

Forza Horizon 6 : Analysis, review, and the latest news

Forza Horizon 6 officially brings Horizon Festival to Japan, launching on May 19, 2026 on Xbox Series X|S and PC, with Early Access starting May 15 for the Premium Edition, over 550 cars, a Tokyo – snow-capped mountain – touge map, and many notable gameplay upgrades.

Forza Horizon 6 is the sequel to the popular open-world racing game series developed by Playground Games and published by Xbox Game Studios. After years of community anticipation for Horizon Festival to come to Japan, Microsoft and Playground Games finally confirmed it at the Xbox Tokyo Game Show 2025 Broadcast: Forza Horizon 6 will be set in Japan and released in 2026. This is almost the most 'fan-friendly' move in the series' history, as Japan has long been considered the ideal location for a Horizon game: neon cities, mountain touge roads, JDM culture, drifting, kei cars, urban highways, countryside, cherry blossom season, and even snow-capped mountains.

Regarding release dates, **Forza Horizon 6** will launch on **May 19, 2026**, on Xbox Series X|S and PC, including the Microsoft Store, Steam, and Game Pass. Buyers of the Premium Edition or Premium Upgrade can play early, starting **May 15, 2026**, four days earlier than the standard release. A PlayStation 5 version has also been confirmed, but it will follow the Xbox and PC releases in 2026, with no specific date yet.

Picture 1 of Forza Horizon 6 : Analysis, review, and the latest news

A quick summary of Forza Horizon 6

Category	Main information
Game name	Forza Horizon 6
Developer	Playground Games
Publisher	Xbox Game Studios
Background	Japan

Category	Main information
Official release date	May 19, 2026
Early Access	May 15, 2026 for Premium Edition/Premium Upgrade
Foundation	Xbox Series X
Vehicle number	Over 550 vehicles at launch.
Car cover	2025 GR GT Prototype and 2025 Toyota Land Cruiser
New highlights	Intense map of Japan, Tokyo City, Japanese Alps, Time Attack, Car Meets, Drag Meets, customizable garage, new sound effects, cross-play/cross-save support.
Assessment status	Metacritic gave the Xbox Series X a score of 92 based on 64 critical reviews at the time the data was crawled.

Why is Forza Horizon 6 generating so much attention?

The appeal of **Forza Horizon 6** stems from three factors: its Japanese setting, the established Forza Horizon brand, and the expectations following the success of Forza Horizon 5. From Colorado, Southern Europe, Australia, the United Kingdom to Mexico, each Horizon installment has been closely tied to a 'speed travel fantasy'.

Japan is a particularly weighty choice because its car culture isn't just about street racing or supercars; it also encompasses JDM, tuning, drifting, kei cars, mountain roads, urban highways, and the aesthetics of urban nightlife. Xbox Wire confirmed that the teaser announcing Forza Horizon 6 includes easter eggs from previous installments before revealing the new world of Japan, suggesting Playground Games wants to make this a major milestone for the series.

The key point is that Forza Horizon 6 isn't just a 'map change'. According to the official Xbox website, the game is touted as the 'biggest open-world driving adventure yet' of Forza Horizon, featuring Japanese landscapes and over 550 real cars. This is an ambitious claim, as Horizon 5 was already very large and highly regarded for its scale and quality of its open world. If Playground Games truly excels at map depth, online gameplay, and driving feel, Forza Horizon 6 could become the new standard for open-world arcade racing games.

The Japanese setting: Forza Horizon 6's strongest selling point.

The most appealing aspect of **Forza Horizon 6** is 'Horizon Japan'. According to Forza's map announcement, the game stretches from the central streets of Tokyo City to the snow-covered Japanese Alps, and is described as the most 'dense and vertically oriented' map in the series. This is crucial because Japan is not only visually beautiful, but also boasts constantly changing terrain: bustling cities, highways, coastal roads, traditional villages, mountains, passes, snow, forests, and narrow areas suitable for drifting or time-attacking.

Playground Games also stated that the Forza Horizon 6 map features routes inspired by the C1 loop, Ginkgo Avenue, Mt. Haruna, and Bandai Azuma. These names are certainly appealing to players who love Japanese cars, as the C1 loop evokes Tokyo's urban highway culture, while Mt. Haruna is often associated with the touge spirit in the racing and anime/manga communities. For a Horizon game, where 'wandering around' is sometimes just as enjoyable as winning a race, a Japanese map with its many layers of urban landscapes and mountain passes is a very strong foundation.

