

LEGO® Architecture Skylines

By Iva Pavlič

The LEGO® Architecture Skylines series was started in 2016 with three sets: 21026 Venice, 21027 Berlin and 21028 New York City. After the success of these first sets, 21032 Sydney, 21033 Chicago and 21034 London came out in 2017. This year the Skylines were back early, with 21039 Shanghai. A Las Vegas Skyline had also been announced but was not released. The reason behind this decision lies in the tragic event from October 2017 in Vegas: a man fired at a crowd of concertgoers from the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay hotel. Thanks to the number killed and injured, the event will be remembered as the deadliest shooting by an individual in the USA. Mandalay Bay hotel was to be a part of LEGO®'s Las Vegas Skyline.

The Skylines sets are not skylines in the true sense of the word. Instead, each is made as an ideal combination of the city's best-known buildings. Just as the Landmark sets, they are the ideal souvenir for each of the represented cities. The idea is obstructed only by the fact that they are all globally available. This theme has been an ambitious one from the beginning: truly some of the most characteristic buildings (and monuments) have been included and, more often than not, their main features are well represented at such a small scale.

21028 New York City

New York is the most densely populated city in the USA so it is not surprising that its Skyline is made up of corporate skyscrapers: One World Trade Centre, the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building, the (somewhat lower) Flatiron Building and the inevitable Statue of Liberty.

Two of the buildings in this Skyline have already appeared as Landmarks: the Empire State building, to which a part of the article in our last issue was



dedicated, and the Flatiron Building. The Landmark Flatiron Building was transformed into brick well: framed by Fifth Avenue and Broadway, its unusual shape was cleverly built in tan and dark tan. In the Skyline version, in order to fit with the rest of the buildings, the shape itself was a priority so it is among the less recognizable buildings in the set.

The Empire State Building is one of earliest sets in the Landmark series. It is built with few details and almost entirely with tan bricks. The shape's successful representation makes the building instantly recognizable. In this set, not only the shaping is perfectly built, but also the building's characteristic facade with its vertical lines captured using grille tiles. Slightly more detailed is the very top of the skyscraper, making it the most recognizable, best designed, and for sure the most beautiful building in the set.

The most ambitious building in this Skyline has to be One World Trade Centre. Take a look at the real building, with its reverse triangles and cross sections going from square

at the bottom to square at the top, but octagonal in the middle, and you will be in doubt as to whether the simple, precise and original geometry could even be transformed into the LEGO® world. The result of the attempt is a very nice, elegant skyscraper, with a combination of grey and sand blue, built using a SNOT technique. The volume is built in four separate pieces: the lowest two are rectangular, the third is an attempt to capture the octagonal shape using slopes, and the fourth is again rectangular, but rotated 45° relative to the base, with an antenna on top. Although the basic geometry of the building was attempted here, it is a good example of the limitations of LEGO® bricks at such a small scale. The skyscraper is recognizable only after thinking about the similarities between the geometries.

21034 London



London is one of the world's most visited cities and contains extreme cultural diversity: 8.5 million people living in London speak over 300 languages. London is here represented by the National Gallery, Nelson's Column, Big Ben, the London Eye and Tower Bridge. These buildings are all connected with the city's rich history and culture.

Apart from the buildings, there is also the Thames, represented by transparent tiles under Tower Bridge, with a boat sailing down it. Tower Bridge is raised at set times for specific boats, and it can also be raised in this model: the lower level is built using clip tiles and handle plates. The upper level is the famous walkway, and in reality it has a glass floor. The characteristic light blue railing is simply tiles with a vertical tooth in the middle, where the Coat of Arms of the City of London stands. Apart from being movable, Tower Bridge is also suspended. The steel plates are built simply, but faithfully. In the characteristic colour (medium blue), a soft axle is attached via a handle at the top and a clip at the bottom of the bridge.

