

# Raise the "Drawplate"!!

## The history of Castle in Spain

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The dark age of history span from the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the year 476 to the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. It was a period of almost 1000 years when humans struggled daily to survive and overcome the great epidemics and famines that ravaged Europe. But although they were terrible years, their secrecy and darkness have fascinated many, perhaps due to the magnificent castles, siege weapons and armour of warriors that have survived until these days.

The knights, with their purity of soul, their word and valour make recreating this world into something magical. So LEGO® didn't leave this vein untapped and, as its competitor Playmobil®, it released several medieval sets during the eighties and nineties, reaching the present day with the sets from the "Fantastic era".

Very few people know that the first LEGO castle was not the legendary castle 375 or "yellow castle", but it

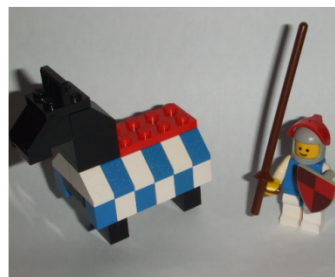
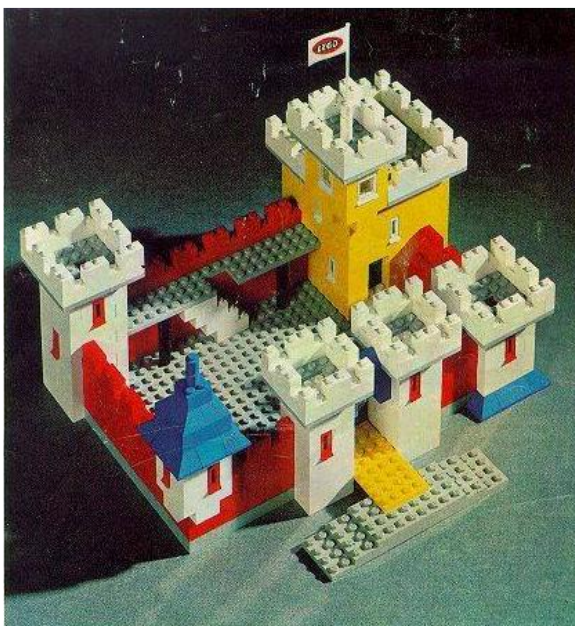
was a promotional castle launched with the collaboration of Weetabix, a brand of biscuits in the UK, in 1970.

The era of LEGO Castle itself began in 1978 along with the new articulated minifigs, which have given life to our hobby.

Anyway, the era of the LEGO Castle also has its High Middle Age and Early Middle Age, and we can distinguish four main stages of Castle line, dating from:

- 1978 - 1983
- 1984 - 1992
- 1993 - 2000
- 2004 - 2009

The history of this line in Spain has always been tragic. Many sets arrived later than in the rest of Europe or did not arrive at all, leaving some lines





lame and poor in detail and sets.

We will analyze these stages to find the differences and innovations during the 31 years of Castle.

The first stage is characterized by having only three very simple sets. Today we might consider these constructions almost childlike, with horses made of multiple parts and very simple construction techniques. Still they were Best-sellers, and today they are highly prized sets and wanted by those who love collecting.

This series consisted of:

- 375 (6075 U.S.), Castle (yellow) which appeared in 1978
- 383 (6083 U.S.) Knight's Tournament
- 677 (6077 U.S.) Knight's Procession

### What is the difference between the 1st and 2nd stage?

- The introduction of new parts to shape the castle. The most important one a panel to build walls (Bricklink ref.4444)
- The appearance of LEGO® horses and saddles.
- New war equipment (bows, quivers, spears and axes)
- New additions to the minifigs like hats with mesh, feathers and peaked hats for the princesses.
- New golden patterns in minifigs and shields.
- For the first time gray parts are used in large quantities.

During the 2nd stage we can find 5 castles that correspond to sets of knights with different standards (crossed axes, lions, falcons, etc.) that differentiate between each other and create a game between good and evil at the free choice of the player.

- 6080 King's Castle
- 6074 Black Falcon's Fortress
- 6081 King's Mountain Fortress
- 6085 Black Monarch's Castle
- 6086 Black Knight's Castle

Series that appeared in this period:

- 1984 Knights of the Lion and Knights of the "crossed axes"
- 1986 Black Falcons
- 1988 Forestmen

### What are the differences between the 2nd and 3rd stage?

Limited series like the "Forestmen" (Robin Hood-like) saw the light during those years, but only with few sets in order to complete the collection. In 1992 LEGO® introduced the first line with a clear beginning and an end, i.e. with a finite duration in time. These pioneer sets were the "Wolfpacks"

- 6075 Wolfpack Tower
- 6038 Wolfpack renegades

In 1993 we find the first complete series of a specific theme. In this case it was the "Dragon Knights", in which for the first time mythological creatures (the dragon and the wizard) appear. LEGO castle begins its fantastic era, drifting away from the classic sets. Besides LEGO launches "groups" of sets focused on one particular line consisting of a main castle, a tower, some sort of carriage or catapult, a medium set like a fortress and a pack of minifigs.