Picture 3 of Forza Horizon 6 : Analysis, review, and the latest news

Another noteworthy point is that the seasons in the game are promised to be more distinctly different from Mexico in Forza Horizon 5. Forza says that the seasons in Forza Horizon 6 change from landscapes, crops, foliage, weather to environmental sounds, and players can use snow tires to enjoy year-round snow in the Alpine mountains. This helps make Japan in the game not just a cherry blossom postcard, but a space with a seasonal rhythm, different road grips, and driving feel that changes according to the environment.

List of vehicles: over 550 cars and a strong comeback of JDM culture.

Forza confirmed that **Forza Horizon 6** will have over **550** collectible and customizable cars at launch. The two featured cars are the **2025 GR GT Prototype**, making its first appearance in the video game in Forza Horizon 6, and the **2025 Toyota Land Cruiser**. Given the Japanese setting, Toyota's central role in the media coverage is a logical choice: the GR GT represents modern performance, while the Land Cruiser represents practicality, off-road capability, and Japanese engineering heritage.

Forza also stated that the car roster has been rebalanced according to performance classes, and an **R Class** has been added for track-oriented cars. This is noteworthy for players who like to build cars by class, as the balance between classes determines whether multiplayer is healthy. If the game has many cars but the meta revolves around a few overly powerful models, the online experience will quickly become limited. Playground Games' clear statement about performance balancing shows they understand the long-term concerns of the community.

Additionally, Forza Edition cars return, this time with more extreme upgrades. If implemented properly, this group of cars would be a good incentive for collecting, completing events, exploring the map, and participating in seasonal challenges. But there are risks: Forza Horizon has often been criticized for 'giving away cars too generously,' diminishing the feeling of owning a rare car. Forza Horizon 6 needs to strike a balance between accessibility and the feeling of a valuable reward.

New gameplay: Time Attack, Car Meets, Drag Meets, and Car Life.

One of the most noteworthy changes in **Forza Horizon 6** is how the game organizes community activities. According to Forza, Japan in the game has many meetup locations including Time Attack Circuits, Car Meets,

and Drag Meets; these locations are integrated into the Shared Open World, meaning players can drive past, see real players, and join immediately without a loading screen.

Time Attack Circuits is a new feature where players race through gantry gates to set the fastest lap times. This mechanism is much more suited to Japanese racing culture than just traditional checkpoint racing, as time attack involves fine-tuning the car, learning the racing line, optimizing braking, acceleration, cornering, and comparing every fraction of a second. Forza states that players can arrive with any car and still receive Credits/XP for each completed lap, so this could be the most 'time-consuming' activity for those who like to improve their skills.

Car Meets allows players to show off their cars and characters, download tunes/liveries, and even purchase replicas of impressive vehicles they see. This is how Forza Horizon 6 integrates the creative community into the open world, rather than hiding it in a menu. **Drag Meets**, on the other hand, offers 12 car slots at each drag race location, suitable for those who enjoy experimenting with acceleration setups, launch control, and build comparisons. If these activities are stable in terms of matchmaking and servers, Horizon Japan could be much more vibrant than the feeling of a 'large map but scattered players' in some open-world games.

Beyond racing, Forza Horizon 6 also adds **Customizable Garages** and **The Estate**, allowing players to decorate their garages, create showrooms for their car collections, and build directly in the open world. Horizon CoLab also allows up to 12 people to collaboratively build EventLab content on the Japanese map. This is a smart move: instead of just selling a racing experience, Forza Horizon 6 is expanding into a car lifestyle platform where players can drive, collect, show off, tune, decorate, and create content.

Driving feel and sound: small upgrades that can make a big difference.

Forza Horizon has always sat somewhere between arcade and simcade: easier to play than Forza Motorsport, but still retaining enough weight, grip, and responsiveness for players to feel each car has its own personality. With Forza Horizon 6, some early reviews indicate the game adds a new 'Simulation' steering mode, which reduces understeer and makes steering more precise. Car and Driver also rated Time Attack as one of the most enjoyable activities because it forces players to pay attention to fractions of a second, a departure from the usual fun chaos of Horizon.

