

I've been accused by some fans of giving vague descriptions and evasive answers to questions about Tomb Raider: Underworld, and all I can say is yes, guilty as charged. But for good reasons. From the beginning I've been asked, "Are we going to see Croft Manor?" To that question I've always answered a simple yes. What else could I say, knowing what I knew about the trailer we would eventually release but didn't want spoiled? My half-answers and evasions are often protecting what fans really don't want to know before they play the game, or features that are intentionally being kept flexible until the end because the overall quality and taste of the final soup is more important than any one ingredient that goes into it.

When it comes to specific features, a lot of what makes this game so exciting comes down to details; lots and lots of details. Some features that people talk about the most, or have the biggest impact – and I'm not only talking about Tomb Raider games here – are details that occurred to someone late one night and two days later were in the game. But just as often a feature can be planned from the very beginning, and then late in development it needs to be cut because for whatever reason it just doesn't contribute properly, or it can't be debugged. This flexibility is very important, and so when someone asks a simple question like "How is health going to work?" I don't answer definitively, because until we ship, such a sensitive and influential system for a game like this can't be locked down. If we're not happy with how players are responding to the experience as a whole – if the soup doesn't taste great yet – we need to be able to make easy but significant changes to ingredients right until the end.

This also stops me from shouting out some of the really cool details we have now, and continue to add each week as we polish the game from top to bottom. Things like how Lara puts her hands up to protect her face from the heat when she gets close to fire. Or the way you can grab a cliff edge, and if you press the ledge-up button at the right time, she can seamlessly loft herself up to stand atop the cliff edge. Or how Lara presses her lips together when she's holding her breath underwater. Or any number of details we've put in which might not stay in for some reason, including the things I recklessly revealed just now.

I do hope to be able to give more details about Tomb Raider: Underworld in the coming weeks, but when I give slippery answers, please believe that I really do want you all to know everything about the game, but by experiencing it yourself more than by hearing me explain it. Having said that, be on the lookout for more information about Lara's expedition to Thailand, coming out in magazines any day now, and online in a week or so. There was no way to show off Thailand without including what many fans will consider spoilers, but to make you feel better, the giant statues that Lara interacts with are part of a puzzle much more elaborate and multi-staged than the media will reveal – it's the nexus point of many related challenges and puzzles that must be overcome to progress.

Cheers,
Eric