



Best Mobile Games Of 2019

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In The Palm Of Your Hand

It feels like something we say every year, but boy--mobile games have come a long way. With mobile devices being refreshed on an annual basis, the hardware you find inside of a phone improves too (however incrementally that might be). The kinds of technological feats you can expect from a phone constantly grow more impressive, and as a result, the kinds of video games you can find on there does too.

This year, another shift changed our ideas of what we've come to expect from mobile games. In late 2019, Apple released its mobile game subscription service, [Apple Arcade \(/gallery/apple-arcade-update-all-the-games-confirmed-for-la/2900-2664/\)](/gallery/apple-arcade-update-all-the-games-confirmed-for-la/2900-2664/), which allows access to over a hundred games whose mobile exclusivity sits with iOS devices (on top of being available on Apple TV and Mac computers).

There were a number of notable mobile releases outside of Apple Arcade, of course. Nintendo released [Mario Kart Tour \(/mario-kart-tour/\)](/mario-kart-tour/), CD Projekt finally released [Gwent \(/gwent-the-witcher-card-game/\)](/gwent-the-witcher-card-game/), Capcom surprised us with its crossover card game [Teppen \(/videos/how-teppen-plans-to-break-into-the-ccg-scene/2300-6450366/\)](/videos/how-teppen-plans-to-break-into-the-ccg-scene/2300-6450366/), and Valve released a port of the incredibly popular auto-battler, [Dota Underlords \(/dota-underlords/\)](/dota-underlords/). But all these titles, and many others like them, had one thing that's now become commonplace in the mobile game market--they all lean heavily on in-game microtransactions.

The big gamechanger with Apple Arcade is that all games on the service are free of in-game advertisements and microtransactions. It might seem like only a minor perk, but it's seemingly resulted in a wonderful selection of standalone game experiences that rarely outstay their welcome, and focus on being the best games they can be. The Apple Arcade lineup is a welcome injection of no-strings-attached creativity for the mobile game scene.

It's no small coincidence that the GameSpot staff's picks for best mobile games of 2019 are all Apple Arcade titles, with just one notable exception. These are all games that bound us to our phones and gave us immense joy, and if you haven't played any of these titles yet, we sincerely hope that you do.

If you're curious about what else we've highlighted as the best games in other categories, be sure to check out all our end-of-the-year coverage collected in our [Best of 2019 hub \(https://www.gamespot.com/best-games-of-2019/\)](https://www.gamespot.com/best-games-of-2019/). You can also check out our [top 10 games of 2019 \(https://www.gamespot.com/gallery/gamespots-best-game-of-2019-nominees/2900-3261/\)](https://www.gamespot.com/gallery/gamespots-best-game-of-2019-nominees/2900-3261/). Over the next few days, we will offer further insight into why we picked them as the best of 2019, with a standalone article going live on-site in order of the games' release dates. Then, on December 17, we will reveal which of them gets to take home the coveted title of GameSpot's Best Game of 2019.



