# How to Get Started With Decentraland & Gameplay Review

The decentralized metaverse is upon us. Read on to learn more about how you can start playing and building a virtual world in Decentraland.

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29 November 2021
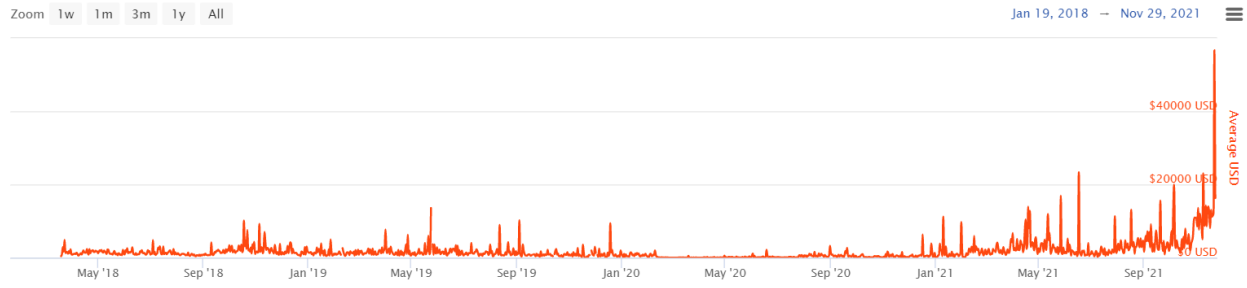
With all the hype around Meta, formerly Facebook's, latest metaverse showcase in October 2021, it seemed appropriate for us to take a look at Decentraland, a decentralized 3D virtual reality world powered by the Ethereum blockchain. Much like Habbo and Second Life, Decentraland allows players to use their avatars to play and explore an open world. Unlike the former conventional open worlds, Decentraland's decentralized nature means that players can do whatever they want in the virtual space, and the possibilities are quite endless. However, Decentraland wasn't always like this, and it has evolved significantly since the project's inception.

## Decentraland's Humble Beginnings

Decentraland was initially created in 2015 by like-minded friends to "fight back" against centralized VR games. In its infancy, in what the developers called " The Stone Age," Decentraland was simply modeled in the form of a two-dimensional pixelated grid, where pixels were allocated to users through a proof-of-work consensus algorithm.

By the end of 2016, Decentraland had transformed into a 3D world where land is divided into different plots. Each plot of land was associated with a hash reference to a particular file containing the assets meant to be displayed on that plot. Users could travel across the virtual world using a Distributed Hash Table and downloading the file and assets for a specific location.
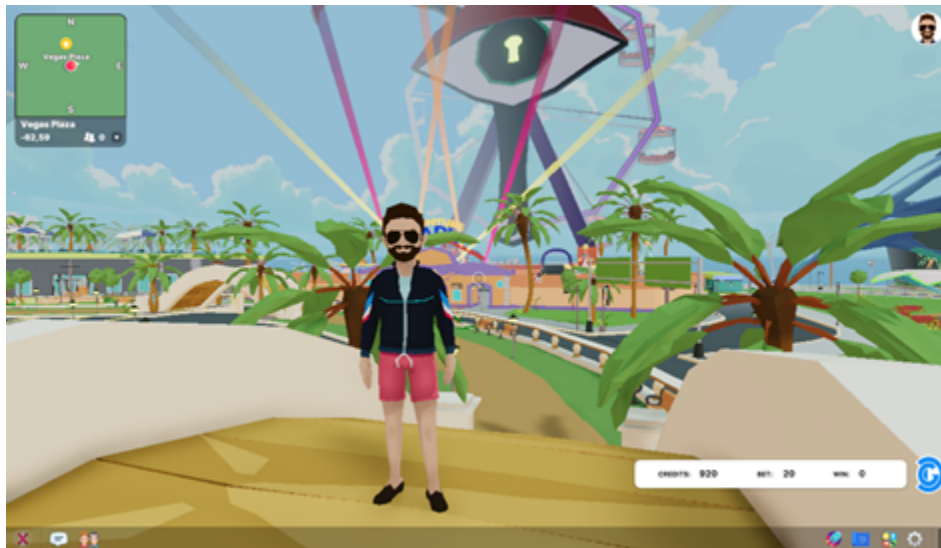
In early 2017, Decentraland launched its first-ever beta, where plots of land were sold for as little as $20. Now those little parcels of in-game land could easily be sold for thousands of dollars. In fact, the past month saw a virtual estate, consisting of 116 smaller land plots, fetching over $2.4 million on the secondary market.

