

## The Growth Of Final Fantasy XI

Final Fantasy XI was launched in May 2002 and quickly became a popular and acclaimed title. It has expanded its world since its launch and much outstanding new content has been added. The fact that it is still successful today demonstrates that it is an excellent and significant game.

Final Fantasy XI has prospered and has built up a substantial base of players and subscribers. Before its release, the game's developers, Square Enix, hoped that it would achieve a figure of around 400,000 users by March 2004. The president of Square, Yoichi Wada, had high expectations for the game, commenting that Square hoped to "make the online game service another key profit generator besides our package game business". It was an important title for the company.

Final Fantasy XI's performance pleased Square, and it soon became one of the most prominent online multi-player role-playing titles around. It reached the milestone figure of 500,000 users by January 2004 and saw the world of Vana'diel become a busy and well-populated community. It impressed Final Fantasy fans who were uncertain about the series' move into online gaming, and drew in new players as well. It was essential in making Square a force in the online sector.

The world of Final Fantasy XI has grown since 2002. Square Enix have added all manner of updates and new content to Vana'diel. The fact that there was over a year between its release dates in Japan and North America gave Square the chance to rework and improve the game before it was unveiled to the west. This meant that when it was launched in the United States it was an even better title than it had been originally. These enhancements helped the game to succeed in America and Europe.

In 2004 player versus player content was added to Final Fantasy XI. Square released an update in April 2004 containing a sporting event called Ballista, which is similar to basketball. In Ballista, players have to throw a stone called a 'petra' into a receptacle called a 'rook'. Further content came in February 2006 with the addition of Brenner, a game where players have to capture another team's 'flammen' or flame. These games are very entertaining and made for strong additions overall.

Another interesting piece of new content was the feature of weddings, which were introduced to Final Fantasy XI in October 2002. This feature allows two characters to 'marry' each other, and share the experience of the game together. It is enacted just like a real marriage, complete with a wedding ceremony between bride and groom. This option has become a fun and attractive feature of the game.

There have been two expansions to Final Fantasy XI to date and they have broadened its world considerably. The first expansion is called Rise of the Zilart, and it was released in Japan on April 17 2003 on PlayStation 2. This expansion's storyline focused on the Zilart, an ancient race who attempted to open a portal called the Gate of the Gods. This expansion added in new areas to Vana'diel such as desert and jungle settings, and included new careers like dragoons, ninjas, samurais and summoners.

The second expansion to Final Fantasy XI is called Chains of Promathia. It was released in Japan, America and Europe on September 21 2004 for both PlayStation 2 and PC. Chains of Promathia continued the Zilart storyline and featured a narrative about ancient legends and settlements. It included new areas on the outskirts of Vana'diel, and new creatures such as the Moblin, a goblin that lives underground. Both expansions were very creative and featured appealing new game territory.

At the point of early 2006, a third expansion is planned, entitled Treasures of Aht Urhgan. Final Fantasy XI is also due to make its debut on Microsoft Xbox 360. These moves will help the game to grow even further. Overall Final Fantasy XI has developed beautifully since its launch. Vana'diel is a thriving community and will captivate players well into the future.

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### About the Author

Hunter Crowell is a researcher, marketer, and an avid online gamer, including Final Fantasy XI and also the creator of Buy FFXI Gil Price List, a web site setup to help players find the cheapest place to buy their FFXI Gil. Visit his site at <http://www.ffxi-gil.info>