

Pick Up & Deliver 840: Vacation Games Transcript

Welcome to Pickup and Deliver, the podcast where I pick up my audio recorder as I step out for a walk and deliver an episode to you while I stroll around. I'm Brendan Riley.

[Intro Music]

Greetings, listeners. It's a balmy, very warm, late June day here in suburban Chicago, and I'm glad to be back.

I, I guess I have to start with an apology. I did, I was a lazy podcaster. My intent was to publish an episode which is recorded right now. I guess I could leave leave the message in for posterity, but I believe that in the episode I have in the bank waiting to be published, I say, "hey, I'm going on vacation for a couple of weeks." I did not get around to publishing that episode, and thus I did not tell you I was going on vacation for a couple of weeks. And so the podcast went quiet and I apologize for that. Hopefully you weren't too sad and you were able to find some other board game podcasts to listen to.

I know there aren't really any there, but in a serious note, I did have a listener reach out and just say like, "hey, are you doing okay?" And I really appreciate that. It's nice to know there are people on the other end of the, the speaking tube. And, um, I apologize for anybody who was caught off guard by the lack of chatting with Brendan podcasts that you could have listened to.

Well, it is, as I said, very warm. I'm walking at six in the morning because it's already seventy eight degrees. We went, uh, my wife and I, my wife and I to celebrate our twenty fifth wedding anniversary. Took a two week trip through the Canadian Maritimes. We drove around and went to Nova Scotia. We went to Quebec, a little bit up northern Maine for a couple hours, and then Nova Scotia, New Brunswick or New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island for a couple days each. We had a delightful time exploring different parks. Seeing some landmarks. Enjoying the food. Spending time together. It was a lovely trip. We even played a couple board games which I'll talk about, but so that's what I was doing.

And while we were there, it became handy to try to figure out how to understand Celsius kind of quickly. And so I looked it up and they're like, well, it isn't perfect math, but a good rule of thumb is if you take a Fahrenheit temperature like seventy eight degrees, subtract thirty, which gives you forty eight degrees Kelvin, which gives you twenty four. Then you have your Celsius temperature. So it's about twenty four Celsius right now. And I checked that a few times. It puts you within like five degrees Fahrenheit of the Celsius temperature and within a couple degrees Celsius of the Fahrenheit temperature. So close enough for government work if you're trying to estimate. But anyway, it's six a m it's already seventy eight degrees. It's going to be a real scorcher here today. And so I did not want to take a walk in the middle of the day, as I have been doing in previous episodes. So I can also tell it's very humid because my sheet that I am using to talk about the games is already kind of wilted. Wow.

So okay, I thought I went and looked. I have never done an episode about vacation games. I've done episodes about travel games, but specifically vacation games, which I feel like is a different mindset. But mostly this is not a theme storm episode where I'm talking about games that are good to take on vacation. Instead, this is an episode where I'm talking about the games that I played on my vacation, and games that I think would make good references to the activities I did on my vacation, if that makes any sense. Well, if it doesn't, I'll explain it as I go.

So start with I thought I would tell you about games I played on my vacation. Not that many. This wasn't a gaming vacation. We weren't getting together with friends, which is normally when we would play games and we certainly weren't going to a gaming event, but it is inevitable. We'll play some games while we're traveling. I did bring a bunch. We didn't play all the ones I brought. I usually take games out of the boxes and put them in Ziploc bags, and I limit myself to one gallon size Ziploc bag to bring games. When we're going on a vacation like this, this was a driving trip. We ended up putting four thousand three hundred miles on our car, but it was wonderful. Okay, so we played three games on our trip.

Uh, the Or for, uh, the first of these was **Qwixx**. Qwixx is our standard travel game. I've told you about that a number of times. Um, it is a dice rolling, push your luck game that is, I think, eminently replayable. And I delight in it.