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*Daily average value of assets sold (in USD)*        *Source: nonfungible.com*

As the Ethereum network continues to gain more traction and attract a sizeable user base, Decentraland has integrated itself within the ecosystem by utilizing the network's smart contract capabilities. This has enabled interactive apps, in-world payments, and peer-to-peer communication in the metaverse. Today, players may trade digital assets, socialize with friends, and even hold VR conferences, all while exploring this ever-expanding digital world.
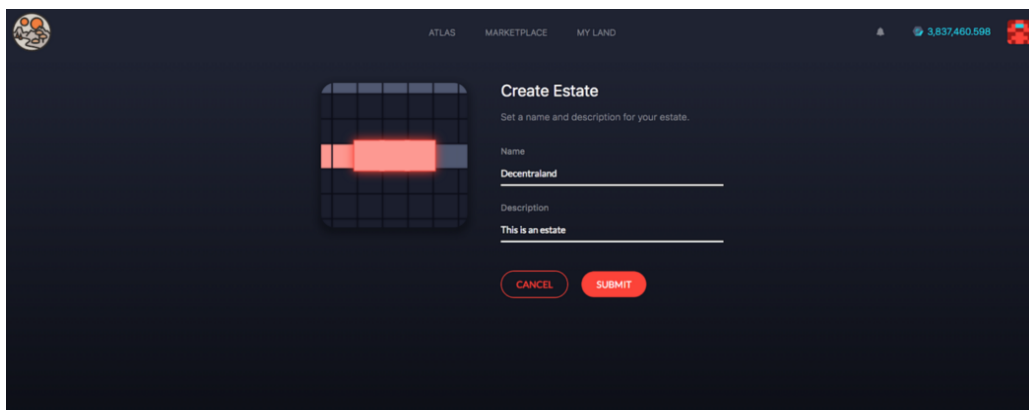


## What Exactly Is Decentraland?

As the name implies, Decentraland, which is an abbreviation of 'decentralized land', is a fully immersive digital world completely controlled by its community. The world of Decentraland comprises many digital plots of land, which are represented as non-fungible tokens (**NFTs**) on the blockchain. As long as they are within the confines of their own land plot, owners are free to create and display their creations for all to see.
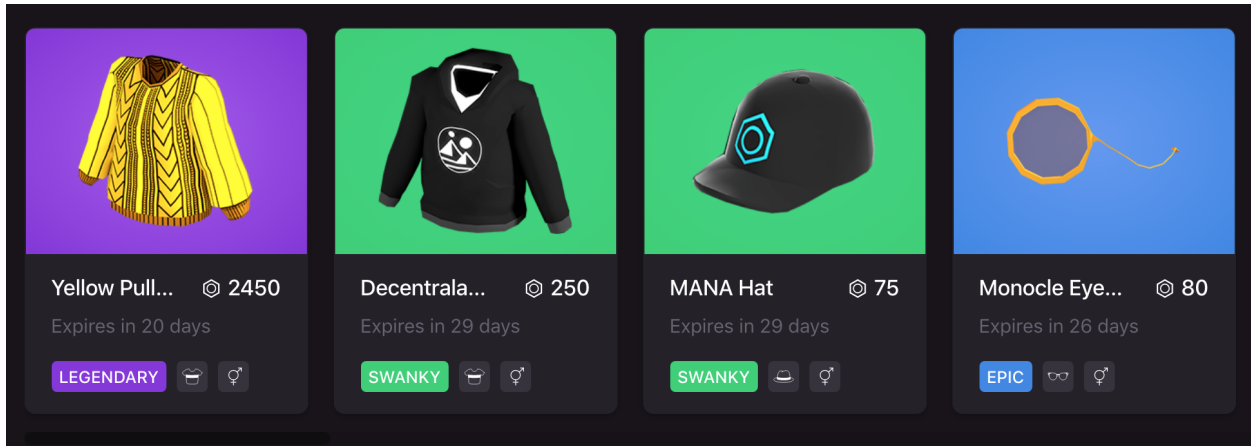
Parcels of land can be purchased from secondary marketplaces such as OpenSea using a variety of tokens. However, they will cost you a fair bit, based on the parcel's size and proximity to specific public areas.

