



## LEGO® Pirates

"(...) But, if you let me choose just one of these lives, then I choose the limping pirate, with a wooden leg, a patch over his eye, and a wicked face, the old rogue, the captain of a ship with a flag showing two shinbones and a skull. (...)"

Text & images Gobernador

In his album "Física y Química" Sabina show us clearly that the world around pirates has a special attraction, something different, something that, in some way or another, seized our attention when we were children... or not so young and let us dream with those lifestyle, maybe attracted by that halo of liberty and adventure which has always wrapped the world of pirates.

Piracy is as old (referring to the sea piracy, not to the piracy which is persecuted by some association

related with royaltys) as navigation. There were pirates in the ancient Greece, in Rome, in the middle ages, the Renaissance and in the Modern times, and also nowadays.

LEGO, conscious of the feelings awoken by anything related with piracy, decided in 1989 to start a theme that is undoubtedly recalled in a special way for the great quality of this sets.

The pirate world that LEGO gave us is centered in the Golden Age of piracy, that took place in the



Atlantic and Pacific oceans between the XVI and XVII centuries. LEGO® represented amazing ships and astonishing buildings, as well as exotic islands and lots of characters that still today remain in the memory of any AFOL.

We'll make a chronological voyage through the different stages of the pirates theme, all the sets, because some of the sets weren't sold in Spain since its beginning in 1989 to his end in 1997, though some sets were reedited.

#### The beginning

The cover of the 1989 catalogue, in both versions, showed us what was the most exceptional new product, the pirates theme. In the Spanish version, we can see how the traditional themes (Space, City and Castle) are watching the new theme's disembark. In the English version we can see Captain Roger and one of his henchman ready to bury a treasure.

With these sets the two main groups appeared: on one side the pirates, commanded by captain Roger and on the other side the imperial soldiers, led by the governor.

One of the main new features came with this theme's minifigs, which were the first ones to abandon the traditional smiling face with two little black eyes, and started showing beards, moustaches and sideburns of different colours, as well as patched eyes. Also captain Roger was the first maimed minifig, with a wooden leg and a hook instead of a hand.

In the first stage two ships appeared, which set a

landmark, above all the "Black seas barracuda, 6285", a set reedited in 2002 and considered a LEGO legend.

These ships brought lots of new pieces, from hulls to masts, including also cannons and different accessories.

The ships were wonderful reproductions of true sailing ships, and included great details as the figurehead and the forecandle.

One of the other new sets that remained in our memory, despite not being included in the Legends series, was the "Eldorado, 6276", the governor's fortress, a solid building in a lonely island, with an authentic colonial scent, and it's one of the two sets in which the governor's minifig was included.

Other remarkable sets were edited in the first batch, "Forbidden island, 6270" and "Sabre island, 6265", among others.

The imperial guard, dressed in a beautiful blue uniform with three different ranks. The governor, with his two-horned hat, his golden epaulettes and the magnificent frock coat, then the officials, with a three-horned hat, golden epaulettes too and a blue frock coat and finally, the soldiers, with a black uniform, red epaulettes and blue frock coat.

The pirates were dressed in a more sailor way, with several coloured jackets or striped shirts and various headscarves and three-horned hats, except Captain Roger, who showed off an elegant black uniform, with brown epaulettes and a two-horned hat with the skull and shinbones.

Pirates remained unchanged in the following years, very different from the Imperial guard which, in the year 1992 changed its uniforms, from blue to red,

Last page: El Black Seas  
Barracuda

Right: Eldorado



and the epaulettes, from red to blue. Also a new rank appeared, the Admiral, with a brand red uniform and white gloves.

In this stage new ships appeared, as the “Skull’s eye schooner”, the biggest ship manufactured to date by LEGO®. At the same time the “Imperial flagship, 6271”, smaller than the “Caribbean Clipper”, but with a slimmer line, also introduced a compass and a system that allowed operating the rudder properly. In the group of buildings we have to highlight the “Imperial trading post, 6277”, a perfect complement for the “Eldorado Fortress”. The fortress showed us a mainly militar building, but the trading post was a harbor with lots of elements in common with the merchant sailing, like the small house or the ship included in the set with lots of details, despite its small size.

