

Paradisa: Styles and Building Techniques

By Iva Pavlic

Images by Iva Pavlic



Paradisa was a subtheme of LEGO® Town (the major theme today called City) from 1992 to 1997. Paradisa was a place to rest, relax and have fun in a town context that had up to then been mostly police and fire stations, post offices, train stations and suburban houses. With Paradisa the LEGO® town got its own amusement park, country club, lighthouse, horse ranch, playground, bars, cafés, and beaches.

The symbol of Paradisa is the very first thing that comes to mind when thinking of such a place – the palm tree. In larger sets it is an obligatory exterior decoration element, and it is printed on minifigs, walls, the ranch logo, a trailer, and even the ice cream freezer.

green baseplates. The floors, walkways, terraces, building bases and roofs are grey. A shade of pink, slightly lighter and less obtrusive than the one we are used to seeing in Friends sets, was used for details and elements such as stairs, fences, clothes, chairs, umbrellas and doors. Often included in sets were vehicles – a black convertible, an off-roader with a horse trailer, a tilbury, a bicycle, a train, a pedalo, a speedboat, windsurfing boards – all in order for the sets to be appealing to boys. The majority of LEGO® sets are dominated by male minifigs, while girl-oriented sets, such as Friends sets, are dominated by female figs. Unlike these, Paradisa generally had a well-balanced male-to-female ratio.



The sets were designed for increased appeal with girls, but thanks to the design and the attention to detail, boys could play with them just as well. Perhaps this is most evident in the choice of colours. The basic colour used is white on light



New to the line were more elaborate minifigs: female figs had accentuated eyes and red lips, girls had freckles, and male figs had moustaches or sunglasses. Clothes were radically different from those worn by the residents of LEGO® town: bathing suits, shiny jewellery, printed T-shirts, suits, riding and cooking outfits, and each larger set had at least one minifig in

a white T-shirt with the palm tree. They came equipped with caps, riding hats, whips, life jackets, spades, myriad umbrellas, glasses and mugs – everything needed for carefree leisure time.



These sets are also abundant in animals – with the ubiquitous white, black and brown horses, foals and red parrots. There was also a monkey, a dolphin, a cat, and even a crab on a round tile.

Up to 1996, Paradisa sets with more than 50 or so bricks had a baseplate. All of them were light green, while some of them had additional details such as paved walkways or beaches in several colours, from light green to teal to blue.

The building style of the main models was simple, and that of the alternate models featured on the lid and the back of the box was so simple that no instructions were included for them. One might even say that panels and bricks almost the same size are overused in some places. Still, with such simplicity, and all the panels and arches, the result is elegant and aesthetically pleasing.



In 1990, the first set whose atmosphere hinted towards Paradisa was 6376 Breezeway Café. The palm tree and parrots had moved from pirate sets to town, which got a restaurant with a view through large curved panels framed in arches. This building style was continued in Paradisa with more attention to detail: the space between two walls was usually arched, unless it was filled with a large window or a transparent panel. Buildings were no longer cubical spaces, and larger roof surfaces were covered in 8x6 slopes (4515) with a print of pavement or sun shade. The two slopes in the

6419 Rolling Acres Ranch were offset by two studs, and 2x4 curved bricks (6081) were added to the front for a mellow transition between the wall and roof. The third stable had a semi-circular roof supported by an arch. Arches were often used on the entrances of baseplates, as lights or as roof support, such as that of the 6418 Country Club.

With large windows, transparent panels were also frequently used: from the flat one with a curved top (2571) to the large and small quarter circle curved top ones (6002 and 6059). These panels, especially in their transparent versions, were not used in many other sets, and unfortunately were prone to being damaged due to their large surface.

The largest leap outside of the LEGO® town norm and into levels and curviness was in the very beginning of the theme, with 6416 Poolside Paradise – a house composed of a small dome with a parrot habitat at ground level and a more prominent dome with a sitting table on the upper floor. On the left was a spiral staircase and on the right a balcony under which was another staircase. The baseplate itself had several levels and matched the garden well, completing the whole 'poolside paradise' into what most people would picture it to be.

Perhaps the best feature of Paradisa sets is the fact that almost all but the smallest ones had up to five alternate models. Sometimes they were near banal, like in 6410 Cabana Beach – a bit of greenery and a couple on the beach – but larger sets such as the Rolling Acres Ranch and Poolside Paradise had completely rebuilt buildings, even different vehicles. The diversity was helped by many factors, but our favourite is a feature of the Poolside Paradise baseplate: it had two pools that could easily be covered by the plates provided in the set, thanks to the offset edges.



After Paradisa, later LEGO® themes aimed at girls were Belville, Scala and Friends. They are all marked by more vivid colours and less elegant orange, pink, yellow, and purple tones. Belville and Scala came the closest to regular doll houses with very little to be built out of bricks, while Heartlake City is a step back towards LEGO® town, providing a new bakery, the vet's, a school, and even a new airport. Some of these may still be appealing to boys, but the choice of colours and the gender of the figures is at odds with the idea. From an aesthetic point of view, Friends sets lack the elegance of Paradisa, and Emma's and Olivia's houses are plain suburban homes, designed like doll houses. Curved panels and large windows are used again but not to the same effect, thanks to the other colours. One might even conclude that the themes aimed at girls after Paradisa were not worthy heirs when it comes to the idea and building style.

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