

(LEGO KIDS' NEWSLETTER)

The Florida smuggle-buster

It was three years since The Great Tidal Wave destroyed Miami in 1999. Since then, the diamond smugglers of Sugar Island had been having an easy time with the Florida police...

Until, that is, the blond giant Lieutenant Lego joined Fort Lauderdale Police Department from Denmark.

After just one month with the force, Lego was determined to stamp out the criminal rackets of the much-feared 'Hispaniolas'.

Everyone knew it would be tough. The Hispaniolas knew The Everglades - and there was the extra danger of alligators, boars, black bears and panthers running wild in the National Park!

"OK men," said Lego to the assembled Customs Squad. "It's time to finish off those diamond cheats once and for all. Let's go!"

Outside HQ, the whole LEGO TECHNICS fleet was ready and waiting...

At exactly midnight, the signal came. "Hispaniolas' yachts moored off Everglades City, lieutenant. Our undercover guys are ready. It's time to move."

Slowly at first, Lieutenant Lego's POWERBOAT COLUMBIA airboat slipped out of the harbour, its huge rear propeller gradually gaining speed.

On the empty State Highway opposite the harbour, a dozen or more MIAMI POLICE PATROLS and HAWAIIAN BEACH RACERS were already scorching west across The Everglades.

They were followed closely by four roaring AMPHI-POWERS and a TRANSFORMATOR in one of its nine disguises - this time hovering as a look-out helicopter!

In less than an hour, the Hispaniolas could be seen sitting around a blazing campfire on the beach. Suddenly, CS gas exploded in thick clouds all around them...

They panicked. There was coughing and choking, and men were staggering everywhere. Then a loud-hailer cut through the hubbub...

"This is the police - lie flat! Lie flat!"

But this was to be no pushover. Within seconds, machine-gun fire rattled out from the smugglers in all directions.

Then, as if from nowhere, came the unmistakable 'WHOOSH!' of Lego's POWERBOAT

COLUMBIA - and it was racing towards the shore, all guns blazing...

"This is WAR-WAR-WAR!" snarled Lego as he scattered smugglers in every direction. And almost as soon as the firing had started - it was all over.

Within minutes, the smugglers were surrounded and rounded up by the whole LEGO TECHNICS fleet - to be led away in handcuffs as everyone saluted the bravery of the great Dane himself, Lieutenant Lego.

(Panel with product pics & captions as in 1996 catalogue)

**NEW FOR 1996!
AND IN THE SHOPS NOW...**

Yes! Every model in the Hispaniolas story is in the shops NOW! Each set comes with electrical or mechanical working parts that show you how machines work in real life! They're fun to assemble - and there's hours of play in every one!

FLORIDA - 'THE SUNSHINE STATE'

You'll find Florida in the south-east of the USA (it's that 'finger' pointing down towards South America!) To the east is the Atlantic Ocean and in the west is the Gulf of Mexico.

Spaniards were the first Europeans to set foot in Florida in the early 1500s. Until then, the area had been the home of native Indians - the Seminole, Miccosukee and Calusa tribes.

Florida today is a very different place - a lively mix of people from around the world, especially Central Americans in search of the good life to be enjoyed in Florida!

The Everglades National Park

This is the largest natural attraction in Florida, but with 1.5 million acres, there's always plenty of elbow room!

Wildlife is everywhere in this protected wilderness. It's home for over 160 types of animal including 14 endangered species such as the Florida panther, Florida black bear, woodstork and Everglades mink.

Endangered West Indian manatees and huge loggerhead turtles rumble around the wetlands, swapping stories of crazy tourists with sheltering alligators and America's only salt-water crocodiles.

Over 200 species of birds flourish in this area...

You'll see every feathered wader that ever there was; exotic greater yellowlegs, snail kites and pied

grebe; migrating birds like great crested flycatchers, swallowtail kites and grey catbirds - as well as that great national symbol, the American bald eagle, soaring regally overhead.

Airboats

Travelling around in the wetlands has always been a challenge, but tourists nowadays are usually ferried by AIRBOATS - a similar design to the LEGO TECHNICS POWERBOAT COLUMBIA.