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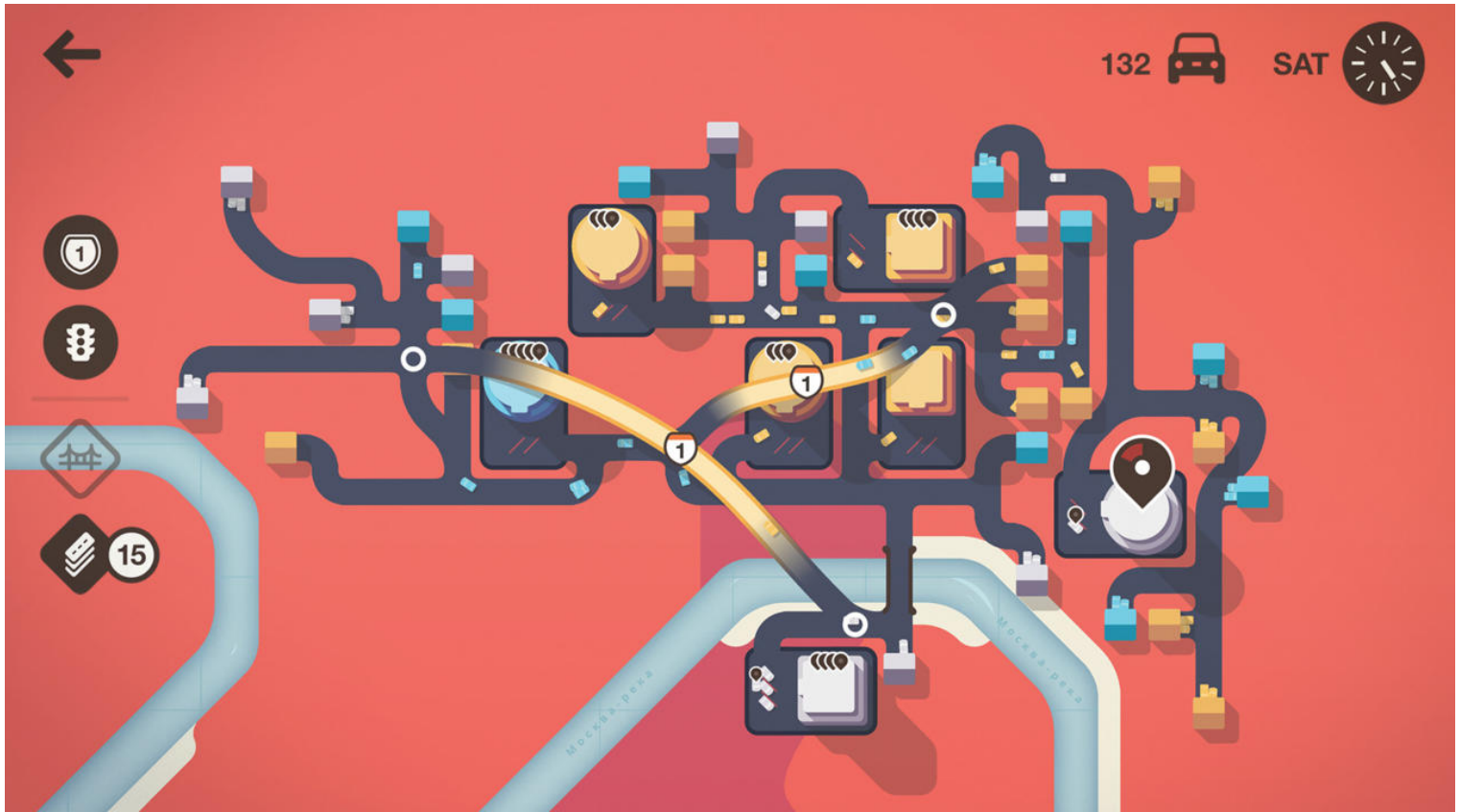
Sky: Children Of Light

In 2019, the studio which brought us [Journey](https://www.gamespot.com/journey/) (<https://www.gamespot.com/journey/>), thatgamecompany, released [Sky: Children Of Light](https://www.gamespot.com/sky-children-of-the-light/) (<https://www.gamespot.com/sky-children-of-the-light/>) on iOS, delivering another wonderfully meditative and intriguingly social game experience. Similar to Journey, Sky revels in the joys of movement, traversing a vast landscape and absorbing the audio and visual splendour of the world, your robed avatar displaying expressive and subtle animations as they move--it's a game that reminds you of what modern smart devices are capable of.

What makes Sky particularly compelling is your character's ability for flight. As you progress through your journey of discovering the spirits of a long-lost civilization, you'll collect sources of light which grant you wings and the ability to soar through the air. It's an exhilarating feeling heightened by the beautiful world and presentation, made all the more special by the limited nature of the ability.