The leftmost part is the National Gallery. The columns of the portal are made out of vertically placed white grille tiles and are slightly offset with their own pediment, while the wings are inset. Above the centre part, behind the gable is the

The Chrysler Building's shaping is also captured well, but the alternating transparent and opaque plates make it seem much more transparent than the original building. Magnificently built is its famous art deco top, which at first glance might seem impossible to build at such a small scale. Sitting atop four 1x1 cones is a round jumper tile, on top of which is a travis brick with a round brick, another cone and an antenna. Tooth plates turned upwards are attached to the side studs of the travis brick, and with the 1x1 round brick they create the characteristic top with its stepped curved arches. The Statue of Liberty is recognizable not only by the microfigure in the well-known green hue, but also by the finely built shapes of the base, using the smallest of tan plates and tiles.

recognizable dome. Built this way, it is the perfect model of a classical building, made recognizable also by the piece of Trafalgar Square and Nelson's Column in front of it.

In my humble opinion, one of the two best and most original builds in the Skylines series is the London Eye. Mostly Technic pieces are used here, and without them such an ambitious miniature would not be possible. The eye stands on two Technic wishbone suspension arms, slightly offset to create the triangle joined by a pin at the top. The wheel is brilliantly simple: an ordinary transparent plate and two clip tiles are attached to the two lengths of hose to represent each of the passenger capsules. This creates two rails that make up the wheel, joined by angled connectors at the bottom and pins at the top. There is a total of 16 capsules, whereas the real one has 32, each of which represents one of the London Boroughs. A bar connects the angled connectors to the base of the main support.

Big Ben is built out of grille bricks which represent the vertical ornamentation of the tower. The clock is a 2x2 brick with a print of the real thing. The Landmark Big Ben's biggest weakness was the clock, and it is a pity such an excellent print was not used there as well. Big Ben appeared as a Landmark (21013 from 2012), a part of the London Skyline, in some Cars sets

from 2011, and also as the spectacular 2016 Advanced model 10253 with 4163 pieces. So Big Ben is a building that LEGO® designers have now equally successfully built out of 50,

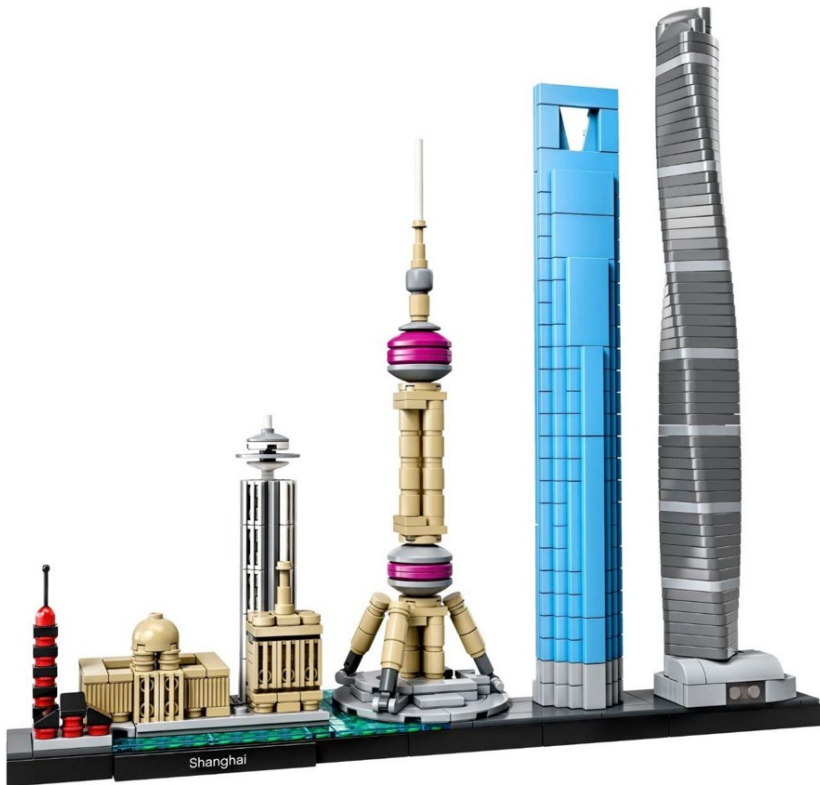
350 and over 4000 bricks. The same goes for Tower Bridge, which is here around 230 bricks, and over 4200 in the 2010 Advanced model 10214.

