

# MARIO IS MISSING!

**GENRE(S):** Educational

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

**DEVELOPED BY:** The Software Toolworks

**PUBLISHED BY:** The Software Toolworks

**RELEASED:** 1992

*Mario Is Missing!* for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System is best described as a gateway to the dark side of the Mario marathon. 14 and a half years ago, I went into this "game" with zero expectations, reservations, or anything that could've prepared or defended my soul against this piece of trash. As someone who's known for repeated mistakes, I also played the NES version. Well, what I ended up with, was some of the funniest shit I've ever written. That is why I'm going to spare myself from returning to these games, and instead mostly rely on my old stuff. The SNES version dropped first, so it shall also be the first to be roasted.

Bowser is planning to use a million hair dryers to melt Antarctica and flood Earth.

Before I go on, I should probably mention I'm not making this up.

Yeah, so the big bad sends Koopa Troopas all around the world to steal precious, historically significant artifacts from several major cities to fund this pet project of his, and just to ensure his success, he kidnaps Mario. Luigi sets out on a global trek to save the planet. ...And sure, his brother too. Whatever.

The main reason why I'm doing the SNES and NES versions separately, is that even though they're from the exact same poop factory, they come with their own sets of holes. It's hard to say which one of them shows more effort over the other. Its value as a game is less than zero, and its value as an educational tool is just barely hanging on the line. A complete idiot would be more than able to beat the game, without

learning anything. It insults the intelligence and patience of any average human being, and the funniest thing is there are typos and actual outright mistakes all over. Whenever you answer a question wrong at those info booths, Princess Toadstool – yeah, she's the "info lady" - tells you to "get your facts straight". There's a saying involving a pot and a kettle.

The game looks like a million things at once, but all there is to it is reading and quickly memorizing all you've read, fit into a bland bundle that remotely resembles a Mario game, killed dead by awkward controls and its own utter stupidity. I could stop here, but I can't help myself. Let's take it from the top. The graphical differences between the cities and their respective populaces are absolutely minimal. The sprites that are ripped straight off *Super Mario World* stick out like sore thumbs in the bland environment. The NPC sprites are the absolute same everywhere, and it's kinda funny to see albino cops in Beijing. The music... well, it's one tune. Namely the overworld theme of *Super Mario World* over, and over, and over again, remixed differently in each city.

The game starts from Bowser's keep in Antarctica. There are six doors, each of which takes you to a different city. Upon your arrival, you need to chase down NPC's – quite literally, I don't have the mental resources to explain – and simply talk to them to find out where you are, if you haven't figured it out just by looking around. You then need to summon Yoshi, and direct him from the Antarctica to wherever you are. You don't need Yoshi to make general progress unlike in the NES version, but you'll need him once you beat the stage, to scare off Pokey who guards the way back to Bowser's keep.

The "clues" given by NPC's are usually supposed to be good jokes, but I think only the developers perceived them as such. It's hard to pick up the important parts and determine the right context from well over a half of this game's script. The stuff they say about the artifacts you're carrying is equally pointless. About those, they're carried around by three specific Koopa Troopas stationed somewhere in the city, You need to flush out these three from the horde and defeat them to grab hold of the items. What's funny is that they can't do shit to you; you cannot take damage in this game. Physical damage, I

mean. You can run straight into the lap of a boss, and nothing happens. In some twisted way, this is the perfect game to play when you're drunk or suicidal. Or both at the same time.

These ridiculous artifacts range all the way from a pair of ballet shoes to the minute hand of Big Ben, to a lone brick of the Great Wall of China. They need to be returned to information centers around the city. Princess Toadstool, or an extremely rude evil version of her, gives you a pamphlet describing what she's missing, or a larger ensemble it's part of. It's a boring crash course with lots of numbers and names; this is the stuff you'll have to memorize before you talk to her again and offer her the missing item. See, she will ask you two random questions relating to the contents of the pamphlet to make sure you're carrying the genuine article.

Pause! ...Let me get this straight. I could bring in any counterfeit toy, if I knew the colour of the biggest bridge in San Francisco, or where the Sistine Chapel was located? Or, my absolute favourite: if I knew who wielded the "Gladiator's Spear"? You don't know? The answer is "Gladiator". Seriously.

Let's go on. Returning the item and answering the questions correctly nets you thousands of dollars, which you can use to... I have no idea. I have some in real life, but here: no. I've got to try this some time. Maybe when some turtle steals the whole ceiling of the Sistine Chapel next time around, I'll be there to cash in. Oh, and lest I forget, if you answer any of the questions wrong, Toadstool won't speak to you. Until you leave the screen for a couple of times and persistently try her again, that is.

So, when you've returned all artifacts, you're free to leave the city and close Bowser's shortcut there forever. Everything I've mentioned thus far needs to be repeated, city after city. Don't worry, you don't have to visit every city on the world map, most of them are on it just for show. After completing your tedious tasks in four more cities, you will "face" the first boss of the game, who, again, can't do any damage to you, nor is he even trying, since all he does is run away from you. You need to catch him, jump on his dome a set number of times, and that's it. You can then enter through the gate he previously hid

behind, to a hallway with another set of doors. This is all there is to *Mario Is Missing!*. You thought it was a game? My sincere condolences.

Now that I think of it, *Mario Is Missing!* isn't exactly bad in the traditional sense. It's just boring, pointless and completely useless. I can almost wrap my head around something like this released on home computers, since the production of computer games was so much more cost-efficient than that of console games; their retail prices were much lower. What I sincerely cannot comprehend, is why valuable cartridge space was sacrificed to make a Nintendo game out of this dud. Yeah, yeah. It's-a-me. That's why.

**4.0**