If you're feeling a little claustrophobic, you can create even larger plots of land by forming adjacent parcels into estates. These combined plots of land allow owners to easily manage and develop their landholdings, especially if they are trying to build structures that can't fit within one regular land plot. Estates are represented as another ERC-721 NFT that contains the underlying land parcels.

Decentraland's economy is largely powered by its native token, MANA, which can be used to purchase land plots, wearables, and other services within its virtual ecosystem. Besides that, token holders have the right to participate in governance by creating or voting on community proposals. MANA tokens can be obtained from most centralized and decentralized exchanges such as Binance or Uniswap.



Owning land is just half of the experience - the other half is building amazing structures and pieces to showcase, as well as exploring the entirety of the Decentraland metaverse. But before you can do that, you would need an Avatar - three-dimensional characters that allow users to assume a virtual identity in Decentraland, where they can explore the metaverse and socialize with others. You can create as many avatars as you want and customize them with your own signature look, or choose from hundreds of different outfits. Unlike real life, you can also change your hair and facial features instantly!

| Yellow Pull... ◎ 2450 | Decentrala... ◎ 250 | MANA Hat ◎ 75 | Monocle Eye... ◎ 80 |
| Expires in 20 days | Expires in 29 days | Expires in 29 days | Expires in 26 days |
| LEGENDARY | SWANKY | SWANKY | EPIC |

If the free outfits are not to your liking, Decentraland also features premium NFT wearables which can be purchased through presale or from the secondary market using MANA. Wearables come in different rarities, ranging from Uncommon to Mythic. The higher the rarity, the lower the mintable supply for that particular item.

Brands and content creators alike can also create exclusive wearables for special contests or events. These wearables are minted on the Polygon blockchain by default so that users can trade them without incurring exorbitant gas fees. You can pick up some of these rare items such as a MetaMask Beanie or our very own Gecko Hat from the secondary market.

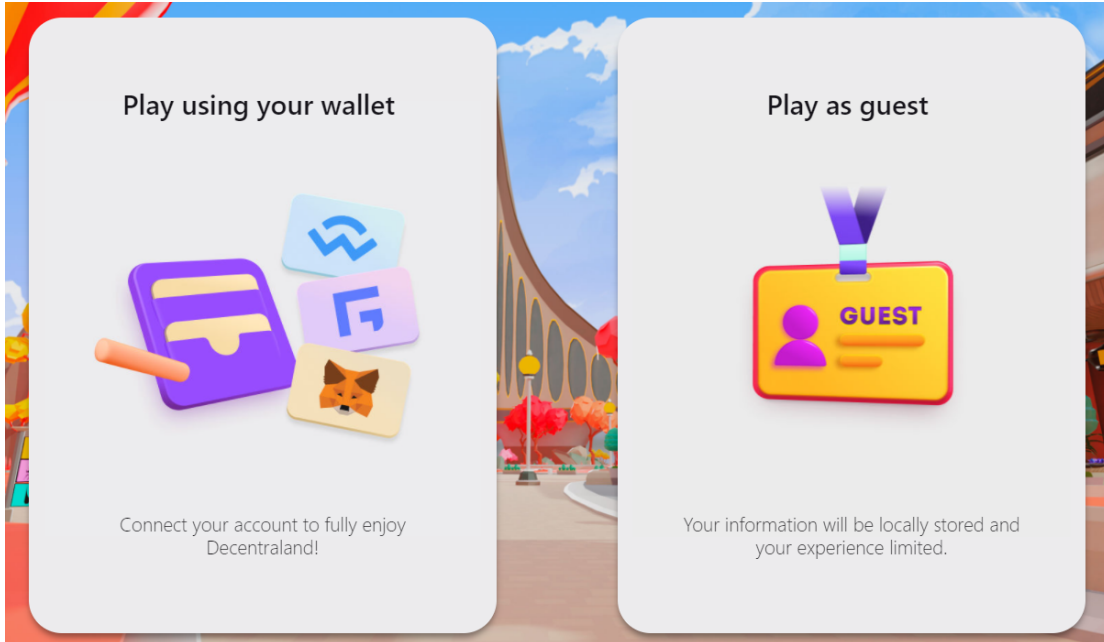## How Can I Start Playing Decentraland?

