



POKEMON, RETROGAMING

# Top 10 Most Underrated Pokémon Games

Being born in the '90s meant I was there to experience the Pokémon phenomenon as it happened in real-time: **I saw Pokémon The First Movie in the cinema**, watched the anime series every day, collected the toys, collected the cards, and of course, played the games.

23 years later, I've still been keeping up with the franchise, even at times when the popularity seemed to dwindle. That's mainly thanks to the non-stop offering of Pokémon video games throughout the years: from the initial release in Japan of Pokémon Red and Pokémon Green in 1996 to the more recent worldwide release of **Pokémon Legends: Arceus on the Nintendo Switch**, **there have been over 122 games released under the Pokémon moniker.**

With the vast amount of Pokémon games in existence there's undoubtedly going to be some that don't get the recognition they deserve: so here are **10 Pokémon games I believe are underrated and that deserve your attention today.**



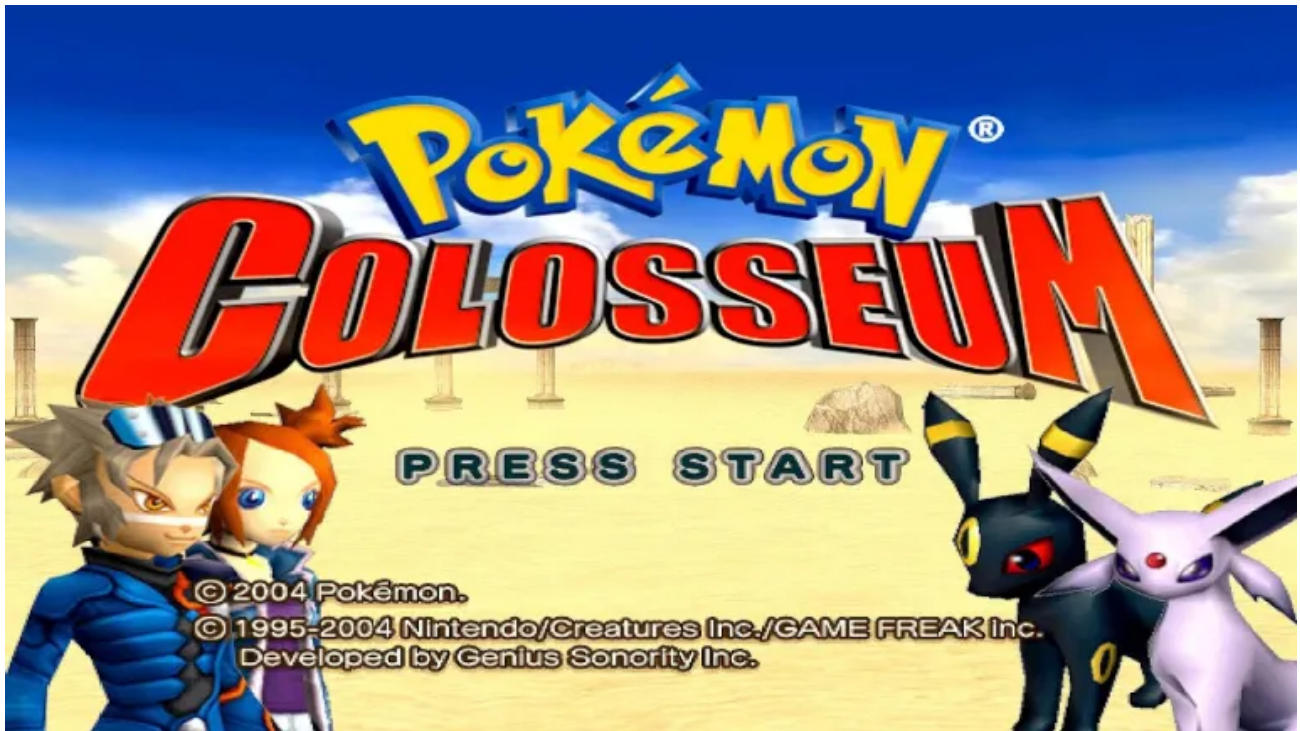
## 10. Pokémon Let's Go Pikachu/Eevee (Nintendo Switch, 2018)