We played **Lost Cities**. Lost cities is a really interesting game because the dynamic can change dramatically. You can play really aggressively against one another. It's a two player game where you're trying to build runs of cards and it uses a rummy or gin style card placement mechanism where you have to play a card and then take a card, and you do that each turn until the game ends and the game ends. When a round ends. When the last card is drawn off the draw pile. The game ends when you finish the third round, and you're trying to get points by building these runs of cards. But the tricky thing is there are six suits. I think the base game comes with five, but then they expanded it to six. And each line of cards that you start immediately is worth negative twenty points. And then whatever numbers are on the card are worth positive points. So if you get the two and the three, that's five points. If you get if you add the four also after that, that's another four points and so on. But you have to play the cards in order. And because you have to play a card every turn, you can only have eight cards. You get to this point where often there are lines you're trying to build, but you don't want to play the card you have now. So then there are discard piles of the different numbers of the different colors, and your opponent can draw from those colors.

If you haven't played lost cities, you should. It's really, really good. But when you play it, you can play very aggressively against the other player, which you're inevitably playing against the other player. But you know, you can really work hard to try to stymie them, but sometimes at the cost of your own development. Similarly, you can play pretty smoothly where you're giving each other the colors you're going for, and you're holding back just enough to try to give yourself the edge. What you don't want to do is make it too competitive, because you each have a lot of power over what the other person can do. So it's a nice balance. This game we ended up playing. I would say more congenially, more, more likely to give each other the cards that they wanted with the idea that, yeah, you know, tit for tat. And we both had very high scores as a consequence. So it was interesting. It's interesting to see how that knife edge moves or how that competition edge moves. Always a good game. Lost cities, that's Reiner Knizia.

We also played **cribbage** and **gin rummy** from time to time. So those are the games I played on my vacation. Not a ton of gaming, but as I said, wasn't really a gaming vacation.

We did stop into a number of bookstores. I know you're surprised about that. And two game stores. We actually stopped into three game stores. Two that I wait were there for. There were four game stores that we stopped in, two of them. I kind of went in, looked around a little bit, said, all right, thanks. This was nice. And we left. Nothing really wowed me. And then two of them I did end up picking up a game. The first one where I got a game was in Halifax. It's the boardroom Game Cafe. This is a pretty standard game cafe from the layout. We didn't actually eat there, but they have a little shop in the front and it was actually a pretty thorough shop. Most game cafes I found the. The shop is usually too general and not deep. Not. Doesn't have a deep enough selection to really be a good store for me to shop at, but this one did have a pretty robust collection, and it did have a game that I've had my eye on for a while. And my birthday was in June. I got some money from my mom and some money from my wife's parents, so I had enough to buy a couple games. So I bought **Orloj: the Prague Astronomical Clock**, which is a game I've had my eye on for a while. It's really pretty. It's from Devir. They have a good reputation. It's got a. It's got decent reviews and a decent score on board game geek. I noticed that Blue Pig Pink Pig reviewed it just after immediately after I bought it. So I hope that I don't listen to that episode and find them all going, "oh, this game stinks." But even if they think it stinks, I might think it's really good. They've had bad takes before in my experience. So that's Orloj: the astronomical clock, which I bought at the Boardroom Game Cafe in Halifax.

Uh, and then this is really fun. I went to we went to Nova Scotia and we didn't hit any game. Oh, that was Halifax in Nova Scotia. We hit one game store in New Brunswick, but like I said, there wasn't anything there that really wowed me. It was a decent selection. I just either whatever. And then we were gonna spend a couple of days in Prince Edward Island and the. There are two things I know about Prince Edward Island. That's where Anne of Green Gables takes place and Rodney Smith lives there. Rodney Smith is, of course, the smiling progenitor of watch. It played the board game teaching channel. And so I got on blue Sky and I tagged him and I said, "hey, I'm coming to Prince Edward Island. What are some board game must do's?"

And he replied and said, "well, if you're looking for stores, here's three you probably want to check out. Have fun in the Island," which was very nice. So we went to two of the three. I looked at the reviews on or I looked at the images and stuff on board game on Google, and one of them looked like it was too much of a toy store. Like they probably did have games, but none of the pictures showed a big game collection except overlapping with toys. And I generally find that a toy store that has games very rarely has games I want to buy. That'll be different if I have friends with young kids and I'm trying to buy a present or something, but you know, generally.