At this point, you're probably wondering - how can I start playing Decentraland right now? Well, all you need is a web browser and from there, there are two ways to go about it. You can sign in as a guest, where certain features will be unavailable, or you can choose to sign in using a digital cryptocurrency wallet such as MetaMask.

However, it is recommended to get yourself a digital wallet to enjoy the whole experience. Having a digital wallet allows you to store and port your game assets and in-world progress in a secure manner as long as you take good care of your private key and seed phrase.

Here is a step-by-step guide on how to enter Decentraland using a digital wallet, so you can jump right away into the metaverse!
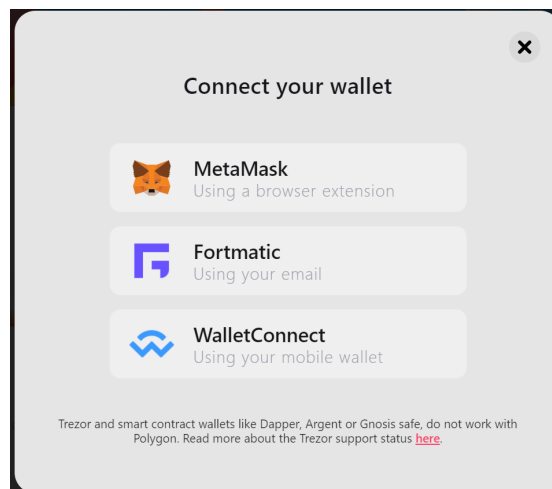
### Step 1: Open your web browser and head to https://play.decentraland.org/.

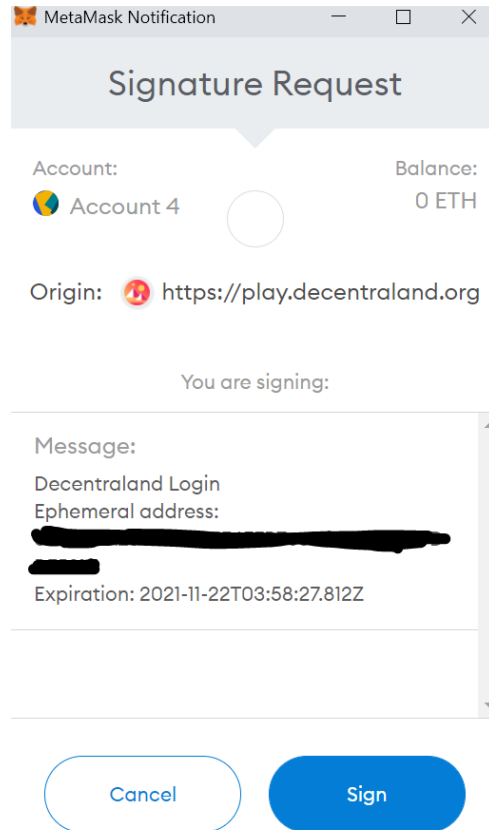Click on the left option to play using your wallet.