21039

Shanghai

Shanghai is located at the Yangtze river's mouth. Thanks to its location, in recent years it has become one of the biggest and busiest harbours in the world. The rapid development is most evident in the urban architecture: Art Deco buildings are combined with the ever-growing number of contemporary skyscrapers.

The City God Temple and the Longhua Pagoda are the two small structures at the far left side of the skyline. The Pagoda is as simple as it gets, built from alternating red round and black regular 1×1 plates and a tiny antenna on top. The 15th century temple and the 10th century pagoda are a part of the traditional Shanghai architecture. The neoclassical HSBC Building and the Customs House are a part of the Bund, a waterfront area along the bank of the Huangpu river. The HSBC building is built in a similar fashion to the National Gallery in London: the facade is grille tiles, and above them is a dome. The difference lies in the wings, which are here built with grille bricks. The river is built out of trans-light blue tiles, and on the opposite bank is



the Oriental Pearl Tower, a radio and TV tower with a futuristic look and eleven large and small spheres sitting on three columns. The first and the largest has a diameter of 50 metres (164 feet). The base of the tower is very elegantly built, yet the supporting columns are just three times two 1×1 round bricks. On top of them is a magenta and light bluish grey sphere, cleverly built out of dishes. Above it are again three round-brick columns, while the smaller spheres, located between them, are not present in the LEGO® version. The upper sphere is also built out of dishes. The tower ends in a round brick and a light bluish grey minifigure head, atop of which is a telescope with a bar. The best part of the building process is the end: two round bricks on a bar, completed with a round tile on one end and a bar holder with clip on the other. The clip is attached to the base, while the upper part rests against the plate below the first sphere. Albeit with a great reduction in the level of detail and with a repetitive use of elements, the tower is splendidly built and recognizable.

The Radisson Blu Hotel is built by attaching rail plates with grille tiles to travis bricks. This represents the 'webbed' body of the skyscraper well. On top is the rotating restaurant with a glass dome, built out of dishes and other round elements. The Shanghai World Financial Centre is a prism whose two opposite edges are split each into two curves, which are then connected at the top, below which is a trapezoidal opening. Thanks to this design, the skyscraper was nicknamed "the bottle opener." Just as with the One World Trade Centre, the shaping here is impossible to fully capture in bricks at such a small scale. In the Skyline, the Shanghai World Financial Centre is an elegant skyscraper with a light bluish grey bottom, attached to the base with clips, and a medium blue top. It is gradually narrowing towards the top with the use of a large number of jumpers, from four studs to one stud in width. The same pattern is repeated on the reverse side, using plates. The model itself is nice, the colour choices are great—even the bottle opener look is there—but although it is somewhat closer to the original than One World Trade Centre, it is not a complete match.

The Shanghai Tower is the tallest building in the world, at 632 metres (2073 feet). It is built on 70-metre concrete pillars in order to resist typhoons and its shape is so aerodynamic that it reduces wind loads by 24%. The LEGO® Tower is built from thin Technic 3×3 quarter circle liftarms. Fifty liftarms are stacked around two axles and then turned by hand to produce the irregular, aerodynamic and almost organic look of the tower. The model is made stable thanks to a central axle, which is independent of the 'outer shell' of liftarms. The structure is topped off by Bionicle teeth with axle holes. In my opinion, the Shanghai Tower—thanks to its seemingly simple yet spectacular organic shape made with Technic parts—is one of the best models in any Skyline set, right up there with the London Eye.

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