In other Pokémon games, you had to battle every wild Pokémon you came across for a chance to catch them, but Pokémon Let's Go changed all that! Taking elements from the mobile game Pokémon Go, now you could just throw Pokéballs to your heart's content – made even more fun with the Pokéball Plus, a small Pokéball controller that came with the game that could be swung in your hand to make you feel like you were a real Pokémon Trainer from the comfort of your own home.

In Pokémon Let's Go you could also interact with your starter because of the Switch's touch-screen compatibility; from giving your Pikachu or Eevee some much-needed pets to feeding them berries to keep them happy.

I feel that the need to market this as a Pokémon Go experience on the Switch may have alienated some fans from giving them a chance but **they're polished,**

**super fun and essentially just modern remakes of Pokémon Yellow.** A must-have for your Switch if you're a fan of Pokémon or just a fan of RPG's.



## 9. Pokémon Colosseum (Gamecube, 2004)

Unlike the majority of Pokémon games, this game didn't have any areas for you to catch Pokémon out in the wild. Instead, the only Pokémon you could catch was 'Shadow Pokémon', Pokémon once owned by trainers but were captured by members of Team Snagem. By using the Snag Machine, Wes, the player character, is able to identify once captured Pokémon and with the help of his friend Rui, restore them to their normal selves to save the day!

**Colosseum makes for one of the best JRPG experiences on the Gamecube, taking elements from not just Pokémon but the Final Fantasy series too.**

If the single-player story doesn't take your fancy, there's also 'Battle Mode' which allows you to get immediately stuck into some fierce Pokémon battles, similarly to the Pokémon Stadium games on the N64, but using the updated graphics and animation that the Gamecube could offer.





## 8. Detective Pikachu (Nintendo 3DS, 2018)

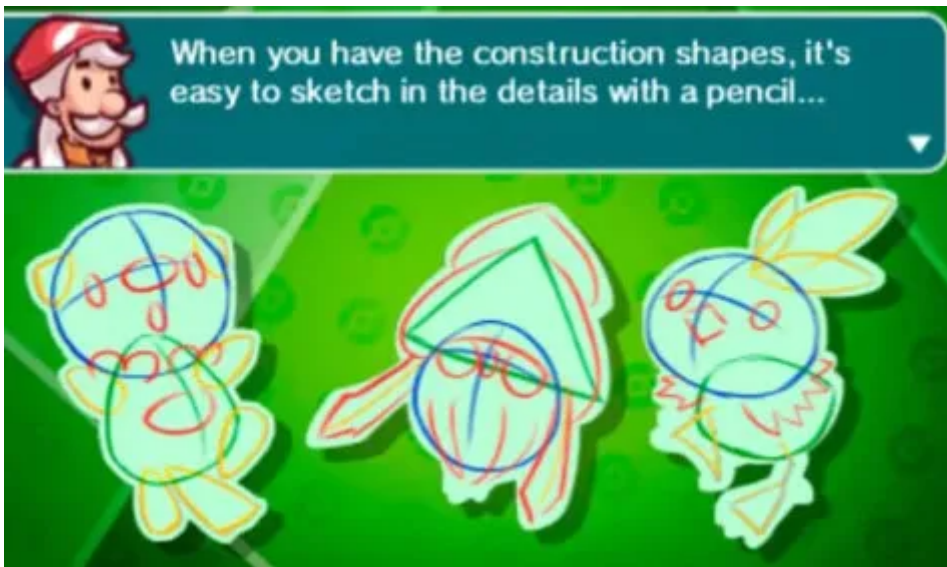
You could argue that 'Detective Pikachu' isn't under-rated at all, as the movie it was based on was a huge hit! I personally put it up there with one of the only truly decent movies adapted from a video game. Despite that, I still feel the source material still gets overlooked, especially as it was a late addition to the 3DS library.