## Step 2: Select your preferred wallet to connect

After clicking, you will receive a prompt to choose which type of wallet to connect. You can select from MetaMask, Fortmatic, or WalletConnect. For this example, we will be using MetaMask.
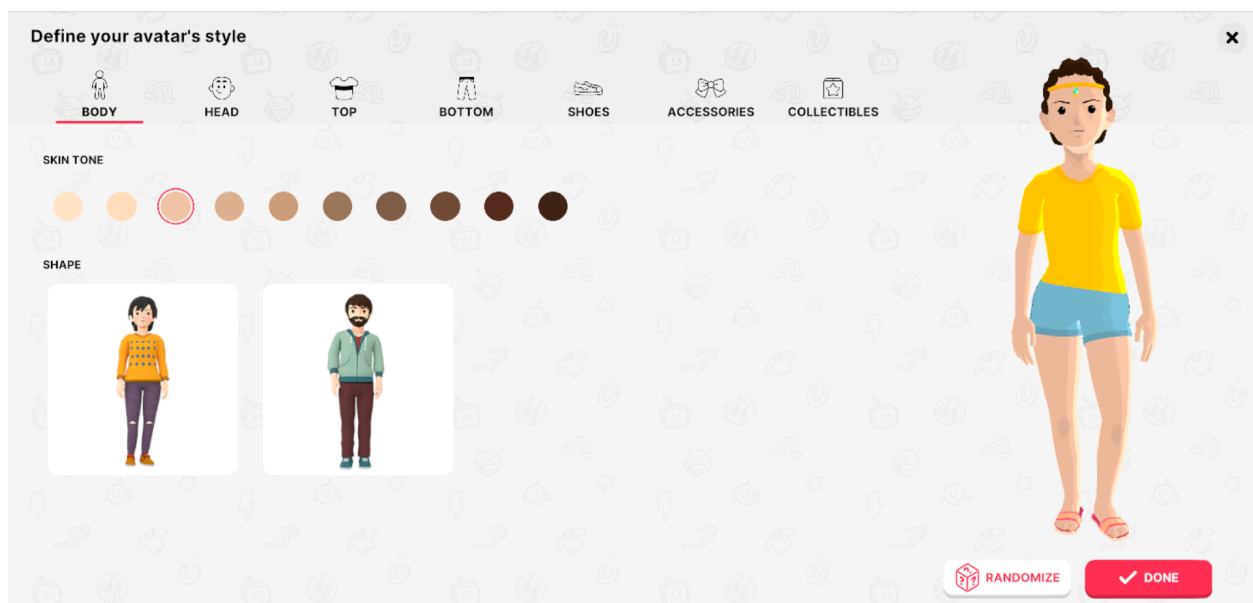


## Step 3: Log in to Decentraland

After connecting your MetaMask wallet, you will receive a signature request to log in. Sign the request and you will be redirected to your avatar in Genesis Plaza. If this is your first time logging in, then you will be sent to a menu to personalize your avatar!
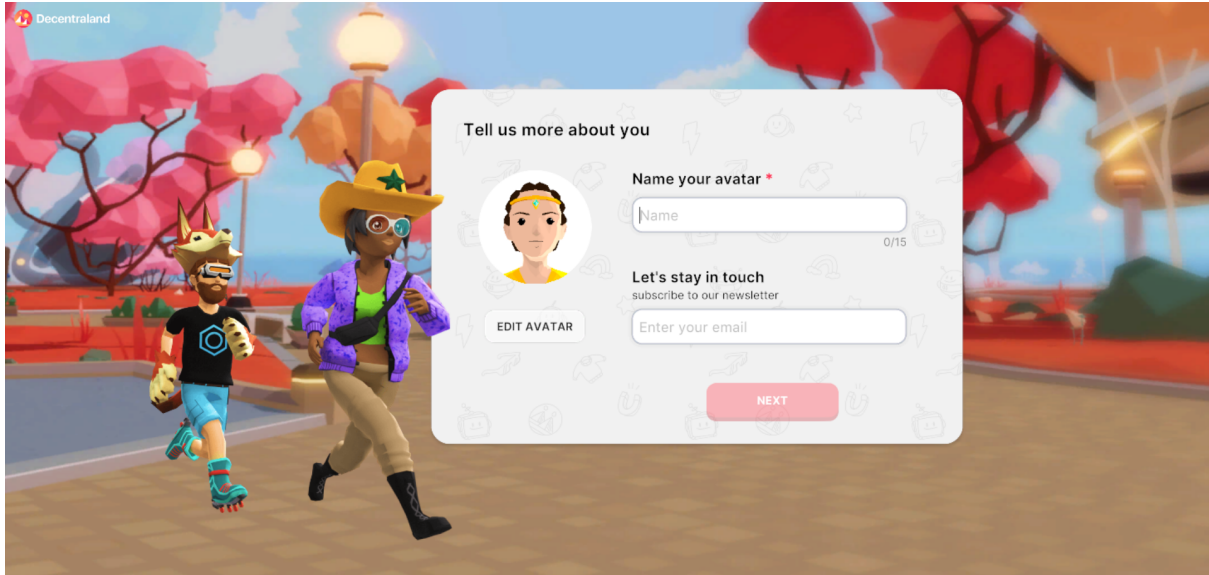
## Step 4: Customize your avatar

