



TICOLUG

Luis Escalante is the Ambassador of TicoLUG, the first and only 'Recognized LEGO® User Group' (RLUG) in Costa Rica, a small Latin American country located in Central America. Luis has been kind enough to tell us everything we need in order to get to know this LUG a little better.

The inhabitants of Costa Rica are known worldwide as 'Ticos', hence the name of our community. Our idea started more than 10 years

ago, in 2010, when a group of five friends decided to get together to share experiences around this magnificent hobby, which we enjoyed so much when we were kids and which we are even more passionate about now that we are adults.

Currently the group is made up of more than 40 LEGO fans, collectors and builders, from the youngest, who are represented by their parents, to the oldest, who are over 50 years old. Most of us met through a friend's recommendation or by attending an event. However, we know that in our country there are many people who enjoy this hobby, as much or more than us, so we always invite people to follow us on our social networks and become part of this great family.

Funding is essential to be able to carry out our activities and provide a service to our members, and as part of the requirements on joining the community, our members are asked to pay a monthly fee of 3,000 colones (local currency), or

approximately \$5.00, which is used to cover all of our expenses.

In 2013 we organized our first exhibition in a small shop, then in 2015 we were invited to participate in the inauguration of the first LEGO Store in Costa Rica. But it was not until 2017 when we decided to take it to another level, and from that moment we worked hard towards the common goal of becoming the first RLUG in Costa Rica. After more than 20 events and meeting the requirements of the LEGO® Ambassador Network (LAN), we achieved our goal in May 2019.

Every year, to celebrate Children's Day in our country, we organise our biggest and most special event, but in September 2019 it was the biggest in our history. In the year of our official recognition, more than 30 members showed their sets, MOCs and dioramas covering more than 800m2 of exhibition space, and with an influx of more than 6,000 visitors. This was an event we will

definitely never forget. We are also very proud to have Francisco Escobar, a member of the select group of 10K LEGO® Ideas in our community. He is one of the few Latin Americans to achieve this recognition and currently has other active projects on the platform.

As for all LUGs, Covid-19 significantly affected our plans for 2020. The community meetings went from being face-to-face to virtual, and the physical events we had confirmed during the year had to be cancelled. However, we did not let the pandemic beat us and decided to reinvent ourselves using digital tools. Through social networks we managed to hold more than 30 live events with various fun themes for all our fans

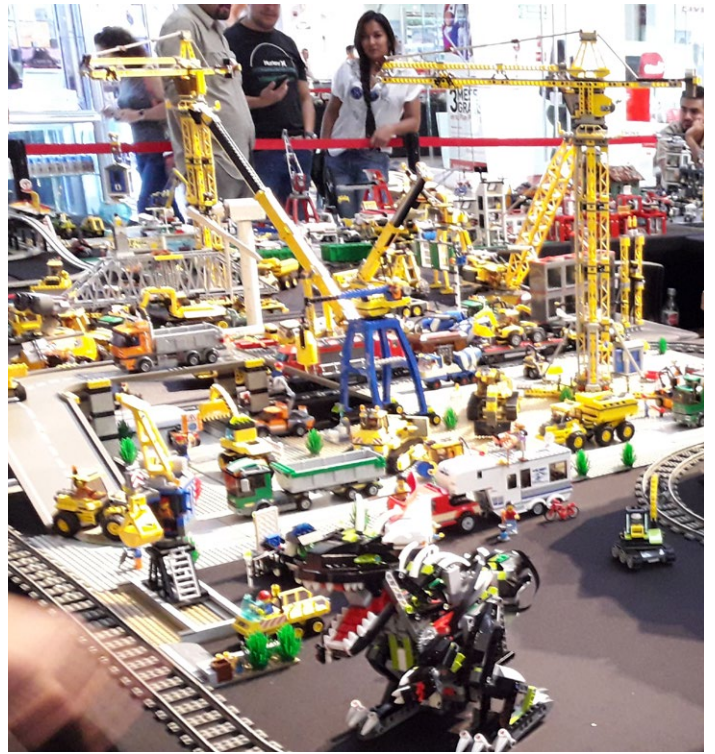
and members of the community.

Since being recognised as a LUG, our relationship with the LEGO company is very important for us. On the one hand, I consider the relationship with the LAN to be very good. Our participation is active both in forums and meetings, and I was recently appointed 'Brickmate' to help new ambassadors take their first steps. Yet on the other hand, in Latin America we don't have any LEGO Office, so the market is controlled by local distributors, the prices are very high, and we only have Certified Stores; so the relationship becomes very complicated or doesn't exist at all.

In Latin America we need more help from LEGO







directly or through the LAN, to be heard and to try to establish a relationship with local distributors, who sometimes do not understand our role as an official community or find it difficult to give us space within their businesses. On the other hand, we continue our efforts to eliminate the gaps between official and certified shops, in order to obtain greater benefits as consumers of the brand in this region.

The future of our community is very promising, and in the last decade we have achieved things that before were just a dream. The benefits provided by the LAN always help us to improve and grow, for example with LUGBULK which gives us the opportunity to materialise our projects and really let our imagination fly.

Our plans for the future are to continue growing as a community and of course to maintain our official recognition, and we have always wanted to organise our own big LEGO event, like those which take place each year in various cities across the United States and Europe, where really impressive dioramas are built and fans from all over the world attend.

To finish I would like to share with you a personal anecdote. In May 2019, I had the opportunity to celebrate my 35th birthday, together with my wife Priscilla in the town where it all started, almost 90 years ago: the Home of the Brick, Billund, Denmark. We visited LEGO® House and the first LEGOLAND theme park, and being in front of the little house where this great hobby started was a really amazing and unforgettable experience.