Pirates and soldiers, soldiers and pirates, no matter the color the uniform, all had to do with the world powers sending their armies from the metropoli to protect their interests from the pirates. But in a closer view, there is an odd thing in this Caribbean equation, and it’s nothing but the first inhabitants of these latitudes.

In 1994 LEGO introduced the Islanders in the Pirates series, representing the members of an unidentified american tribe, but according to their dresses and complements, it was not risky to suppose they were from somewhere in the Pacific, maybe from a Polynesian island.

The nemesis of the new characters were not the colonial troops, maybe too busy with the gold and its transport to the old Europe, but the pirates in their effort to fetch the gold guarded by the Islanders.

Among the best Islanders sets we found the “Enchanted Island, 6278”, which is maybe the most representative of what the new sets brought to the serie, with tribal monuments, a catamaran and an assorted selection of the new minifigs, as well as a new base. At the end, a new animal which will be shown in other series, the green crocodile, sharing the design of the upper jaw and tail with the dragon of the Castle series which appeared the year before. The Islanders only contributed with new sets to the catalogue of 1994. In 1995 the new sets of the Imperial Guard yielded a lovely set “Imperial Outpost, 6263”, practically unseen in Spain, due to it’s difficulty to be found. This colonial type building is the swansong of the Imperial Guard.

In the other side, the Pirates had lots to be shown, and in the year 1995 they cheered up the catalogue with the “Skull Island, 6279” showing another lair of the Captain Roger, with an impressive smiling skull shaped entrance.

When speaking about pirates, we speak about Caribbean and South America, and we imagine English soldiers, pirates and aborigines running around the place, but we miss another notable presence: the Spanish. Coming to this point, there is a little controversy over the last statement, because some people hold the opinion that there are Portuguese troops. LEGO, in the whole Pirates series, defines no national army, but it’s not foolish to think that are Spanish troops, maybe with the uniforms of the XV and XVI century instead of the XVIII uniforms carried by the Imperial Guard. Among the sets of the new arrived, we have to mention that they are not so numerous, the “Armada



flagship, 6280" shines with his own light. It is a middle-big sized ship, and we can consider it like a small jewel. It has two masts and a new sail arrangement, with a beautiful white hull and three minifigs wearing "morrións" (the famous conquerors helmets) and stylish uniforms, one of them with a bright armor plate.

In the year 1996 we can taste the up-to-date biggest ship, "Red Beard Runner, 6289", with different mechanisms in the masts and forecastle.

At the end, in the year 1997 the Pirates series made their last appearance in the LEGO® universe, but its farewell let us a good taste: a small collection of minifigs "Buccaneers, 6204", with four characters, a skeleton and a treasure chest. Also we had a small ship, the "Cross Bone Clipper, 6250" that resembled the "Renegade Runner, 6268" and a big set, the "Pirates Perilous Pitfall, 6281", a pirate base with a huge boulder, a trap and a vessel at the shore.

Sometimes we hear rumours of the possible return of the Pirates series, which would be a reason for huge happiness among the serie's fans, because 11 years later LEGO has developed its designs and bricks and it's easy to imagine how the new Pirates series could match any of their predecessors.

And as a final word, if you enjoyed the pirate's world and have some curiosity to see some of the previously mentioned sets in a different way, please

visit the pirates photonovel (in Spanish) weekly published at Hispalug (<http://www.hispalug.com/foro/index.php?topic=3908.0>)

Consulted documents:

- o LEGO, Collector's guide. 800p, Fantasia, 2008
- o ARMERO, Álvaro, Piratas, corsarios y bucaneros. 345 p, Editorial Libsa, 2003.

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