Second, we went to I went to the store called the comic Hunter, which was a kind of an old school comic book store. They had boxes of back issues. They had a proprietor who I will say did not greet me in any way when I was in the store, but instead continued a long conversation about DC comics with one of his regulars who was standing at the counter. And then they did have a couple shelves of board games, which, despite being a relatively small select small size, was a surprisingly wide selection of games. And it looked like he had a pretty good sense of sampling games from different places and times. And so there were a bunch of games there, like there were three or four that I was considering buying. I will say they were pretty expensive compared to like, uh. Anyway, there were several of the games were sort of more expensive than I wanted to pay, and the game that was most tempting. Oh, I'm forgetting what it's called now. Something rabbit. It was a game about. It was a game that takes place in a Cherokee community. Uh, and it has to do with Cherokee mythology. And one of the things that I thought sounded really cool about it was that you. It came with instructions to play it in English or Cherokee, which I just like the the difference in accessibility that doesn't actually help me play, of course. Uh, I was tempted, but it was very expensive. It was like one hundred dollars Canadian, which fair to be fair, is like seventy five dollars US, but still. And the reviews were not good on board game geek. Um, they were at best mediocre. I mean, it's general rating is like seven something, but it was a crowdfunded game. So the reviews are often inflated a little bit. And then the geek rating was in the low fives. so I decided not to get that with the with the hope that the third game would pay off and boy howdy did it.

Exor games is the one I would recommend if you're going to be in Charlottetown, P.E.I.. It is a huge game store. They have a gigantic like Warhammer and Magic section, but then they have a huge just regular tabletop games section as well. A robust collection of available games, including a copy of Arch Rivals the knitting game that my company, XYZ Game Labs, produced and sells. That was fun to see on the shelf. And yeah, it was a really nice store. They were super friendly. They said hi to my wife as well as saying hi to me, which I think is a good indicator of the nature of a game store. If you go into a game store as a couple, particularly a heterosexual couple or a man and a woman, and the woman is given the same level of attention and greeting as the man is. That's really important because a lot of game stores are sexist places and not super welcoming to women. So it was nice to see that we did end up picking up a game there. We saw this game called Hatchlings, which I don't know a ton about the reviews, the board game geek ratings on it are okay.

I probably wouldn't buy it just randomly on a day when I had a choice of any game available on the market. But of the games that were available there, it looked pretty good. It also had a cedar waxwing feeding cedar waxwing babies on the cover. My wife and I were doing some birding on our trip, and when I'm shopping with my wife, it's fun to get a game that has a theme that she would enjoy too. And the. Since the other game I got I bought was about the Prague Astronomical clock, I thought nestlings seemed like a good fit, so that was one of my souvenirs for the trip was this game nestlings, which I haven't tried yet, but I'm sure you'll hear about in a future episode. So that was Exor games in Charlottetown, P.E.I.. Well, I spent more time talking about the places I went in the events of my game trip than I intended to, but we still have a few minutes left, so let's talk about some things. So what I thought I would do to talk about games here is I picked out three activities that we did on the island. So I thought I would tell you about that activity. And then I would tell you about some games that go well with that activity or would.

So start with you are going to be surprised to hear this listener. We went birding. I say the surprise part as a bit of, um, sarcasm if you're new. My apologies. My wife and I are avid birders. We have been for about two and a half years now. We started in January of or January, February of 2024. It's kind of a weird time to start doing an outdoor activity in Chicago, but whatever. And we've been birding pretty avidly since then. The we went on a number of birding walks and other things that were connected to the hobby. But the, the big activity that we did was we got tickets on a excursion on a boat to something called off the coast of Nova Scotia called Bird Island. Bird Island is what the label says. It's an. It's actually. Well, not really. It should be

called Bird Islands. There are two big islands that are next to each other, and I say big, like big compared to a person, but. Or your yard. But they're small as far as islands go. But there are these rocky outcrops with plants or with grasses and large cliff face, uh, about, I don't know, a couple miles off the coast. It took about a half hour, twenty minutes to half an hour to boat out to them. And then we slowly boated around them for about an hour, and then twenty minutes to half an hour to come back. So those islands, they're called Bird Islands because they are full of birds.