But what's more special is Sky's unique social aspect--the world is sparingly populated with other players. You can play the game alone, but the actions you can take in Sky's shared multiplayer experience promotes such a wonderful sense of friendliness and cooperation among people. You can give people light from your candle, letting them fly further. You can use emotes to wave or hug each other, unlocking unique traversal abilities. Veteran players can use those abilities to help others reach areas that may be impossible for them at early stages. Consenting players can sit on a bench with a stranger, which unlocks direct text communication. The game's unique take on microtransactions only lets you purchase gifts to give to others, and receiving gifts is the only way to purchase cosmetics.

Sky is a wonderful game that lets you derive joy from simple, beautiful things--the feeling of freedom, the beauty of a majestic sunset, and the generosity of others. The fact that it's the only entry on this list that sits outside of Apple Arcade should reinforce that it's something special. It's free to play, too, which makes it an unequivocal recommendation as one of the best mobile games of 2019.



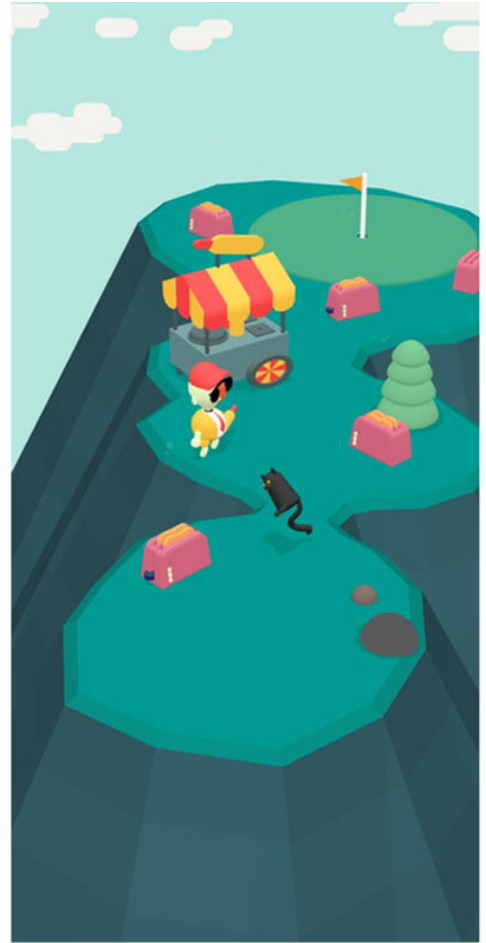
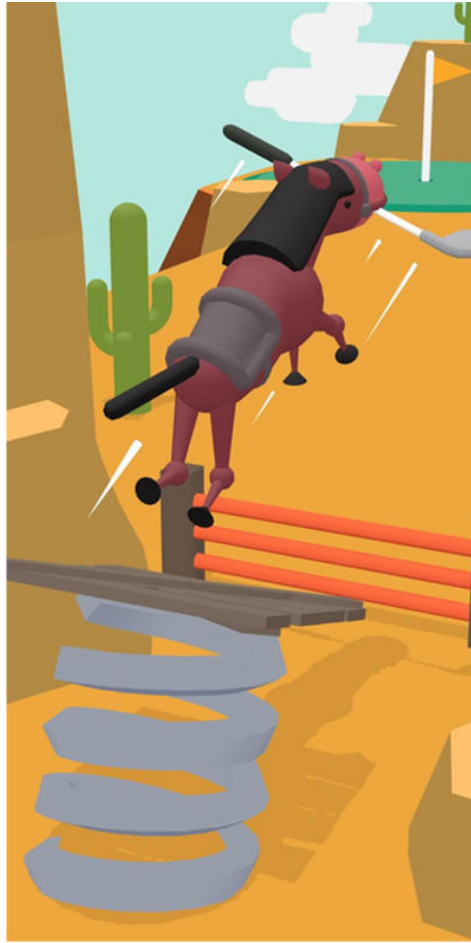
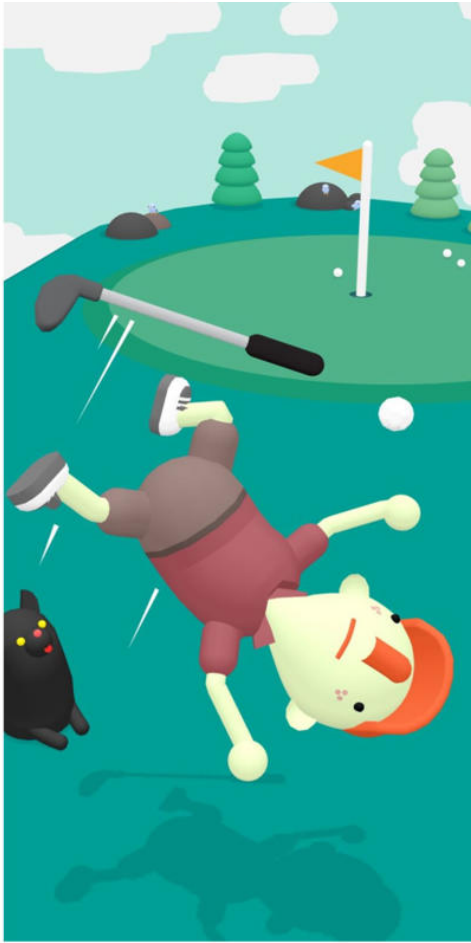
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Mini Motorways

