

# MARIO IS MISSING!

**GENRE(S):** Educational

**AVAILABLE ON:** MAC, NES, PC, SNES

**DEVELOPED BY:** Radical Entertainment

**PUBLISHED BY:** The Software Toolworks

**RELEASED:** 1993

Time for another round of a game that is missing a lot more than its title implies. Since I pretty much destroyed the SNES version, let's start with a positive note. Did I mention *Mario Is Missing!* is historically significant for being the first game to star Luigi as the main character? Well, there it is: a fun fact. Let's get to the not so fun facts. The NES version of *Mario Is Missing!* is an even worse waste of space and time than its 16-bit iteration.

The dumbass plot which no one cares about is exactly the same, with a bit more elaboration. Bowser's plan is to melt Antarctica by using a million hairdryers. Koopa Troopas are sent around the world to steal valuable artifacts from several major cities to fund the project. Mario, Luigi and Yoshi storm Bowser's keep. Mario gets his ass kidnapped, and it's up to Luigi and Yoshi to put an end to Bowser's plot.

While in the SNES version you could have a quite good hunch regarding your whereabouts just by looking around instead of having to talk to NPC's, here that's impossible, because all of the cities look exactly the same, and ugly as hell. That is the main reason why this game is even more of a nightmare than the previous one.

Honestly, this could have been a good game as the educational curiosity it is. For kids that are perhaps 6 to 8 years old, this version of *Mario Is Missing!* does have its passing moments as a formidable lesson in English language. Kids of that age might even be resilient enough to actually enjoy the game, just because they're more easily fooled into thinking that this is an actual Mario game.

You start off on foot, as Luigi, and your mission is to find Mario. (Not.) Assuming you know the ridiculous plot, you know damn well where Mario is, so the title of the game is a bit incorrect. Through one of the many doors in Bowser's lair, you're teleported to a city somewhere in the world. First, you need to talk to a few pedestrians, to gain clues to your whereabouts. When you figure out where you are, you'll need to summon Yoshi to be able to continue your journey. This means you need to switch to Yoshi and swim from the Antarctica to meet up with Luigi, wherever he is. So, back to the title of the game... since you know where Mario is, and the most important part of the game is knowing where you're at and guiding Yoshi to Luigi, I think a more appropriate title for the game would be "*Yoshi: Why, Where, and What the Fuck? Part II*".

When Luigi meets up with Yoshi, you can ride him and carry on with your tedious trek beyond that one screen. Don't worry, nobody gives a fuck about you riding a dinosaur in New York City in 1993. It's everyday stuff, and since you need him to make progress, it seems that the said dinosaur knows his way around better than you anyway. Next, you need to dispose of the Koopa Troopas – by jumping on them, you can't eat them – retrieve the stolen artifacts, and deliver them to information desks in front of famous landmarks. Still using N.Y.C. as an example, the landmarks here are the Rockefeller Center, the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building. Before you are able to return an item to its rightful owner, you have to answer a ridiculous pop quiz question regarding the landmark. It makes less and less sense each time I go over this. Same goes for the game in its entirety.

There's one specific relief about this game versus its 16-bit brother: it's much shorter. Every stage is followed by an utterly anti-climactic confrontation with a Koopaling, and finally, Bowser himself. I have no idea why they even bothered to put these in, these "fights" just make the game even more embarrassing and awkward than it already is. The absolute worst thing about it though, is the idiotic control scheme where the Start button actually does most of the work. The dumb menu hanging from the top of the screen comes at a close second. Instead of a neat row of action icons, they used one single

frame which you have to toggle all the time to keep making progress. At least they could've added in some text to explain what each icon means.

If you want to teach your kids some geography and historical trivia, go buy them a book or two. If that's not enough and they want their favourite Nintendo characters to do the authors' job, perhaps you can let them try this on for a size, but for the sake of all the fucks in the world, don't mess with it yourself.

## 3.6