On the trip, they gave us a little checklist that showed us something like eight different species. We would probably or had a good chance of seeing that day. And then there were like four spots for extra species. We saw seven of the eight that were on that list, plus a couple more that were not on that list. So it was a very good birding outing. There were several birds that we saw that we'd never seen before. A great cormorant was pretty cool. We saw a bunch of those. There were a bunch of puffins, which is a bird I have seen before in my life, but not since I started birding. If you bird and you're somebody who keeps track. A lot of birders keep track of. Have they seen a bird? A particular species of bird? It's one of the things you keep track of. So the puffin is a bird I had seen before, but not since we started keeping track. We also saw Razorbills and, uh, my favorite was the Black Guillemot, which was particularly fun because the captain of our ship, who was sort of narrating what we were seeing, and it was generally an amusing kind of guy. He said, "keep an eye out for those black guillemots. You can tell them because they have they're mostly black with little white spots on their wings and those sexy red legs." And sure enough, the black guillemot has bright red legs. They look kind of like very similar to duck legs, but they are bright, bright red, which is very funny because he used it as a kind of vocal, uh, habit. He would say sexy red legs every time he mentioned the black guillemot. And now I know that my wife and I, for the rest of our lives, will think of that as the bird with the "sexy red legs," which I think is really funny.

So that outing was a little bit about boating, a little bit about tourism, but it was mostly about birding. So here are some games that were related to that. The tourism one comes to mind. First, the tourism one comes to mind first. This is the game **Riverside**, which is about having a boat full of tourists and taking them up a river to see stuff that's a dice rolling check, a box game, uh, in the neighborhood of something like Three Sisters. And it's from Eilif Svensson of the, uh, Swedish or of the Norwegian design team that I like so much of Amundson and Svensson. Uh, we also there's also **wingspan**, of course, which is an ideal birding game, is a game all about birds full of bird cards. I don't need to say a lot about wingspan. You probably know about it.

But then I also thought about two games that are about taking photographs, which is the other thing I was doing here. And this is **wild Serengeti**. Wild Serengeti is a safari game where you are on safari to get good photographs of a safari. What you do is you play cards to move animals around on a board, to try to get them in the right arrangements, to take pictures of them, which is just like what you do in nature. You move the animals around until they look good and you take pictures. I mean, not quite, but often you do wait until the right moment, or you take pictures and the one you get where they're in, the kind of the right combination of positions is the one that works really well. So that is Wild Serengeti.

And then there's **Costa Rica**. Costa Rica is a push your luck game from Matt Dunstan and Brett Gilbert, in which you are revealing tiles and collecting photographs of different animals in the jungle, and your goal is to get a certain number of. You're trying to get sets of the different animals and avoid too many hazards. So it's a fun game that I think is well worth checking out if you get a chance. I found it on deep discount and I have gotten more plays out of it than I have many other games that I paid full price for. I also did look up camera and photography games, and there are two that I was thinking of that are worth that I don't know. I don't know anything about playing them, but it's amusing to know they exist.

There's a game called **Bird Watcher**. It was published after wingspan, so, um, feels like it's at least connected to the theme. Like, oh, gamers like birds. Uh, that's from renegade. And it looks like it's a game about trying to get great photography of birds. Uh, and then there's a game called **Redwood**, which is about traveling forests of the Pacific Northwest and trying to get good pictures in them. So those are my games. They come to mind as I think about our trip to Bird Island.

