

New Player Guide

Welcome, Captain!

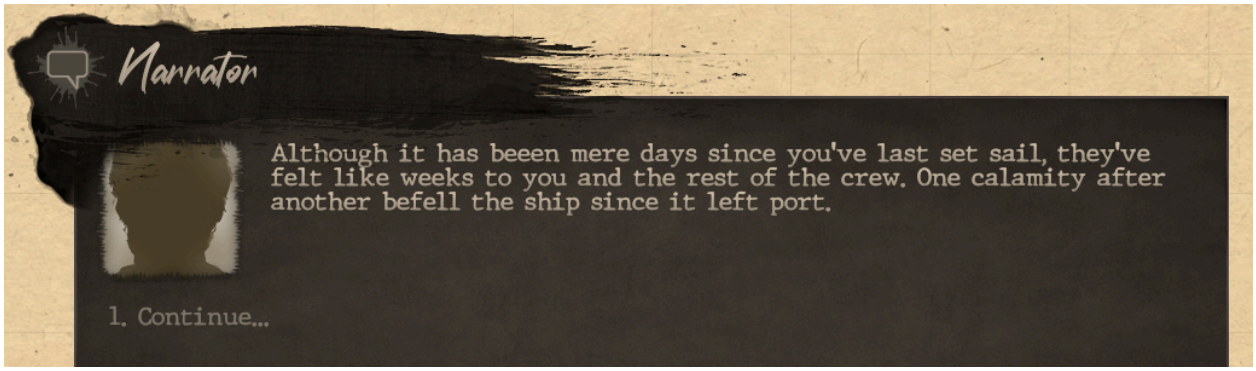
Windward Horizon is the 2024 sequel to the action-filled naval sandbox title Windward, which was originally released by Tasharen Entertainment on Steam back in 2015. Take command of the seas and explore a beautiful, procedurally generated world where several factions seek to expand their influence and enforce their ideals. Complete quests, engage in lucrative trading, or simply sail around and be a menacing pirate, waylaying others on the high seas – there is no wrong way to play.

Windward Horizon, like its predecessor, has been designed from the ground up to be a co-op game that's ideally enjoyed together with your friends. The game's goal is simple: take what players enjoyed the most in the original Windward and make it even better.

Although this guide will draw comparison to the original game, it won't make an assumption that you've played it recently, if at all.

With that out of the way, let's get started!

Your journey will begin by choosing a name for yourself and entering the world. A short introduction will let you choose where you start in the world, so if choosing to play with your friends, it's advised to choose the same location. If you don't, then expect a bit of sailing before being able to join your friends, as there is no teleporting around!



With the introduction out of the way, your first breadcrumb quest will direct you to a nearby province, which will be marked on the map. Navigation on the world map is done by clicking where you want to sail. You can click on the nearby province to sail to it, and doing so will let you enter it when you get near it.



Of course the provinces aren't the only locations you can enter, as you may notice by interacting with your ship's lookout by clicking on the eagle skill at the bottom of your map:



Make note of it if you haven't, as you'll be making use of it anytime you need to interact with anything out on the world map – from various quest markers to simple scouting for a potential new province.

As the starting quest takes you into a nearby province, you will finally get to sail your ship properly, and will be able to learn to control it by holding your mouse's left button somewhere in order to steer the ship, or using the WASD+Space Bar keys if that's more to your preference. If you've played the original Windward, you will likely feel right at home here!



In Windward Horizon, any action can be bound to a key by simply right-clicking it – whether it's a skill on your hotbar on the bottom, the chat window on the bottom-left, the minimap on the top-right, or the keys to open your inventory and talents on the top-left (just underneath your health bar). The same right-click can also bring up additional options for skills, such as the ability to auto-target, let you target manually or even auto-use the skill whenever possible.

You can also right-click your ship itself in order to rebind essentials such as WASD.

Be careful sailing near the edges of the region – if you wander into the fog, you will find yourself outside of the province and back on the world map.

Unlike the original Windward, Windward Horizon's camera is not locked, and can be rotated with the right mouse button and zoomed in with the scroll wheel freely.