Sound is an area that Playground Games has emphasized. Forza says that the cars in Forza Horizon 6 have new sound recordings, remastered audio, an upgraded modular system for the turbo and backfire, more detailed road interaction, improved in-cabin feedback, and acoustic modeling technology that simulates the soundscape of the world. The game also uses Triton Acoustics, a spatial reverb system based on object position, and includes field recordings across all four seasons in Japan. With a game full of tunnels, high-rise buildings, mountain passes, and forests, good sound reflections can make the driving experience significantly more realistic.

Picture 4 of Forza Horizon 6 : Analysis, review, and the latest news

Another improvement is **Car Proximity Radar**, which helps players identify vehicles in blind spots, especially useful when using cockpit, hood, or bumper views. In crowded races, Forza Horizon sometimes turns into 'bumper cars' because players have difficulty predicting the location of opponents. Blind spot radar can help make races cleaner, especially in multiplayer or high-speed events on narrow Japanese roads.

Graphics and PC: 4K HDR, ray tracing, DLSS 4, FSR 4, XeSS 2.1

Technically, **Forza Horizon 6** continues to be one of the most noteworthy racing games on PC. Forza Support states that the PC version supports 4K HDR, enhanced ray tracing, unlocked frame rates, ultrawide monitors, and upscaling technologies such as NVIDIA DLSS 4, AMD FSR 4 or 3 depending on the GPU, and Intel XeSS 2.1. The game also supports benchmark mode for players to measure performance, and displays real-time video memory and system memory when adjusting graphics settings.

Ray tracing on PC includes Ray-Traced Reflections on vehicles and the environment, along with Ray-Traced Global Illumination for more accurate indirect lighting and occlusion in the open world. With the Tokyo setting, wet roads, neon lights, glossy car bodies, and urban environments with many reflective surfaces, ray tracing can make a noticeable difference if optimized properly. However, performance still depends on configuration, background tasks, graphics settings, ray tracing, and upscaling, so PC gamers should use benchmark mode before attempting to push everything to Ultra/Extreme.

Forza also stated that the game is playable on handheld PC devices such as the Steam Deck and Xbox ROG Ally, with cross-save across all platforms that Forza Horizon 6 supports, including Xbox Series X|S, Windows PCs, Steam, SteamOS devices, PC handhelds, and the upcoming PS5 release. This is important because Forza Horizon is suitable for both long and short play sessions: a race, a Time Attack lap, a few minutes of free-running, or a car hunt.

Early assessment: almost entirely positive, but not without drawbacks.

At the time the Metacritic data was crawled, **Forza Horizon 6** had a Metascore of **92** on Xbox Series X based on 64 critical reviews, with 97% positive reviews and no user score yet, as the game hadn't been widely released. This is a very strong start, especially for a series already in its sixth installment and prone to criticism for repeating formulas.

Positive reviews often revolve around the Japanese map, the Wristband progression system, the accessible racing feel, the large amount of content, and the beautiful open world. Metacritic cites several reviews stating that Forza Horizon 6 is the series at its best, Japan is 'beautiful and worth exploring', and the Wristband system makes the progression feel more rewarding. Other reviews also emphasize that the game is still 'more of the same', but since the underlying formula is already one of the best open-world racing experiences, familiarity isn't necessarily a weakness.

Car and Driver rated the game as very fun in its 'controlled madness' aspect: players can drift Cadillac limousines on Japanese mountain roads, driving through a prologue featuring GT-R NISMO, Honda NSX, Shinkansen trains, cherry blossoms, and Toyota GR GTs. The review also praised the new UI with its 'What's Next' page, which helps players avoid getting lost in the mountain of content, and stated that Time Attack is addictive because it forces players to optimize each lap.

However, not all reviews were entirely complimentary. Car and Driver noted that the game sometimes resembled its predecessor, ForzaTech showed signs of being outdated in some visual aspects, NPC traffic could be sparse and buggy, and dialogue was sometimes annoying. Metacritic also noted a lower rating from Gamereactor UK, stating that Forza Horizon 6 lacked ambition and Japan wasn't as well-represented as expected, although it remains one of the best arcade racers currently available.

Leak before release: bad news for Playground Games

A notable piece of news just before its release was that **Forza Horizon 6 was leaked and cracked before its official launch**. The Verge reported that the full version of the game appeared on file-sharing sites after an unencrypted build, over 150GB in size, was leaked. Playground Games later confirmed that this was not a preload error and warned of strong measures against anyone accessing this build, including franchise bans and hardware bans.

