

Stepping Out

VR Keeps Adults and Kids Focused on Learning During the Pandemic

Matthew Jaster, Senior Editor

What did I do this weekend? I reorganized the garage, picked up some groceries, took the kids to the lake and spent a couple of hours at the International Space Station. The week before I swam with great white sharks off the coast of Australia, visited several museums and art galleries across the globe, jumped out of an airplane, roamed around the ruins of Machu Picchu, and did some dishes—all from the comfort of my living room and kitchen.

Virtual reality won't replace world travel anytime soon, but it does provide a nice change of pace when you've been walking around your house and staring at the walls for three months.

The Addendum Team (with some help from my children) took the Oculus Quest for a test drive recently to see what virtual tours and immersive experiences it offers kids and adults in the time of COVID-19.

Mission: ISS

Roaming around 40 key areas of the International Space Station (ISS), you learn how astronauts eat, sleep, exercise, and pass time in the laboratory. The payoff comes when you head outside, floating around the exterior of the ISS, looking down at Earth, and hoping your cord doesn't snap and you float off into the unknown. Educational, exciting, and terrifying, this virtual experience puts you right in the center of the action without spending hundreds of hard-earned dollars on Space Camp.



Check out the games and apps available for the Oculus Quest at www.oculus.com.

Gravity Sketch

Express your brains most fantastic ideas in real-time at any scale from initial concept to model. This includes form sketches, detailed models, expansive scenes, etc. This is pretty much a full 3D vector drawing program in virtual form. I expect thousands of engineers in the coming years to toss out their sketch books and desktop computers and build magnificent machines and components in an environment like this.



Preston Jaster, age 10, explores the International Space Station (ISS) on the Oculus Quest.

Boulevard

Partnering with museums and cultural sites around the world, Boulevard takes art education to the next level. The app allows users to explore the collections and temporary exhibitions at museums and galleries around the world. Unfortunately, it takes game controls back to the early 1980s, but if the *patient* and *forgiving* techie can get through the front door and learn how to walk around inside this world, it's well worth the early frustrations.

Wander

Are you in the mood for studying Roman architecture? Interested in seeing Vietnamese mountain villages? A quick stroll around the Smithsonian campus? Wander lets you put in almost any address in the world and walk around via 360 cameras. The picture quality varies from site to site, but there's something very refreshing about picking a spot on the globe and being transported there in a matter of seconds. Educational opportunities are endless.

Down the Rabbit Hole

What virtual reality experience would be complete without a trip to Wonderland? Down the Rabbit Hole takes place prior to Alice's arrival and sends users on a journey through the secrets and puzzles that made Lewis Carroll so famous in the first place. This is pretty much an escape room intertwined with classic literature and hints at the powerful storytelling tools at the hands of VR game developers in the future.

Beat Saber

Last, but certainly not least, we played a round or two of Beat Saber. The Addendum Team finds absolutely no educational or engineering value to Beat Saber. There are no museums or virtual engineering games to be found. No tours, no speeches, no gears—but you get to wield two lightsabers and that right there is worth the price of admission.

Learn more at www.oculus.com. 