On the avatar selection screen, you can create your own unique avatar by customizing it in many ways, including Body, Head, Top, Bottom, Shoes, Accessories, and Collectibles.

## Step 5: Name your avatar

Once you're done, you will have to name your new avatar. Optionally, you may choose to subscribe to the Decentraland newsletter.



## Step 6: And you're all set to explore the world of Decentraland!
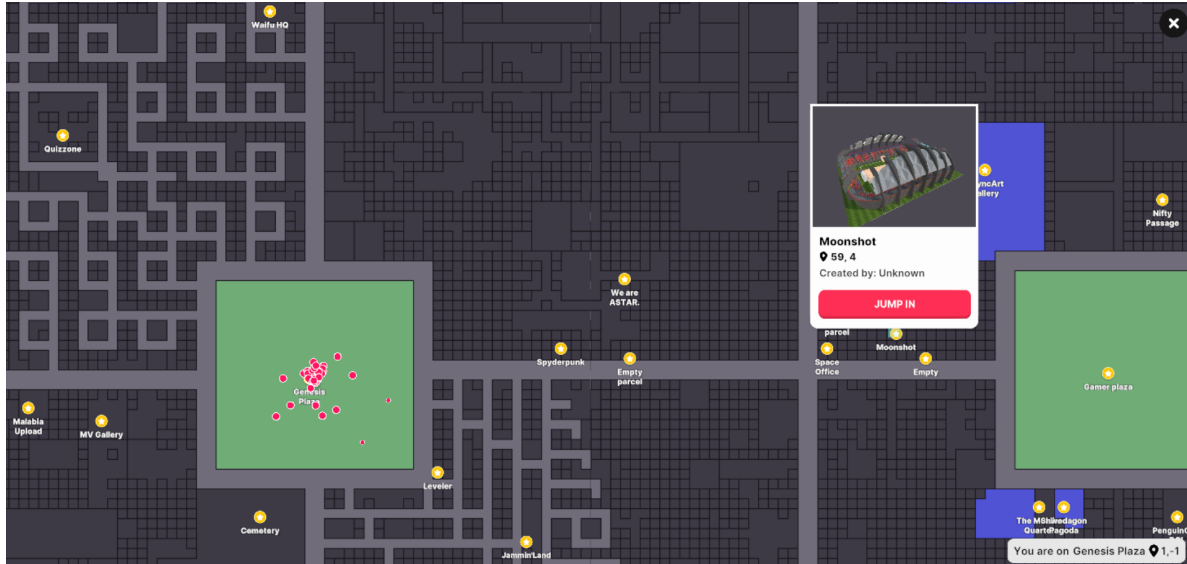


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# Exploring Decentraland

Overall, the gameplay is reminiscent of early virtual community spaces such as Habbo and Second Life. Upon entering Decentraland, your avatar will be spawned in Genesis Plaza, which is sort of like the 'hotel lobby' for players. Here, you can check out a variety of events, games, and trending locations in Decentraland. Since new players tend to arrive here first, this is also a great place to meet and chat with many new faces.
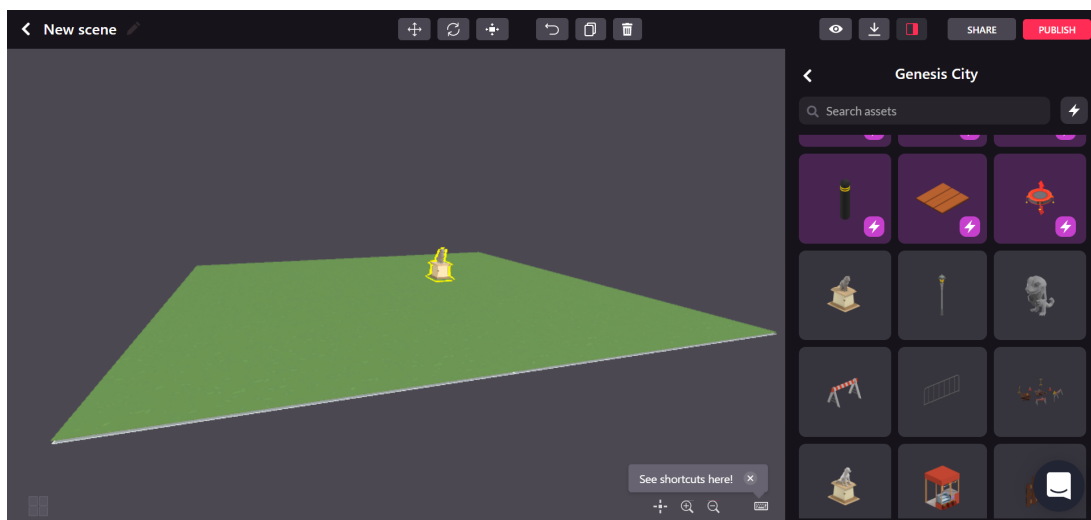


The controls are simple to pick up for gamers and non-gamers alike. Navigational controls operate pretty much like a first-person shooter (FPS), and cursor movements will change your camera angle. You can even toggle between first-person and third-person mode by pressing 'V'. Decentraland offers players visual aids by indicating the proper keys to push for a specific action. For example, players are shown the 'E' and 'F' keys to scroll through the list of events. This is a nice touch that will undoubtedly help newcomers to the metaverse.

If you're not a fan of running from one edge of the world to another, Decentraland allows you to jump to any star-marked location on the map. These locations represent points of interest in Decentraland and are usually filled with beautiful scenery and interactive events, so they're all worth a visit. Who knows, you might even get to collect some exclusive wearables and NFTs along the way!