This leak has two impacts. On one hand, it increases the risk of spoilers, sharing unofficial gameplay experiences, and impacting PC sales in the short term. On the other hand, it also shows the immense anticipation within the community for Forza Horizon 6. For legitimate players, the clear advice is not to download the leak: besides the malware risk, using unofficial builds can lead to account/hardware bans and ruin the online experience.

One detail related to PCs is that Windows Central reports that Forza Horizon 6 does not use Denuvo DRM, based on Steam listings and confirmation from Xbox. This is good news for many PC gamers, as Denuvo is often controversial regarding performance, online authentication, and control over the experience after purchasing a game. However, not using Denuvo does not mean the game is completely DRM-free, especially with Game Pass/Xbox apps.

Is Forza Horizon 6 worth buying?

If you're a fan of Forza Horizon, open-world racing games, or Japanese car culture, **Forza Horizon 6 is almost certainly a worthwhile choice**. The Japanese setting isn't just a fresh coat of paint; it fits perfectly with many of Horizon's activities: drifting, time attack, touge, car meet, drag racing, tuning, car photography, seasonal exploration, and JDM collecting. With over 550 cars, Game Pass support, cross-save, cross-play, and post-release content, this game has the potential to keep players engaged for a long time.

If you're considering buying the Premium Edition, the main benefits are early access from May 15, 2026, VIP Membership, the Welcome Pack, Car Pass, the Time Attack Car Pack, the Italian Passion Car Pack after release, and two post-launch expansions. For players who plan on playing long-term, the Premium Edition or Premium Upgrade might be a good option. For casual players, the Standard version on Game Pass is a safer way to try it out before spending more on DLC.

One thing to consider is that Forza Horizon 6 might still feel familiar to some. If you've played Horizon 4 or Horizon 5 for hundreds of hours and are expecting a complete revolution, changes like the Japanese map, Time Attack, Car Meets, customizable garages, and improved UI might not be enough to truly transform your experience. But if you want a well-polished, beautiful, easy-to-play open-world racing game with plenty of content and a Japanese map that appeals to the community, Forza Horizon 6 is showing many positive signs.

Conclusion: Forza Horizon 6 is the most anticipated Horizon game in years.

Forza Horizon 6 isn't just a safe sequel. This is the first time Playground Games has chosen the location the community has been asking for for years: Japan. Tokyo City, the Japanese Alps, touge, cherry blossom season, high mountain snow, JDM culture, over 550 cars, Time Attack, Car Meets, Drag Meets, customizable garages, and PC-based technical upgrades make for a very strong content package.

Based on official information and early reviews, Forza Horizon 6 has the potential to become one of the most important open-world racing games of 2026. The game still has areas to watch: the degree of formulaic repetition in Horizon, the quality of NPC traffic, server stability, multiplayer balance, and how Playground Games maintains post-release content. But overall, **Forza Horizon 6** is almost certainly converging to become a very strong Horizon sequel: accurate settings, plenty of cars, new activities that fit Japanese racing culture, good PC technology, and very positive initial critical feedback.

FAQ about Forza Horizon 6

When will Forza Horizon 6 be released?

Forza Horizon 6 will be released on **May 19, 2026**, on Xbox Series X|S and PC. Buyers of the Premium Edition or Premium Upgrade will be able to play it early starting **May 15, 2026**.

Where is Forza Horizon 6 set?

Forza Horizon 6 is set in **Japan**, featuring locations such as Tokyo City, the Japanese Alps, and routes inspired by the C1 loop, Gingko Avenue, Mt. Haruna, and Bandai Azuma.

Will Forza Horizon 6 be released on PS5?

Yes. Forza Horizon 6 will be coming to PlayStation 5 after the Xbox Series X|S and PC versions in 2026, but the exact release date has not yet been announced.

How many cars are there in the Forza Horizon 6?

Forza confirmed the game features over **550** collectible and customizable cars at launch. The two featured cars are the 2025 GR GT Prototype and the 2025 Toyota Land Cruiser.

Is Forza Horizon 6 available on Game Pass?

Yes. Xbox says Forza Horizon 6 is playable on Day 1 with Game Pass, and the Forza website confirms Game Pass Ultimate or PC Game Pass will be available from May 19, 2026; a Premium Upgrade is required for Early Access.

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