Your starting quest will complete automatically when you reach your starting province's main town, but you can always remind yourself what you should be doing by clicking on it on the right-hand side of your screen, bringing up the full dialog, as with any quest. Doing so on a non-essential quest will also allow you to abandon it, if you no longer wish to complete it. There is no penalty for abandoning quests.



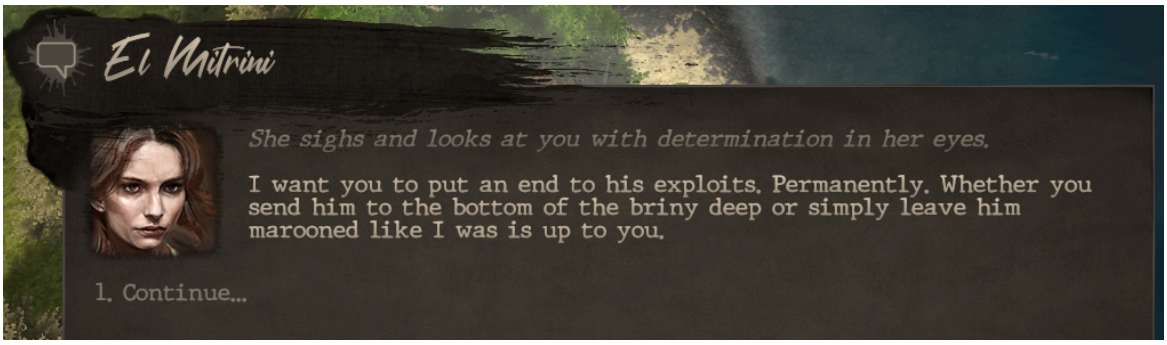
Sailing into the town's harbor will allow you to enter it by clicking on the button (or any building).



The town UI has several tabs for you to check out, but it will default to the overview of the province itself, showing its Growth (whether it's growing or shrinking), Prosperity value (high prosperity = pays more for goods, low prosperity = sells goods cheaper), any workshops present and their progress to next tier, as well as the minor factions trying to spread their influence in order to govern the province.



The latter in particular is the biggest departure from the original Windward, as each of the major factions is actually made up of several minor factions, each headed by a notable individual with their own backstory, personality and goals – and you can choose to aid them (or not) freely. You'll be able to learn more as they reach out to you (or you reach out to them) by starting a conversation. Some may even offer lucrative quests!



Speaking of quests, you can find them by choosing the exclamation tab on the town UI. You can choose to accept any you like, but I recommend avoiding those marked with a skull until you're stronger. Unless you have a friend you're playing with, of course.



Keep in mind, however, that all actions in Windward Horizon have consequences. When you do a quest on behalf of some faction, you will not only earn reputation, but you will also change the influence of the individual you're doing the quest for in the first place. This will alter the balance of power in the region, and will have noticeable consequences in everything from how much you pay in taxes on every transaction, to how much everything costs, and even which workshops will be created as the province grows in size.

Speaking of consequences, your reputation matters as well. Too low, and members of the faction you've upset will refuse to talk to you, or even attack you on sight. On the other hand, higher reputation will not only let you earn that faction's unique perks such as titles, stat bonuses and unique skills, but will even offer you useful insight when interacting with towns governed by that faction, such as the ability to query where certain goods can be traded. Speaking of which, trading can be done by choosing the coin tab on the town UI:



There you can see the balance of goods, where the farther the bar is towards the left, the cheaper something is (buy!) and the farther the bar is to the right, the more expensive something is (sell!). You can earn a hefty amount of gold, experience and reputation by delivering goods from one province to another, which will also spread your current faction's influence and more importantly – grow the province.

Helping the province grow will allow you to access more goods, items and even new ships!



All ships have their own internal layout which you can also see when you open your inventory window (default key: ‘i’) – viewable when the town window isn’t open. All items have certain slots they can be placed in, which is ultimately decided by the ship’s layout. For example, with your basic starting Sloop, the top-most slot can only accept miscellaneous type items such as ammunition or supplies.