At the time of its release, the Nintendo Switch was already out for an entire year, meaning a lot of 3DS's were probably collecting dust so there's a high chance you may have missed out on this game entirely.

You play as Tim Goodman, who along with the grouchy, coffee addicted Pikachu (voiced brilliantly by Kaiji Tang) collect clues in a fully 3D rendered environment to solve the mystery of what happened to your father, who's also Pikachu's owner (similarly to the plot of the movie.)

Though not a long experience, it's one that keeps you glued to the screen and is one of the better Pokémon experiences to have on the 3DS.

**Nintendo did announce that a sequel to Detective Pikachu would be on its way for the Nintendo Switch**, but until then it's still worth giving this game a go, and shouldn't be hard to find a copy of wherever 3DS games are available.



## 7. Pokémon Art Academy (Nintendo 3DS, 2014)

Do you remember the Art Academy series of games? Well did you know there was a Pokémon one?

Developed by Headstrong Games here in the UK, Pokémon Art Academy sees you learning how to draw various Pokémon via different skill levels and allowing you to learn genuine art techniques along the way.

Your teacher is Professor Andy and he's here to teach you how to become the very best Pokémon card illustrator there is!

There are 40 lessons in all, varying from simple ways to draw Pikachu's cute face to adding shading, cross-hatching techniques, and creating dynamic backgrounds for your artwork. **This actually helped kickstart my desire to properly learn how to draw and is great for Pokémon fans or art hobbyists alike.**

The coolest part? When it comes to saving your lovely artwork, it saves it as if it were art for a Pokémon card.

Though the 3DS screen isn't the easiest to draw on given the small size of it if you're into art in any way this is a fun little title and a great addition to the Art Academy series.



## 6. My Pokémon Ranch (Nintendo Wii, 2008)

If you haven't heard of '**My Pokémon Ranch**' don't fret, it wasn't technically a game like the other titles I've mentioned so far, but a WiiWare title only available on the Wii Shop Channel.

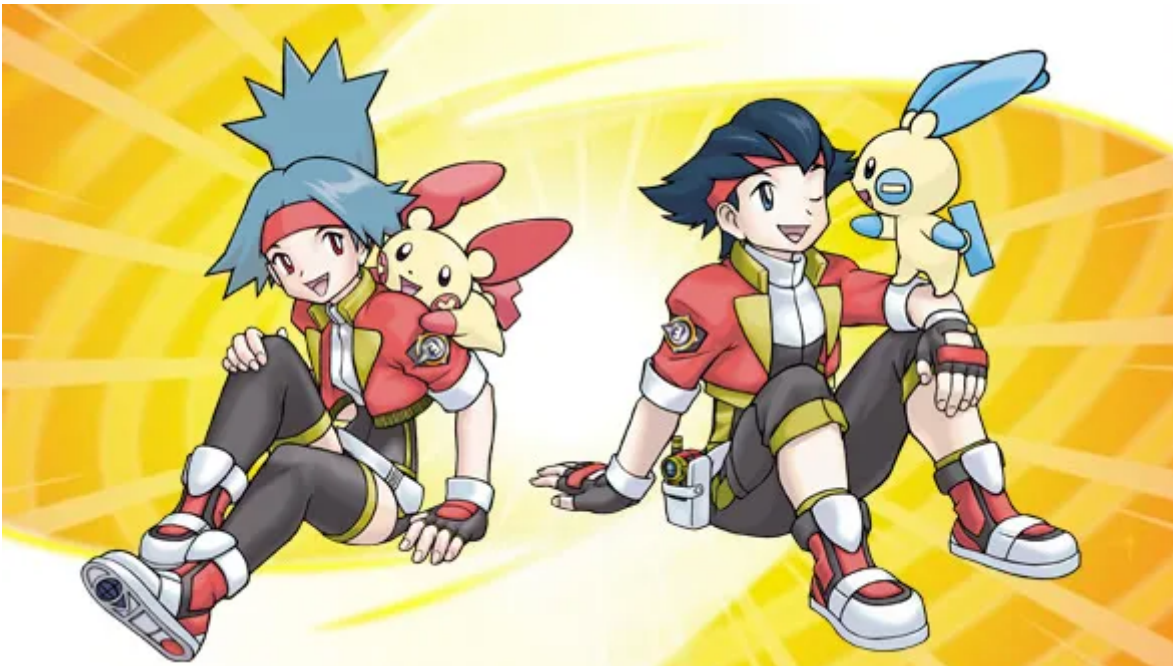
It was pretty much the 'Pokémon Bank' of its day – allowing you to transfer and store Pokémon from your Pokémon Diamond or Pokémon Pearl save files to see them frolic and run around a ranch as cute little 3D models.

