

A young boy awakens to find himself in a cave with strange markings covering his entire body. As he looks around and is stunned by what is lying across from him -- a monster. This is no ordinary beast, it's something from legends in what appears to be a hybrid of part dog and bird. Stunned at first by the creature's presence, the boy suddenly grows sympathy towards the beast when he notices two spears have pierced into its body. Severely wounded the young boy tends to the creature's wounds overnight and the next morning releases him from his chains. Here begins the relationship of this nameless boy and hybrid creature who develop an organic bond and traverse through this bardic landscape.

The Last Guardian is developed by Team Ico and lead designer Fumito Ueda, who originally developed the game Ico on PlayStation 2 back in 2001. Ico was well received for its unique puzzles and delightful story. Four years later Shadow of the Colossus was also on the PlayStation 2 and of course it was a success for Ueda.

It's no surprise that fans have been waiting patiently for the arrival of The Last Guardian. Announcements came as early as 2009 for what was supposed to be originally released in 2011 for PlayStation 3. Team Ico suddenly slipped through the cracks and their game became a legendary myth. The myth resurfaced at Sony's E3 press conference in 2015 that showed a trailer and a gameplay preview with the release date of just 2016. Finally, the game has come to fruition, was it worth the wait?

The Last Guardian is one of the most organic relationships between man and beast -- named Trico. Trico is magnificent in size and in folk tale. According to the boy's grandfather he has heard of such a beast, but after interacting with Trico he has quickly demystified the notion that Trico is to be feared.

The two companions work together to leave the mystic environment. The Last Guardian environment is something to marvel at. It is reminiscent of the architecture of ancient Hindu. Buildings seem to be made from sandstone, with intricate carvings into the walls. You will jump, climb, hang, and shimmy on narrow paths from these towering monuments. Controls for these actions are shown regularly on the top right of the screen, indicating possible actions. The landscape is eerie and misty as of the Yellow (Huangshan) Mountain range. You can freely move the camera around to awe in the beauty of the environment or discover new paths. Small observations such as mist coming through the window or a crack through the wall will help you navigate. You will stumble upon artifacts that will aid you throughout your journey. Some artifacts have a direct correlation with Trico. One item I found if shined onto a surface Trico would send a bolt of electric energy -- a handy item for breaking down wooden doors. Other artifacts are clearly reminiscent of Trico's past. Like most animals who have been through abuse you will see Trico's abrupt reactions.

The young boy is determined to get back to his village and Trico reluctantly follows him. However, Trico can't exactly always follow the path of which the boy takes. Not only is it your job to find your way through but also a path for Trico. Due to Trico's size and having the characteristics of most animals, guiding Trico through the puzzles are part of the challenge.

Trico very much behaves like an true animal in the wild. I have seen him poke his nose through openings where he can't fit, distracted by strange objects, timid of large bodies of water and sometimes I repeatedly call for his attention. These are just some of the few animal instinct behaviors Team Ico has replicated onto Trico. Trico's size can also work to your advantage. I have already used his height to reach tall parts of a building. You can live out your *NeverEnding Story* fantasy of flying on the back of Falkor the Luckdragon's head, unfortunately Trico cannot fly due to his broken wings. Trico is however capable of jumping over colossal walls and expanse rocks are similar of a platformer.

The organic relationship between boy and beast makes for a memorable game. While certain issues and bug tend to arise, such as frame rate issues and certain camera angles. The games minor flaws are overshadowed by these two companions story of a lifetime.

Music – 8

Graphics – 9

Gameplay – 8

Story – 8