From the team that brought you the brilliantly pleasant Mini Metro, a minimalist strategy management game about building subways, comes its sequel Mini Motorways. As the name suggests, this Apple Arcade title sees you managing the automotive infrastructure of a number of real-world cities by building roads.

Discreetly coloured buildings produce like-coloured vehicles that need to get to like-coloured places of interest, and building a network of roads and road upgrades that can get every car where they need to go is your job. Beautiful order is the goal, but as you can imagine, an ever-growing city means traffic congestion, which quickly leads to chaos, which leads to improvised solutions, which can lead to a mess of arteries. Holding out for as long as you can is a satisfying challenge, pushing your brain to create a semblance of order.

Despite the rigorous tests that Mini Motorways puts you through, the pleasing minimalistic visual aesthetic, as well as the excellent ambient soundtrack by Disasterpiece, makes for a deceptively calm experience. It's a wonderfully meditative game, which will be unsurprising for fans of Mini Metro, but it just speaks to the strength of the game's compelling flow and pleasing aesthetic. Mini Motorways is one of the Best Mobile Games of 2019, and one of our favourites to return to again and again and again.



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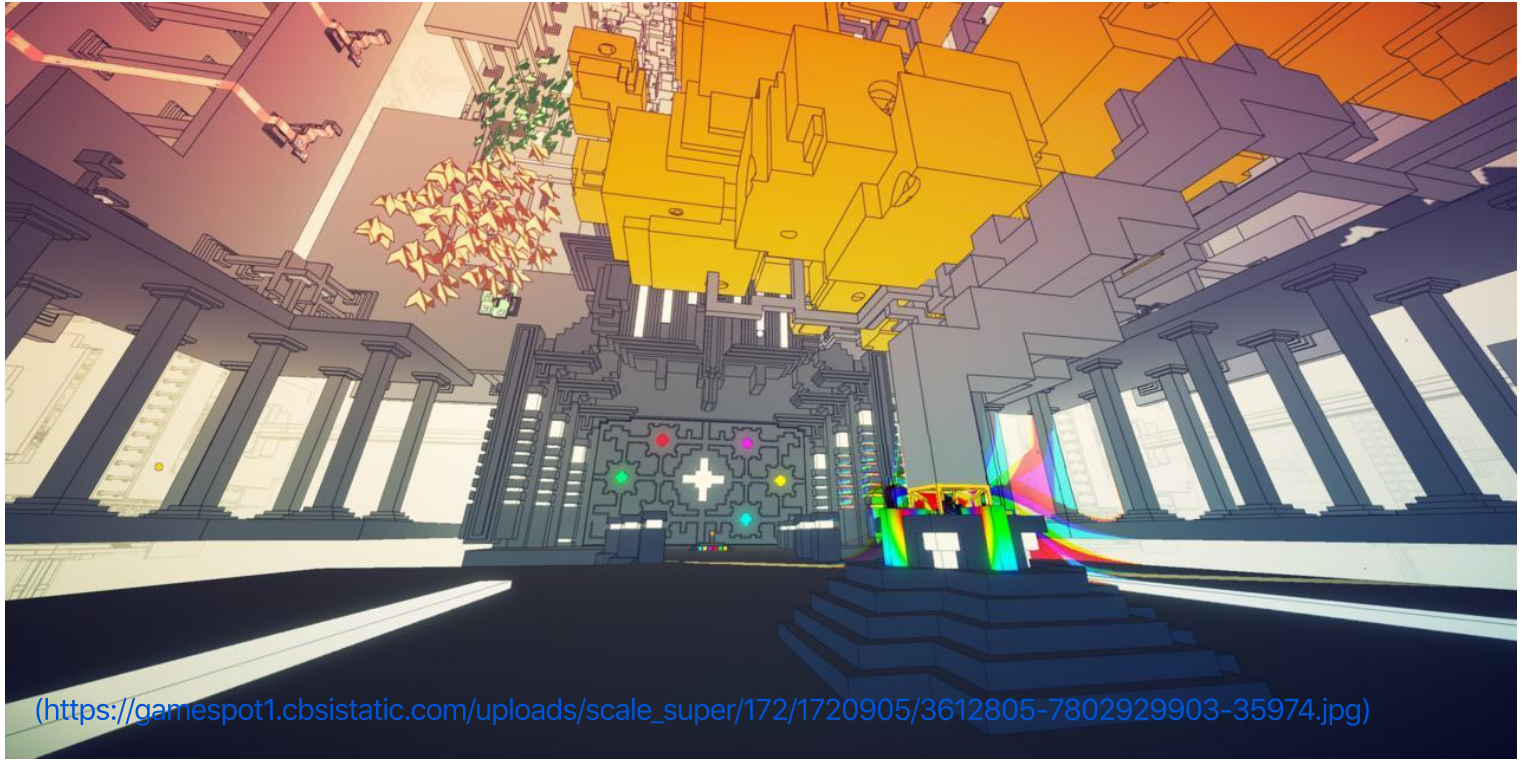
What The Golf?

Not a fan of golf? Neither is this game. What The Golf might just seem like a colorful spin on the monotonous sport, but it's far more than that--What The Golf is a long-running comedy game that continually delights and subverts your expectations with ridiculous interpretations of the sport.

It all starts with a simple tutorial. Your goal is to help your avatar hit a ball into a hole. You swipe and hold to adjust the direction and velocity, and you let go to make the shot. Simple. On the second stage, you try it again, only this time, when you let go of the shot, the avatar gets smacked across the course, his limbs flopping around as he breaks his back on the pin flag, much to your amusement. What the golf, indeed.

From there, each new hole becomes a joyful game of anticipation, curiosity, and comedic delight, where the punchlines are intricately tied to the mechanics. What's going to happen when you release the shot this time? What is the new goal? And "What the heck! I can't believe that just happened!"

Though available on PC as well, What The Golf is best experienced through iOS devices (it's yet another Apple Arcade game). The controls are well-suited to touchscreens, and the game takes great joy in surprising you with various ideas that can only be executed with a handheld device, including orientation and augmented reality. These surprises are what make What The Golf the utter delight it is, and we have no hesitation in recommending it as one of the Best Mobile Games of 2019.