If you happen to own a plot of land, you can also try your hand at building structures and scenes to attract more visitors! Decentraland offers two options for building - either by using the Builder Tool or using their software development kit (SDK). For players with little to no coding skills or experience, the Builder Tool is a great place to start, as you can easily drag and drop various preconstructed 3D assets to create your ideal scene.



## Technical Specifications

From a technical standpoint, the game currently only runs on a PC or Mac and is not yet available on mobile devices. Even though it is just a browser-based application, you would still need a decent rig to run the game smoothly. There are no officially recommended specifications, but the ones below would be the bare minimum you need to clear to enjoy the full Decentraland

experience. However, you can optimize your gameplay experience by adjusting the various graphic settings such as the rendering scale and anti-aliasing.

- CPU: i3 (Gen 2 or higher) or AMD equivalent.
- RAM memory: 4 GB minimum (8 GB recommended)
- Updated web browser
- Graphics: NVIDIA GT 730 or better (AMD equivalent or better)
- Windows with updated graphics drivers (Mac OS or GNU / Linux updated)
- Vulkan and WebGL support
- MetaMask (for Ethereum interaction)
- Internet connection of 10 Mb download. (more is better)

To put this to the test, we've tried playing Decentraland and interacting with its various features using two different devices. Both of them are laptops running the Windows 10 operating system, but with different sets of hardware, as shown below.

| Device 1 (Low specifications) | Hardware | Device 2 (High Specifications) |
|---|---|---|
| Intel i7-8565U | CPU | AMD Ryzen 5 3600 |
| Intel UHD Graphics 620 | Graphics Card | Nvidia GeForce GTX 1660Ti |
| 8GB | RAM | 16GB |

Using the Medium graphics quality as a benchmark, we found Device 1 struggled to maintain even a steady 30 frames per second (FPS) in Decentraland's Genesis Plaza. This is expected as the graphics card is extremely underpowered and well below the stipulated requirements.

