

Settlements

The fifth anniversary of No Man's Sky saw another free update named Frontiers. There were some visual improvements to the game, including better explosions and more detailed construction parts along with a better build menu.

The major advancement to game play was the introduction of Settlements. These consist of a collection of buildings with various purposes, all of which contribute to the well-being of the citizens, played by NPCs who roam the streets and who's thoughts you can read in speech bubbles.

Is it running a Settlement right for you?

If you are early on in your current game, you might want to delay taking on the role of Overseer. Consider a few things first. You will be required to defend the settlement from Sentinel attacks, so your fighting powers should be reasonably advanced. You may also need a supply of some of the more exotic items to grow the town – for example, Aronium. If you don't have a Frigate fleet bringing stuff like that back to your freighter, or lack the necessary crafting recipes, you will spend a lot of time trying to acquire items that are hard to come by in the early stages of a game.

Getting a Settlement into a state where it is bringing in rewards is long process. Each development stage can take anything from a few minutes up to four hours, and it won't be apparent how long each wait will be until you have set it in motion. Fortunately, like growing crops, progress happens in real rather than game play time, so to don't actually need it to be running it for the clock to count down to the next stage.

My advice is that you will find running a settlement less frustrating later in the game, rather than at the earliest opportunity you get to take one on.

How to find a Settlement

If you have reached a certain level of progress when you open a game save in Frontiers, you will be informed of a Settlement near you to investigate. If you pass over the chance to manage it, you can locate further opportunities by buying a map from the cartographer at any Space Station. The specific map for Settlements costs 5 units of Navigation Data, but it should lead you to a Settlement every time. Every inhabited planet should have one, but in crowded areas of a Galaxy those nearby may already be owned by other players.

You can only run one Settlement at a time, so it might not be a good idea to adopt the first one you encounter.

Choosing your Settlement

A settlement on an extreme planet will be a lot more effort to develop because of the need to take shelter frequently. If there aren't a lot of resources lying around, you might find yourself having to make trips to harvest or buy what you need. There is also the question of how advanced the settlement is before you start running it. Most of the un-owned Settlements I have discovered are Class C, but there have been some Class B ones. I would suspect that the frequency of A and S Class opportunities is similar to finding a high-class Freighter.

Each Settlement will be inhabited by one of the three races, so if your vocabulary is better for a particular race, then that's another thing to take into account when you choose.

You cannot tell how a Settlement is fairing until you go to the centre and operate the panel attached to the **Settlement Hub Interface**. This information is available before you become the Overseer. If you decide you want to have a go at running the place, you can do so here, although if this isn't your first attempt you will have to provide some proof of suitability in the form of a quantity of products.

Fighting off the Sentinels

Your first task is almost certain to be the elimination of a bunch of Corrupted Sentinels. You can see on the Settlement Information display the current Alert Level, and when it reaches 100% you are guaranteed a visit. If you are well armed and shielded, you will be fine, but if not, you had better improve your fighting skills as this is going to be a regular occurrence.

Building Facilities

Your next task will be to finish construction of the **Overseer's Office**. This means visiting the construction site and opening the panel. Initial building tasks require common items and very short waits for the work to complete - in the region of minutes - so you soon will have access to your office and the **Settlement Administration Terminal**. After that, you can often choose what you build next, with some facilities affecting the Citizen's level of happiness, other bearing an ongoing maintenance cost, but most of them increasing the overall income of the settlement. Choose wisely, as each item you build can take many hours to complete and may require you to provide some exotic materials.

Profit and Loss

Your first settlement will almost certainly be running at a loss - **Profitability** is less than the cost of **Maintenance**. Your first priority is to address the balance by

building features or making other choices presented to you. For example, a Spaceship Hub will increase trading opportunities, perhaps at the expense of Citizen happiness.

You will almost certainly have a **Debt** as well, and you can't use your own cash to put this right. Once the Settlement is running a surplus, you will begin to pay off the debt - it happens automatically. Like me, you may find the countdown to clearing the debt confusing. Currently it doesn't show the number of days left, just the hours to the start of the next day, but a quick bit of maths - subtracting your daily profit from the outstanding amount of debt - will give you the true picture. Once the debt is cleared, you will be able to reap the rewards of your work.

Once your Settlement has cleared its debt, production will restart, and you will be able to take the profits in the form of Raw Materials and Trading Items, but not currency. The Settlement isn't going to make you rich, at least not for a while, as the initial rewards are best described as underwhelming. What's more, there is no cash surplus, so any further expenditure will put you straight back into debt.

Running the Settlement

Putting profitability over everything else may be counter productive. A Visitor may be an expert in a particular field and should be encouraged to stay even though they will increase or put you back into debt. Visitors may turn up with offers to help you in some other way - you generally get enough information to know if this is going to be a good idea.

Citizens may ask you to authorise missions that will require you to make expenditure. These can cost you quite a lot of money, but the benefits may outweigh the cost. You will also be asked to mediate on their disputes with one another. The Settlement Status report shows you settlement features that are both good and bad, helping you make choices.

Getting to and from your Settlement

Leaving the settlement to its own devices isn't a bad idea - you will be called back if you have work to do. You can be getting on with other missions, or collecting resources that aren't available nearby.

When your first take over a Settlement, you may wonder how you can return to it quickly again if you go travelling. At first it doesn't appear as a Teleport destination, at your other Bases, the Anomaly or Space Stations, or at least it didn't for me. Only after I had travelled to my Freighter did it appear in the list of destinations, but I think this was a coincidence, because testing the idea on another game save still resulted in a delay. So it seems you just have to wait until you get to a certain level of progress.

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However, can't build a Teleport at a Settlement, you have to wait for one to appear in the Office after a certain level of development, so my strategy is to build a mini-base on the outskirts. You will need to be at least a distance of 300u away from the centre of the Settlement before you can plant a Base Computer.

With a Teleport, Medium Refiner and a handily parked Exocraft the base can help you develop the Settlement quickly. If I can find a Power Hotspot close by this dictates the positioning, and it may be a good spot to develop a mining or farming operation anyway.

The Rewards

My Settlements are all growing in profitability and Class improvements occur over time, only to be set back if you don't thwart a Sentinel attack.

We will see over the next few updates how Settlements are developed. They may turn into something more complex, or simply remain as an interesting side hustle to add to your income stream.