fun gameplay makes up for that lack luster. If, Pokémon continue to make improvements I can foresee another revolutionary Pokémon game that will captivate us all.

Story: 5

Gameplay: 8

Music: 6

Graphics: 7