The ranch is run by 'Hayley', and she dreams of being surrounded by lots of Pokémon. You do just that by transferring Pokémon from your games into the ranch – with even any shinies you caught being represented by their different colour variations when viewed in the ranch.

By depositing a certain amount of Pokémon into the ranch you could unlock new features – eventually, you could even unlock the ability to get a Phone and Mew which you could then transfer back to your Diamond or Pearl files to show off to your friends.

My favourite thing about 'My Pokémon Ranch' was the parades. During the parades, you could have one of your Mii's take charge and show off your Pokémon under the care of that Mii. For extra fun, I'd use my Mii's based on characters from the anime so I had myself, my friend's Mii, and Brock showing off our Pokémon.

As you can imagine with the Wii Shop Channel officially shutting down in 2019 you can no longer buy 'My Pokémon Ranch' through official means making this one of the harder Pokémon games to experience today, but **it was one of my favourite things to pick up and play on my Nintendo Wii and worth a look today if you have the means to do so.**



## 5. Pokémon Ranger (Nintendo DS, 2006)

Pokémon Ranger is set in an all-new region called Fiore where you, as a ranger, are equipped with the 'Capture Styler'. What this means is you draw circles around the Pokémon in order to catch them, making heavy use of the DS's touch screen compatibilities. Think of it like you're some form of cowboy but instead of wrangling horses your wrangling Pokémon!

What was especially endearing with Pokémon Ranger was its graphics; instead of the squished chibi-like style of the other Pokémon games of the time, Ranger had more detailed sprites and overall looked a lot brighter and more colorful than its DS counterparts.



With the many mainline Pokémon games found on the Nintendo DS, it's no surprise that **Pokémon Ranger and both of its sequels may fly under people's radar**. Luckily, all three of the Ranger titles are reasonably priced on second-hand markets for you still to buy and enjoy.



## 4. Pokémon Puzzle League (Nintendo 64, 2000)

If you were a huge fan of the Pokémon anime back in the day but slept on Pokémon Puzzle League, **you missed out!**

Pokémon Puzzle League was one of the few games based on the popular anime series that followed Ash Ketchum and his dream to become the ultimate Pokémon Master. In Puzzle League, you find Ash being interrupted on his vacation by a message from none other than Professor Oak, telling him he's been selected to compete in the Puzzle League Tournament.

From there you go on to fight familiar trainers and gym leaders from the anime from Gary Oak to even Mewtwo himself by clearing blocks; the usual matching of three either vertically or horizontally, gathering combos as you go, and making sure your blocks don't reach the top of the board as it's game over from then on out.



What initially seems like just a Pokémon reskin of Nintendo's Puzzle League game series is actually a super fun N64 title that uses animated cut-scenes, voice acting from the original English dub, and N64 versions of the songs you grew up with, such as 'Viridian City', 'What Kind of Pokémon Are You?' and of course the original Pokémon theme song.