The second thing I wanted to point out that we did on the trip that was really fun was we went to a ceilidh. A ceilidh is a traditional Irish and Scottish, Irish or Scottish, uh, music event, sort of defined by the idea of people gathering in houses or gathering in churches, or gathering in public spaces and playing music together. It's usually Irish or Scottish folk music using guitars and fiddles, banjos, maybe drums and singing. And then often

there's dancing and storytelling as well. The ceilidh we went to was at this sort of small community centre, and apparently it is open every night in the summer and they do ceilidhs every night. The I guess the way they do it is the different people who have gigs. They do the gig once a week on that day. So we went, I think on a Tuesday. And so if we were to go back next Tuesday. It'd be the same people there again. I think they do it every Tuesday for the summer. I think that's what somebody said. I don't know how that works if some of the musicians are on tour, but maybe they go on tour in the winter months and the summer months. They're home here and they do these gigs. It was relatively full, we're told, once the high season started. Starts in Canada next month. You have to be there at seven or you won't be able to get in like they sell out every night. We got there at seven and we were able to get in and it never actually filled up. It started at seven thirty, but delightful music, good storytelling, really fun event. There was some dancing and it felt really fun to be part of that community and part of that musical event.

So thinking about what is a what is a version of that in board games? I can't I couldn't think of a ton, but a couple. Most of what I thought of had to do with music performance. The one that I think feels thematically the most similar is **Come Together**, which is a game about putting on basically Woodstock. It's not actually Woodstock, but it's a game about putting on a Woodstock style music event in the sixties, I think. And so the idea is you're arranging acts and trying to get people into place. That's very different than the ceilidh we were at, which had an audience of maybe a hundred people and just three artists on stage for two hours. But but that gives you an idea of it.

There's also in Music Performance, the two other games that I've played that at one point or that I know of that I've wanted to point to. One of them is **Rock hard: 1977**. This is a game about being a rock musician in the seventies. I don't think it's very much like a ceilidh in the way that they describe what you're doing or the the theme fits, but it's at least sort of thematically on on point and then on tour is a roll and write game that I think feels connected to the experience, particularly of the professional musicians who are traveling around doing playing gigs around the country and sometimes into the states, that that is what on tour is all about. So not a ton of connections I didn't have. I couldn't think of anything that sort of really fit the feel of a ceilidh. But the overall flow of music playing is the theme I had there for that event. Then the third thing seems a little bit related to the first one, except the the first one was specifically like going to look at birds.

Taking photographs is just generally hiking. When my wife and I go on vacation, we are often finding outdoor spaces and spending time in them. The. There were a whole bunch of really wonderful different vistas, different places, different forests, different lakes, uh, on the ocean that we got to look at while we were in the Maritimes. A lot of times we were looking at that in the context of looking for birds. Sure. But generally the experience of walking around in nature is wondrous. And let's think about what are games that do that. The obvious leader in that division would be **parks**. This is the game by Henry Audubon, the third so grandson of John James Audubon or great grandson. Maybe in this game you and other players are doing your best to explore different national parks and collect points based on the parks that you're getting.

There's some different kinds of goals, and you're managing different kinds of resources. It's a fun game. It can be a little mean, but not nearly as mean as trekking the national parks, which is a game I probably don't want to play again because it's so mean. Both of these are really good games about hiking and parks though, so seems like seems fitting to me. And finally, there's a game called **trailblazer, the John Muir Trail**, which I wouldn't mind trying, which is about that particular man, but also about hiking in nature and meeting people and so on. So that's a that's another one that I think would be worth exploring if you had the chance. Now, there are a number of other fun things we did on the trip that might have been worth a segment. Here we saw Stephen King's house.

We went to a number of museums. I was thinking about, are there there are games about museums? Um, there is a game called **Museum**. There are games about going and collecting artifacts for sure. **Archeo society** is one. Uh, archaeology is another. Artifacts Inc. is another. So that is certainly part of the experience. But, but generally, I didn't see a ton of games about museums that I wanted to explore. Um, so that brings me to the end of my thinking about games I played on vacation, at least for today.

So what games do you take with you on your trips if you've taken trips this summer? What games have you played while you were on those trips? Head over to BoardGameGeek Guild 3269 and let me know what you're thinking about those games. If you want to reach out to me directly, you can send me a message. Wombat929 is my username on board Game Geek. You can email me brendan@rattleboxgames.com. Or you

could reach out to me on board game arena or yukata dot de in both places. My username is wombat929, and I am happy to play online games with you in those places. In fact, I would really enjoy it. Well, that's about it for me today. I want to say thanks for joining me on my walk. I hope your next walk is as pleasant as mine was. Bye bye.

[Exit music]

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