It’s also this inventory window that also lets you see your ship’s stats and equip items:



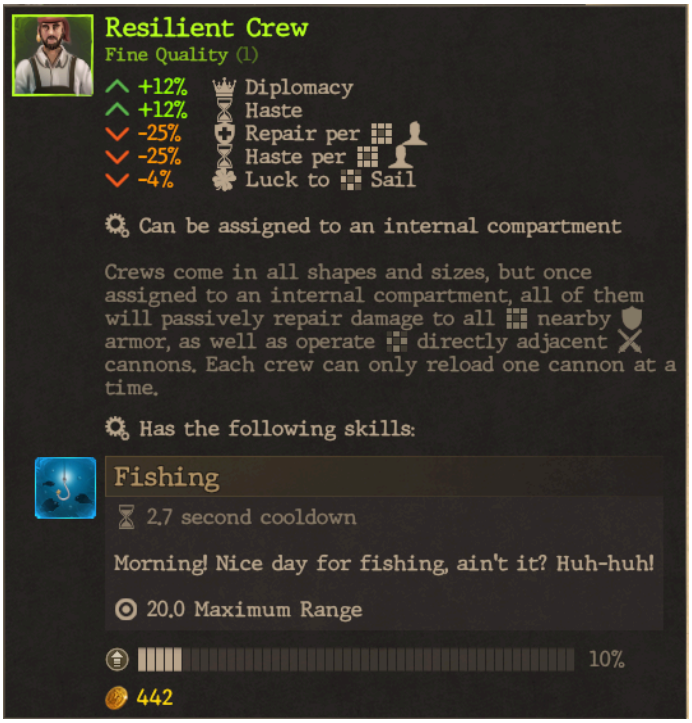
Choosing the palette tab on the top-right will also let you access the customization section:

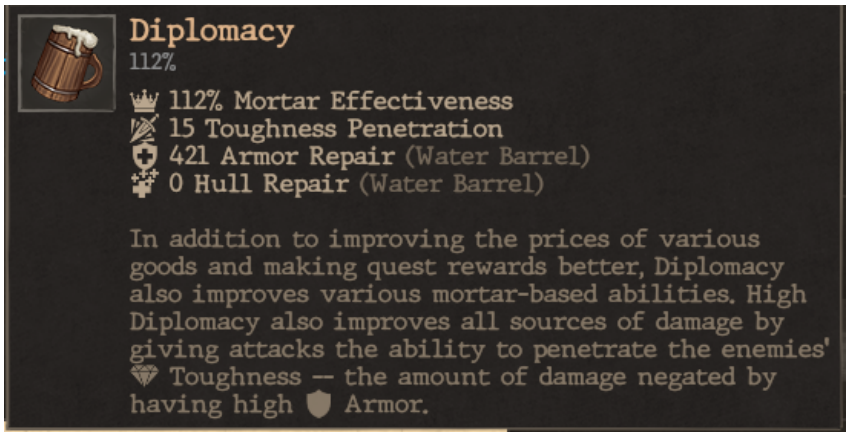


On the bottom-right there are comparison slots where you can drop items that you wish to compare against – useful before purchasing anything in towns.



You can see how any item will affect your ship's stats by dragging it from your inventory or comparison slot over any internal slot without releasing the mouse button. And yes, all items have stats, and some even grant skills for you to use. And if you want to know more about any stat, or see where it's coming from, simply hover over it.

