

Press Release **Embargoed 00:01 11 November 2020**

Wikipedia's Jimmy Wales launches video-call Santa project

A safer solution for the strangest Christmas on record, from the "Santa of the internet"

- Parents can book a live video call with Santa, who has been briefed with all the child's favourite things
- Much safer than taking a child to a shopping mall Santa during a pandemic
- Provides paid work for unemployed Santa's in an already difficult year
- Available globally in all time zones, using local talent whenever possible

Jimmy Wales – known as "the Santa of the internet" for gifting Wikipedia to the world with no ads or paywalls – has announced the launch of Santa HQ, an ingenious live video call service for kids who can't see Santa in person this year due to coronavirus.

SANTA HQ is a collaboration with Ministry of Fun, digital agency PRISM, and Australias Book a Santa. It is the highest quality, most interactive, most comprehensive, and most magical digital Christmas experience.

Ministry of Fun is the UK's top provider of Santa's running the country's most established and respected Santa School, and a long time pioneer of the art of family Christmas experiences. The Ministry has been leading the charge to COVID-proof the magic of Christmas, running a socially distanced Santa School in August which made headlines around the world and was widely praised for its ingenuity and imagination. Book a Santa is Australias most respected Santa supplier with Santas all over Australia from far reaching regional areas to Darwin to the Gold Coast to Hobart.

These companies have now teamed up to turn its formidable imagination to pioneering the 'digitisation' of Christmas necessitated by the pandemic. The Ministry of Fun bonded with Book a Santa with their compatible business ethos and love of Christmas, respecting the work of Santa Claus and the difference the character makes to childrens lives.

This new venture will allow kids a measure of normality in a year of turmoil and chaos. Santa Claus is a symbol of all that is good in the world. It is a reminder of generosity and a moment of happiness.

How it works

A one-on-one live video call with Santa himself is one of the highlights of a magical month-long Festive adventure in which kids team up with a hopeful young forest elf, Elf Greenhorn, to complete a fun, interactive and fantastically Christmassy daily challenge that will help him graduate into a prestigious position as one of Santa's North Pole elves. With the children's help, the forest elf will learn the true joy of Christmas...and may even get the chance to ride with Santa on the sleigh on Christmas Eve.

Daily content includes singalongs, dancing, arts & crafts, storytelling, and outdoor exploration all set within a thrilling storyline written by Zoe Bourn, who has recently written for CBBC's Twirly Woos, Fireman Sam and Thomas & Friends.

Santa HQ is an online service where parents can book a live video call with a professionally-trained, DBS-checked Santa at a time and date that suits them.

Parents fill in a 'Festive Fact-Finding' form before the call to give a heads-up on the child's name and favourite things. Kids are accompanied by adult family members throughout, and accommodations can be arranged beforehand for children with special needs.

Calls are made by professional children's entertainers, who are facing a tough year with most in-person opportunities closed. Santa HQ is one of few outlets providing paid, COVID-safe employment for actors at a critical time.

Availability and pricing

Santa HQ is available globally and priced in GBP, USD, EUR, CAD, or AUD.

For \$13, the 32-day festive adventure which contains unlockable daily content including Christmas videos, singalongs, stories, crafts, interactive fun, challenges, and a ready-to-print photo journal keepsake at the end.

And from \$40, you get all the above plus a one-to-one call with Santa though may be higher for particularly in-demand slots including Christmas Eve.

All children in the same family can participate for the same price.

To book visit www.santahq.app

Quotes and images

Founder of Wikipedia and Fandom.com Jimmy Wales said: *"2020 is a difficult year for everyone, but especially poor old Santa. Not only is he facing the logistical problem of trying to deliver presents during lockdown, but he is also not even able to meet kids face-to-face in shopping malls – usually the highlight of his year."*

To make life easier, we have hooked Saint Nick up with reindeer-fast broadband at his home in the North Pole, and custom-built software to talk to kids all around the world without putting himself or their families at risk. This way, we can keep Christmas special without overwhelming the National Elf Service."

Ministry of Fun Director Matt Grist said: *"We passionately believe in the magic of Santa. Even though Christmas is going to be a little different this year, we wanted to make sure there was a way for him to still engage and chat with children."*

With over 23 years of experience working with Santa we hope that we have created something that is special and that goes way beyond a simple call with Santa. At Santa HQ, families not only meet him face to face but also join the elves on an interactive journey. The result is educational, engaging, heart-warming and most of all fun. Santa HQ is about bringing us all together. We must keep the magic alive this Christmas!”

Founder of Book a Santa, Michelle Drinnan said:

This is a fantastic opportunity for children to engage with a fun interactive event of 30 days of activities. Talking with Santa is encouraged as a group activity where grandparents and family in other states/areas can join us for the call. Having this amazing advent calendar of activities plus a live call with Santa is such great value for families this Christmas. Im very proud to be working with Ministry of Fun, Jimmy Wales and Prism for this global event.

Founder of ‘Made by PRISM’ Harry East said: *“After a difficult year, what better project to work on than a magical app for Santa? We are delighted to have founded and developed Santa HQ so that families can meet Santa and take part in a new and unique Christmas adventure. We are incredibly proud of what we and the Ministry Of Fun have created. At PRISM we know what it takes to nurture an idea and build a product that is as important (and magical) as this one, and it is not every day you get to build an App for Santa. We are so pleased to have been able to bring Santa to families this year, and to provide a uniquely exciting Christmas experience for children to enjoy across the world. “*

Images are available here: [dropbox/google drive link]

For more information please get in touch with Dee McCourt or Rachel Wingate at Borkowski; dee@borkowski.co.uk M.07803 726543 or Rachel@borkowski.co.uk M.07807 354540

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