



Workers put the finishing touches on a reproduction of the Luxor Hotel in the new mini-land exhibit at Legoland in Carlsbad, Calif., Wednesday, March 28, 2007. The exhibit opens on Thursday. (AP Photo/Lenny Ignelzi)



In this handout photo provided by Legoland, worker Larry Bradley puts the final touches on a Lego replica of the New York New York Hotel and Casino before the grand opening of Miniland Las Vegas at Legoland California in Carlsbad, Calif., Thursday, March 29, 2007. The theme park expanded their miniland U.S.A attraction by recreating the famed Las Vegas Strip which was made from more than two-million pieces and more than sixteen thousand hours of labor. (AP Photo/Legoland, Sandy Huffaker)

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20070329/ap\\_on\\_bi\\_ge/legoland\\_las\\_vegas](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20070329/ap_on_bi_ge/legoland_las_vegas)

## Final touches put on Legoland Las Vegas

By ALLISON HOFFMAN, Associated Press Writer Thu Mar 29, 12:48 AM ET

CARLSBAD, Calif. - What happens in Legoland Las Vegas will stay in Legoland Las Vegas — if the designers have anything to say about it.

With just hours to go before the official grand opening of a \$1-million-plus scale model of the famed Las Vegas Strip, builders spent Wednesday snapping and glue-gunning the final few thousand bricks into place on replicas of 10 casinos — from the smooth black Luxor pyramid to

the towering 20-foot Stratosphere, complete with a tiny working roller coaster shuttling green-faced passengers up and down the central spire.

Piles of little 3- to 4-inch Lego figurines — including scantily clad women, men handing out girlie fliers and partygoers toting neon green hurricane drinks — were stacked in bins and on the roofs of the waist-high casino buildings awaiting placement.

"We've got to get 2,000 little people in there this afternoon," design manager Pat DeMaria said as he surveyed the team of landscapers and engineers who were digging holes for tiny cacti and preparing to fill empty pools with water.

After years of complaints about the Disneyfication of Las Vegas, the famed Strip is getting the theme park treatment from DeMaria's designers. The new, 2-million-brick model recreates a handful of landmarks in intricate detail, from the bas-relief carvings on the campanile of the Venetian to the chic Tangerine bar set into the facade of the newly remodeled Treasure Island hotel.

The scale starts at 20-to-1 at the base, so the brick people don't seem dwarfed, and shrinks to 60-to-1 at the top, designers said.

About the only thing missing is any hint of gambling. Fiber-optic light boards advertise the Mirage dolphins and fake cabaret shows — in some cases headlined by the Lego designers' alter egos — but the constant jangle of slots and video poker machines is absent from the set.

Instead, there is a water-spitting Lego elephant, a two-track Lego monorail and automated Lego limousines that disappear into hotel-registration carports and then reappear on the other side. Kids can punch a button to see a parade of newlyweds come out of the Strip's infamous Little White Wedding Chapel — some in white gowns and tuxes, others in less formal nuptial garb.

"We wanted to make it kid-friendly," said Kristi Klein, the lead designer. "So there are lots of interactive elements for them, like the exploding Mirage volcano and the Treasure Island pirate ship."

Young Lego fans, drawn by the bright colors and all the moving parts, peered over yellow barricades that blocked off the new installation until its official opening Thursday.

The Las Vegas Miniland was built by a team of 15 designers in Carlsbad and at Lego headquarters in Billund, Denmark, over three years. It is the biggest scale model in the Legoland park, located 40 miles north of downtown San Diego, though the model Chrysler Building on the shiny New York New York casino is dwarfed by the plastic version rising a few yards away in the Lego Manhattan area.

"It's plastic replicas of fake copies of these great buildings," DeMaria said. "You have to take it a little tongue in cheek."

---

On the Net:

Legoland: <http://www.legoland.com>



Kristi Klein, the lead designer for the Las Vegas mini-land project at Legoland, talks about the amount of detail put into a portion of the Venetian Hotel reproduction at Legoland in Carlsbad, Calif. Wednesday, March 28, 2007. With just hours to go before the official grand opening of a \$1-million-plus scale model of the famed Las Vegas Strip, builders spent Wednesday snapping and glue-gunning the final few thousand bricks into place on replicas of 10 casinos. (AP Photo/Lenny Ignelzi)



Neal Hansen, left, vacuums the moat while Fernando Casteneda works on the pirate ship at the Treasure Island Hotel reproduction in the new mini-land exhibit at Legoland in Carlsbad, Calif., Wednesday, March 28, 2007. The exhibit opens on Thursday. (AP Photo/Lenny Ignelzi)



Gino Lopez paints the fountain in front of a reproduction of the Excaliber Hotel in the new mini-land exhibit at Legoland in Carlsbad, Calif. Wednesday, March 28, 2007. The exhibit opens on Thursday. (AP Photo/Lenny Ignelzi)



Painters Remi Hamzai, left, and David Solis put the finishing paint touches on the entrance to the Venetian Hotel reproduction in the new mini-land exhibit at Legoland in Carlsbad, Calif., Wednesday, March 28, 2007. The exhibit opens on Thursday. (AP Photo/Lenny Ignelzi)



In this handout photo provided by Legoland, visitors check-out the displays during the grand opening of Miniland Las Vegas at Legoland California in Carlsbad, Calif., Thursday, March 29, 2007. The theme park expanded their miniland U.S.A attraction by recreating the famed Las Vegas Strip which was made from more than two-million pieces and more than sixteen thousand hours of labor. (AP Photo/Legoland, Sandy Huffaker)



Pat DeMaria, the model shop manager at Legoland in Carlsbad, Calif., points out some of the details on the front of the New York, New York Hotel reproduction at the new mini-land exhibit at Legoland, Wednesday, March 28, 2007. The exhibit opens on Thursday. (AP Photo/Lenny Ignelzi)



Chris Gardner paints a fountain area outside a reproduction of the the New York, New York Hotel in the new mini-land exhibit at Legoland in Carlsbad, Calif., Wednesday, March 28, 2007. The exhibit opens on Thursday. (AP Photo/Lenny Ignelzi)



A worker stands between miniatures of the Reichstag and the Brandenburg Gate made out of Lego at the so-called 'Legoland Discovery Centre' in Berlin March 28, 2007. Europe's first indoor Legoland opens its doors to the public on March 31 in the German capital. REUTERS/Tobias Schwarz (GERMANY)