These are lightweight boats with aluminium or fibreglass hulls. They are flat-bottomed to glide over the surface of the shallow water found in The Everglades and are powered by a car engine and a large, single propeller at the back - or, on larger boats, two engines and two propellers!

LEGO TECHNICS POWERBOAT COLUMBIA is based on the airboat design but a lot smaller than boats seen in The Everglades which will carry up to 35 passengers at 40mph (55mph when empty!). A typical airboat is 7m long and 4m wide and is steered by a rudder with a hand stick control.

Walt Disney World Resort

Just outside Orlando in the centre of Florida, this is the world's most famous resort! It includes the Magic Kingdom, Epcot Center and the Disney-MGM Studios Theme Park - as well as restaurants, camp grounds, resort hotels, a complete shopping village, water parks, zoological park and a night-time entertainment centre.

Daytona

The famous Daytona Beach on the east coast has 23 miles of beautiful beaches where you're never far from fun-fun-fun!

Plus-plus-plus...

Daytona International Speedway

...the 'World Center of Racing' and home of the Daytona 500, the Rolex 24 Hours and the Daytona 200!

NASA-Kennedy Space Center

For the full story of US space exploration, this is the place to be - the launch base for America's Space Shuttle. Situated 50 miles east of Orlando, there is so much to see and do at the Space Center.

Orlando

A major city of Florida with over one million residents. Citrus fruit growing, tourism and cattle-rearing are the main activities here. And did you know? Orlando has 100 golf courses and 800 tennis courts!

Miami

It's hard to believe, but until the 1890s Miami was just a fishing village at the mouth of the Miami River. Nowadays, it is an international city and one of the world's top tourist spots.

A little further north is Fort Lauderdale, sometimes known as 'The Venice of America' because of its 3,000 miles of exotic inland waterways. The 23 miles of sandy beach are at the heart of Florida's 'Gold Coast' - an area rich in fun, entertainment and energy!

Florida Keys

This 140-mile-long chain of coral islands lies at the tip of Florida's 'finger', stretching in an arc into the Gulf of Mexico. Florida Keys is made up of the Upper, Middle and Lower Keys, with Key West at the most westerly end where Ernest Hemingway wrote some of his best-known books.

Water Sports

With water, water everywhere - and a climate that rarely falls below 18 C degrees - Florida is a water sports wonderland!

There's sailing and motor-cruising, fishing for up to 115 species in inland waters, not to mention the excitement of deep-sea fishing in the Gulf of Mexico.

The clear, warm waters and coral reefs make diving and snorkelling a dream, whilst for the more energetic, there is wind-surfing and water ski-ing and of course, swimming.

Airboats

75 pounds of frogs' legs weren't enough for Johnny Lamb. In 1930s America, a man needed to earn more from a night's hunting.

Getting round the Everglades was the problem. Pulling a flat-bottom boat was tough. An outboard motor was worse, because weeds and muck would clog the propeller.

"How about a propeller on the back to drive the boat like a plane?" suggested Johnny's buddy, Russell Howard.

The two men decided to give it a try by using a 12 foot flat-bottom boat, a 75-horse power engine, a second-hand aircraft propeller, a ply-wood rudder and a steering wheel. Their invention became known as an 'airboat' - and boy, did it work!

Go round the Everglades today and you'll see airboats everywhere - over 3,000 in fact, usually carrying tourists, up to 35 adults at 40 mph (55 mph when empty!).

Airboats are now in use throughout the world - anywhere where there are marshy wetlands like the Everglades.

And they're so versatile! Airboats are used for sightseeing, hunting, fishing, law enforcement, weed control - and they were even used in the Vietnam War.

A typical airboat like those used in Florida is about 7m long and 4m wide. They are lightweight boats with an aluminium or fibreglass hull, and are flat-bottomed to glide over the surface of the shallow water found in the Everglades.

Power comes from a car engine which drives a large, single propeller mounted at the back of the craft. On larger boats, there may be two engines and two propellers. Steering is by a rudder with a hand stick control.

LEGO TECHNICS POWERBOAT COLUMBIA is an airboat design, but a lot smaller than the Everglades pleasure boats.

The airboats have been good for the Everglades. They've created trails which are used by small animals and deer in times of low water - and they also act as fire-breaks in the dry season when fire started by lightning is common.