On the other hand, Device 2 managed to support Decentraland at a healthy figure of 60 FPS. However, in more detail-heavy areas such as Kraken's headquarters, there were some instances of noticeable frame stuttering. As such, you would definitely need a more powerful device for an all-around smoother adventure.

## Will Decentraland Dominate the Metaverse?

Even though it is far from being the perfect metaverse that most people would envision, the Decentraland team is making progress, and they are steadily moving forward on their roadmap, which can be viewed here. First off, the team has plans to prioritize quality-of-life updates for players. These improvements include NFT badges, additional grouping functionalities for

building, as well as the option to directly add blockchain-based smart items. In other words, you may interact with an in-game object like how you would interact with a smart contract on the blockchain. For example, Sushiswap could be represented as a virtual sushi bar, where you interact with different pieces of sushi to swap assets.

Soon, Decentraland will also feature in-world item trading and better multiplayer support. As the icing on the cake, a mobile companion app is also in the works, where players can receive notifications for live events on Decentraland and also chat with their virtual friends, wherever they may be.

However, it is not the only metaverse available for players to explore. With the likes of Roblox and Minecraft already cementing themselves as major players in the realm of virtual interaction, it can be hard to imagine why the majority of gamers would suddenly shift away to Decentraland, purely because of a more decentralized ecosystem to play and build in.

Traditional game companies have had decades to iterate on top of existing formulas and forged significant partnerships to attract the masses into their worlds. And with names such as Microsoft and Meta already making their move, decentralized metaverses would need to incorporate more unique selling points, such as play-to-earn features, to truly come out on top.

Even so, competition within the decentralized metaverse space is starting to heat up. Alternative digital worlds such as The Sandbox and Somnium Space are also gaining traction, each with its own signature features. For example, The Sandbox focuses more on community-created content, allowing users to generate original NFTs and games and sell them on the marketplace. They have even collaborated with major companies such as Atari and Skybound Entertainment.

On the other hand, Decentraland has also achieved some significant milestones of its own. In June 2021, Sotheby's launched a virtual replica of their London gallery on their platform. More recently, Barbados established the world's first metaverse embassy in Decentraland. With traditional institutions becoming more frequent collaborators, these projects are going all out to attract more than just crypto natives. By doing so, they are trying to change our perception of metaverses as more than just a virtual playground but also a new paradigm for social interaction.

## Conclusion

As the world shifts towards more digital interactions, the concept of fully-fleshed out metaverses is slowly turning into reality. Having a virtual open world such as Decentraland, where the players are wholly in control, truly opens up the potential for metaverses to become more than just a place to unplug from reality.

Much like how traditional video games are becoming even more realistic, the limits to what you can do in the virtual world are constantly being pushed. By integrating various external

applications and content onto Decentraland, players can play exciting mini-games with their friends or take a trip to a live art gallery. Soon, players may even visit virtual shopping malls to purchase real-world items. Instead of just getting a wearable NFT for your avatar, you can also receive the same item delivered to you in real life!

As part of Decentraland's roadmap, the project aspires to integrate VR technology to complete the virtual reality experience. But even in its current state, it may be difficult for the project to exponentially grow its userbase. For many players, especially those from more impoverished countries, there is a high technological barrier for them to enjoy the game smoothly. It is critical for Decentraland to optimize the experience for older devices and mobile phones so that anybody around the world can enter the metaverse.

Decentraland and other similar metaverses have given us a sneak peek at a future akin to that of Ernest Cline's novel "Ready Player One", where an immersive digital world like the Oasis becomes a place where the limits of reality are your own imagination. The question is, are we ready to embrace it? If YOU are ready to explore the metaverse, then feel free to jump right into Decentraland and perhaps give our virtual headquarters a visit!