The game originally only saw a release in North America and Europe, so it may be unlikely that we'd ever see it on the N64 Nintendo Switch Library but it's definitely worth going back to if you're a fan of puzzle games and grew up with Ash Ketchum and his friends.



### 3. Pokémon Pinball (Game Boy Color, 1999)

Pokémon Pinball for the Game Boy Color was just that, a Pokémon-themed pinball experience for your Game Boy Color!

Instead of a generic ball on the screen, you had a Pokéball that you'd hit about on either the Pokémon Red themed table or the Pokémon Blue one.

What made this game extra special was the cartridge itself which contained a rumble feature. Powered by only one triple A battery, it really made the

experience extra engaging especially if you set off the Pikachu's at the bottom of either end of the tables. In order to test the strength of the rumble feature within the Options menu, the game featured Pikachu shocking a Psyduck which I always found hilarious at the time. (Poor Psyduck.)

The options menu also gave the ability to 'sound test' the music to the game. Composed by Gō Ichinose, who'd later become a core composer for the mainline Pokémon games, the soundtrack to Pokémon Pinball is my favourite out of the entire Game Boy Color library and one I constantly found myself listening to in the back of the car with my headphones on when I was younger.

**This is still my favourite way to experience any pinball game**, and a worthwhile addition to your Game Boy Color collection! It even received a sequel on the Game Boy Advance known as 'Pokémon Pinball: Ruby and Sapphire' which is equally worth checking out today.



## 2. Pokémon Trading Card Game (Game Boy Color, 2000)

There was once a time when in order to play the Pokémon Trading Card Game the only option you had was to play with friends, in person, with your physical cards. That all changed in 2000 with the release of Pokémon Trading Card Game on the Game Boy Color.

Re-using sprites from the previous Pokémon entries, Pokémon Trading Card Game sees the player setting off to learn how to play the card game in order to

collect the most legendary of Pokémon cards. After following the tutorial of the game, instead of picking your starter Pokémon, you pick your Pokémon starter deck.

One of the best things about the game? It even came with an exclusive card! If you were based in Japan you got a promo Dragonite card, anywhere else, you got a promo Meowth card.

Because of the nature of how we like to play our modern virtual card games via apps on our phones and tablets, having a Pokémon card game on a Nintendo console may be something we're unlikely to ever see again, however, the charm of Pokémon TCG on the Game Boy Color is something that deserves to be played regardless.

Pokémon TCG did see a port on the 3DS Virtual Console back in 2014, but its' sequel 'Pokémon Card GB2: Here Comes Team GR', has never been released outside of Japan – who knows if we'll see either hit the Nintendo Switch in the future.



# 1. Pokémon Conquest (Nintendo DS, 2012)

And finally, the game no Pokémon fan saw coming.

Who knew one day we'd get a game based on real-life efforts to conquer Japan during the Sengoku Period but featuring Pikachu!

A cross-over between Pokémon and the Nobunaga's Ambition game series, Pokémon Conquest was a tactical RPG, similar to the likes of the Fire Emblem series for the Nintendo DS.

As you progress throughout the game you'll meet warriors and warlords based upon real-life figures in Japan's history, each of their outfits being inspired by different Pokémon. My personal favourite being Oichi, whose pink accents on her outfit make a nice subtle nod to her Jigglypuff companion.

Pokémon Conquest is full to the brim with gorgeous animation, exciting battle animations, and plenty of hours' worth of gameplay to keep your attention. If you're into tactical RPG's this is one of the best there is!

Sadly, Pokémon Conquest can be extortionate on the second-hand market, probably due to the fact that it carries a cult following. **If you're lucky enough to get one, you're in for one of the greatest Pokémon experiences out there!**

## What do you think?

Are there any Pokémon games I listed that you haven't heard of before?

Maybe there's one I missed that you believe is underrated?

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