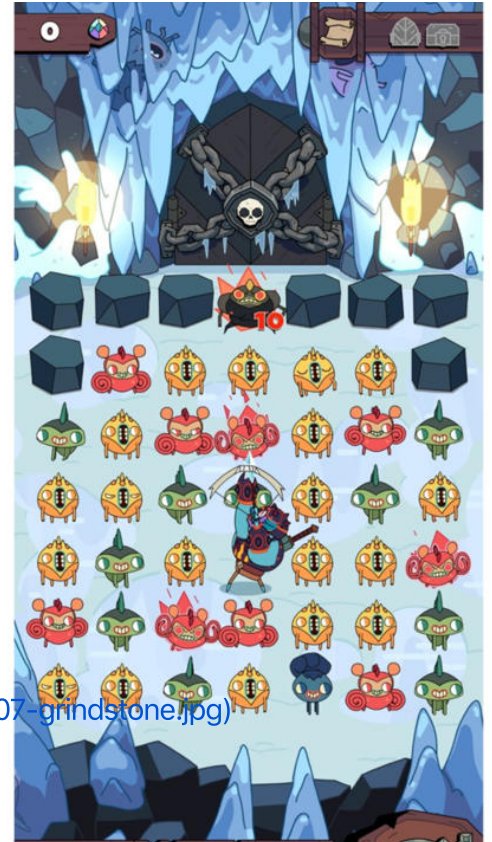


Manifold Garden

The world of Manifold Garden is simultaneously dizzying and beautiful, abstract and ordered. This first-person environmental puzzle game is set in an infinite, MC Escher-inspired world, and as you can imagine, rewiring your brain to figure out the rules and logic of such a complex place is what Manifold Garden is all about.

It's one of those games whose puzzles are challenging to the point where you might be stumped walking around for minutes at a time, meaning when you finally reach a logical conclusion, the feeling of satisfaction is incredibly immense. And like all great puzzle games, Manifold Garden makes you feel smart--it gives you just enough information to get you through without drawing too much attention. The design of the stark world puts its own unique twists on the formula--contorting orientations, infinite environments, and clashing rules of gravity mean even the most straightforward puzzles require some rigorous mental strain.

Manifold Garden is available on multiple platforms beyond Apple Arcade, but there's something to be said about the convenience of playing mind-stretching puzzle games on a portable device. Mainly, the ability to put it away and instantly pick it up again quickly. So many times we've gotten stuck on a puzzle, stopped playing, and then received a sudden burst of inspiration out of nowhere sometime later. The fact that you can conveniently pull out Manifold Garden on your phone and quickly put theory to practice is why games like this are perfect for mobile, meaning Manifold Garden gets a spot as one of our Best Mobile Games of 2019.



(https://gamespot.cbsstatic.com/uploads/scale_super/2017/20985/3612807-grindstone.jpg)

It's no surprise that a number of our favourite mobile games of 2019 are Apple Arcade titles--the subscription service had a strong launch with plenty of high quality titles that captured our hearts. Grindstone from Capy Games is unquestionably one of the frontrunners, an incredibly crafted game that puts a compelling spin on the gem-matching genre.

Grindstone's compulsive loop involves charting a path of destruction for your hulking barbarian of a protagonist, finding an optimal route through like-coloured monsters. The longer the chain, the more rewards you'll spill onto the battlefield and the more opportunities you have available to switch your target colours and create even longer chains of carnage.

It's a ritual that rarely gets old, and that's thanks in part to Capy's signature visual charm--sharp, colourful, and full of character and cartoonish gore. Watching cowering enemies get cleaved into a mess of meat chunks as the barbarian hacks through them is always a delight. Grindstone feels like an undiscovered gem from the golden age of smartphone games--before microtransactions, before daily login bonuses. It's a game that triumphs because of the strength and execution of its core idea, and we wish it didn't end.

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