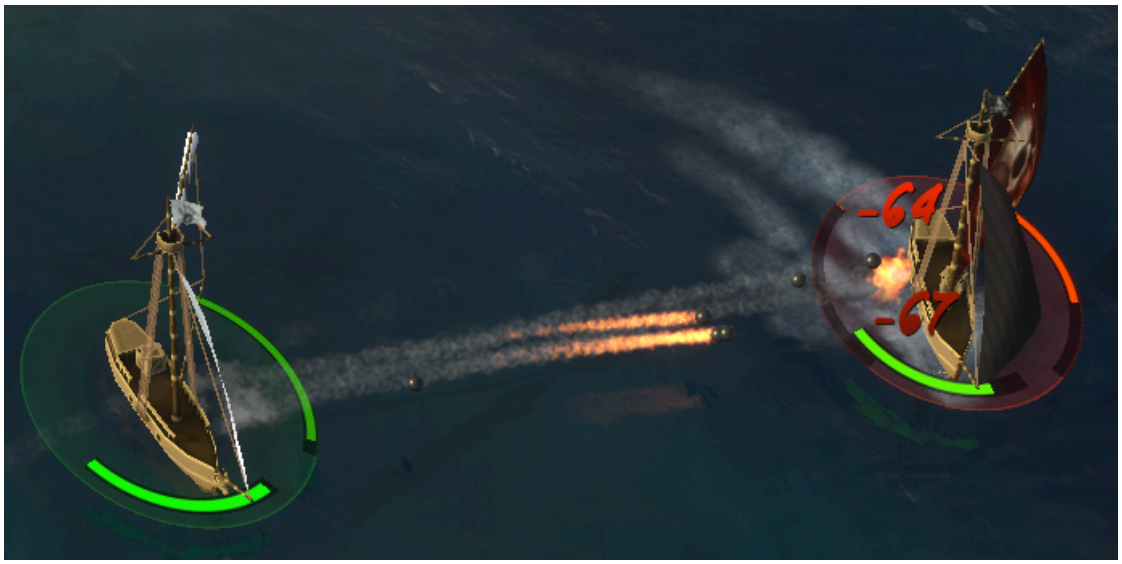




But enough gawking about! Start by picking up a quest or two, and if you want to know where to go, open up the map by clicking on the minimap on the top-right or using the ‘M’ keybind.



Just be aware that some quests may require you to fight!



On the combat side of things, be aware of the basics:

- Your ship only has cannons on the port (left) and starboard (right) sides. Don't expect to be able to fire at enemies that are behind you without coming around first.
- You start with the **Volley** skill by default, which lets you do a powerful attack every so often. Use it every time it's off cooldown! (default key bind: V)
- Range matters. The farther away the target, the less likely your cannons are to hit it.
- Your ship has 3 health bars. The two on each side of the ship represent its armor. Armor gets repaired quickly by the crew and is used to absorb incoming damage. If armor goes to zero, the damage will fall through to your ship's hull, which is represented by the bar on the bottom of the indicator. If this reaches zero, your ship will explode.
- As a pro tip, if armor on one side gets depleted, consider coming about and facing your enemy with the other side that hasn't taken so much damage. You may also spot enemies doing this as well.
- Have fun! Dying simply means you respawn somewhere. It's no big deal.

Winning in combat will earn you experience, reputation, and sometimes items!



As a side note, all items and experience gains are individual to you, so bringing a friend will make everything easier without harming your gains in any way. It's a win-win!

Once you've earned enough experience, you may spot a level-up message. At this point it's worth opening up your Talents window (default key: P) to see where you can spend your hard-earned points.



Note the arrow keys on the left and right – there are more talent trees than Offense to explore!

I suggest navigating over to the Support tree on the right and choosing the Mortar skill first to give yourself a powerful extra ability to use in combat – but it's your choice, of course.



Windward Horizon's talents can be mixed and matched freely, allowing you to build anything from highly specialized to flexible hybrid specializations as you desire. There is also no "respec" needed as you can simply right-click to remove points and place them someplace else as you see fit, so don't worry about making a mistake.

But back to the peaceful side of things, once you've had your share of fighting and are back in port, you can explore the other tabs, which will become more useful as your reputation with the governing faction improves. The Gossip tab, in particular, is very handy in querying details about where nearby provinces are located, where certain goods can be found, and even where certain lucrative deals can be acquired. Try asking for things such as notable figures by their name to learn more about them, "nearby" to learn about other provinces, goods by their name such as "lumber", and so on. So go on, experiment!



Speaking of experimentation, it's time for you to do the same. Hopefully this guide was useful in getting you started, as there is much more for you to explore and discover – such as realizing that all of the game is completely moddable by editing simple text files – from game rules to internal ship layouts. But that is for another guide!

Have fun in Windward Horizon, Captain!