- More specific castle parts appear, like the corners of the towers
- New helmets with animal features (dragon or bat shaped helmet)
- Chrome parts (crowns and swords)
- Ovoid shields, new spears and new longer arches

The progressive Juniorization [1] of the sets starts during this period.

Series that appeared during this time:

- 1992 Werewolves
- 1993 Dragon Masters
- 1995 Royal Knights
- 1996 Dark Forest (not available in Spain)
- 1998 Fright Knights
- 2000 Knights Kingdom I

### What are the differences between the 3rd and 4th stage?

After almost 4 years of disappearance, the Castle started to reappear in 2001 with the reissue of 2 mythical sets, included in the now defunct Legends [2] series. The sets that were reissued are 6067 (Guarded Inn) numbered 10000 and 6074 (Black Falcons Fortress) numbered 10039

LEGO realized the potential of collectors and in 2002 launched the first set designed by an AFOL, the 3739 Blasksmith Shop. Currently we have the 10193 Medieval Market Village, another set designed by Lego enthusiasts.

We have to jump to 2004 to find the next stable Castle series, which was intended to be a continuation of Knights Kingdom I (named Knights Kingdom II). This new series introduced very large parts and continued the trend of LEGO in the early years of the new century, using quite infantile elements. As the notable novelty of this new series the knights were dressed in very bright colours, with red, purple, green or blue armours.

In 2007, after several attempts to recapture the classic lines, LEGO once again bet on the traditional series, creating more realistic castles and models. With a theme that may bring to mind the "Lord of the Rings" called "The Fantastic Age" the mythological story with orcs, trolls, dwarves, undead and dragons reappears.

This time the models are more detailed and present a large number of realistic elements. The soldiers and knights have no strange colours and their clothes are more faithful to the medieval armour. Furthermore most of the minifigs have two expressions, a calm face and another one with an expression of terror, giving more opportunity for playing and much more importance to the minifig.

With this new approach to the minifig, packs of 5 minifigs are released, each with a dress and complements of their own (for the moment we can find packs of soldiers and knights, undead, dwarves and trolls)

The year 2008 brought one of the best sets in the recent years as it contains completely new minifigs. This was the Medieval Advent Calendar 7979, a set that lasted barely 2 months and sold out with a breathtaking speed as it contains the coveted harlequin.

But one of the star sets that was desired for years is the Medieval Market Village, set number 10193. This set is a scene with two buildings, a stall and a tree as central elements, something long demanded by all LEGO AFOLs because it is the first large set capturing a normal medieval life scene. Being created by AFOL builders, this set focuses on adults and contains countless details and curiosities, as well as introducing a cow, a new animal which appeared in 2009 and a turkey, a rare element only present in Bellville sets.

During these years we have also seen: A medieval chess, orc queens and kings (very cute), key chains, magnets, a kind of Bionicle Knights, skeletal horses, orc boats etc...

Someone will wonder about the Ninja series and



Vikings, but we will not consider them in the Castle series although they have some similarities to the medieval sets.

In conclusion, 30 years of castle go far, although LEGO® has practically limited itself to building castles, catapults, battering rams. It forgot about the people who inhabited the Agro, citizens and businesses, while Playmobil® did not forget and knew how to create these accessories, which today are paid in gold. LEGO's new policy is doing much to restore this forgotten part of history and create sets that complement those holes. Let's hope we will not have to wait another 30 years to see another set like the Medieval Market Village.

And finally some curiosities about Castle

Helmets "without visor" were designed for use in the Castle line to later add visors. These helmets were later also used for Space and City, but the visors

never appeared. The main problem was the fragility and the little grip of these parts.

The 6071 Forestmen's Crossing, which appeared in 1990 exclusively for the USA, has a very rare minifig, known as the forestwoman. It is one of the few female minifigs outside the typical medieval princesses.

In the first edition of the Guarded Inn (Set number 10000) the horse was not white. By mistake it was a green horse with Indian characters. Shipments from Shop At Home included a white animal in a separate bag.

The 1st stage of Castle in Spain runs from 1979 to 1984 (consisting of the yellow castle) and the 2nd stage sets did not come until 1985 while in the rest of the world they came out in 1984.

The first castle sets (1984-1992) were designed to build a great wall and join the sets together. In fact they were the first modular buildings. ■