



Introduction

The Good Hope Quilters' Guild Mystery Quilt 2023

www.goodhopequiltersguild.org.za

The Spice Route Quilt

78" x 78" (90" x 90" with borders)

by Dewald Compion



Photo: Dawie van Niekerk ©

I am very excited to take you on a journey for the next 12 weeks as we explore the Cape of Good Hope and other destinations on the Spice Route.

Introduction

I know, mystery quilts are not everybody's cup of tea. Not knowing what you are making and how to select and use fabric can be a bit daunting. And not working at your own pace can be frustrating. I wasn't sure what to expect when I joined my first mystery quilt-a-long two years ago, but trying to unpuzzle the mystery, whilst learning new quilting techniques and getting amazing tips from other quilters soon had me hooked. And now I'm kind of addicted.

I will attempt to assist you in any way possible (except for prematurely solving the mystery, LOL) if you are unsure about any of the techniques or instructions along this journey. I am really excited to spend the next 12 weeks in your company. This project is a wonderful way to ease into the new quilting year with simple (mostly familiar) blocks, hopefully teaching you some new tricks along the way.

Quilt Size: 78" x 78" (90" x 90" with borders)

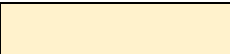


Block Size: 6" x 6" finished

Fabric Requirements

This quilt is designed using three shades of fabric: **LIGHT**, **MEDIUM**, and **DARK**. You can choose to use three shades of the same colour, or mix it up with three completely different colours, as long as the contrast between the light, medium and dark fabrics is distinctive enough. You can use solids or non-directional prints. I usually take a black and white photo of the different fabric options if I'm not sure if there is enough contrast – the values are usually much more evident if you evaluate it in shades of grey.

I will also provide instructions if you would prefer to make a scrappy or more colourful quilt. The design can really shine if you choose to do this and could lead to a quite interesting quilt design. If you choose to go this route, it is very important to use a strong colour/pattern printed fabric as your main design fabric and a contrasting strong colour/pattern printed fabric as your background fabric to make the design work. You can use mixed colours to replace the medium value fabric – either completely scrappy or as per the instructions if you prefer a more "structured" finished quilt top.




Fabric requirements assume at least 42" useable width of fabric (WOF). ¼" seam allowance included.

Light - Background		3⅞ yards
Dark - Main		2 yards
Medium		1⅜ yards

If you choose to add borders to your quilt, you'll need enough extra fabric of your choice to make a 6" border. You can choose the same fabric as your background, or for a beautiful contrast, use the same fabric as for your Main Fabric. You can also decide to add your own designed, complementing border once the final quilt top is revealed. The idea is to have fun and make this project your own.

For a more colourful or scrappy quilt, use fabric as above and replace the Medium Fabric with colourful fabric of your choice.

Or if you need further guidance for a slightly more “organized chaotic” look: Pick your Background and Main Fabrics using the measurements above. Then, decide on four (4) complementing colours to replace the Medium Fabric. You will need the following:

		Colour Option 1	Colour Option 2	
Light - Background				3 ⁷ / ₈ yards
Dark - Main				2 yards
Fabric 1	week 2 & 6			3/4 yard
Fabric 2	week 3, 8 & 11			1/4 yard
Fabric 3	week 4 & 7			3/8 yard
Fabric 4	week 5 & 10			3/8 yard

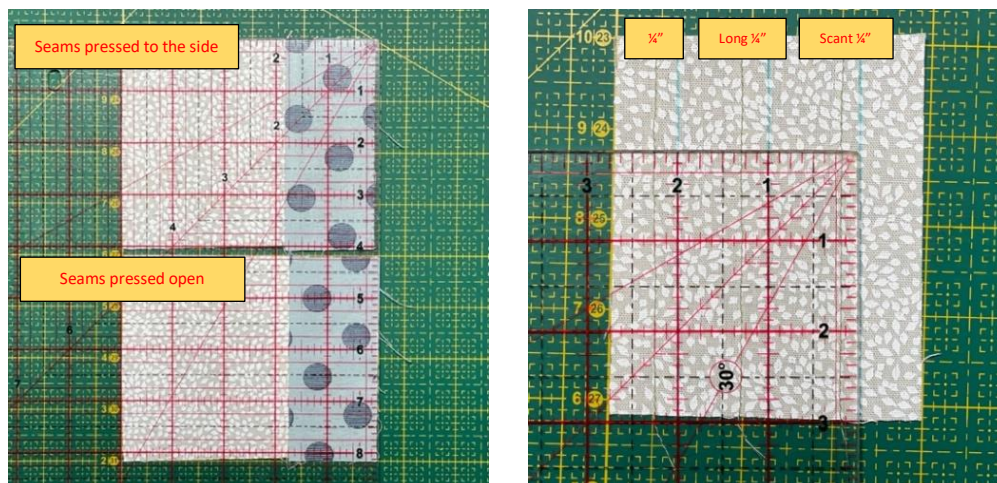
Some Basic Tips

1. **Prewash your fabrics.** I know, it’s not always necessary, but mixing different fabrics and especially different shades of fabric can potentially cause bleeding when you wash your quilt. Certain dyes are more likely to cause bleeding as well. Certain fabrics like Shweshwe and African wax prints should always be washed before use to soften the fabric.
2. **“Iron, bru”** Pressing is a crucial element in minimizing frustrations while quilting. Press your fabric before cutting for accurate measurements. Also set your stitches by pressing the sewn line after piecing blocks, before pressing the seams. Then press from the front.



3. **“Sho’t Left.”** When it comes to pressing seams, you have two options: Open or to the dark fabric. I prefer pressing seams to the dark side, because it gives the opportunity for nestling seams. However, I find that pressing seams to the side can cause the finished blocks to be a fraction smaller than intended, especially if there are many seams in one block. To compensate for this slight loss in block size, it is advisable to stitch a scant 1/4” seam allowance (move the fabric a thread’s width to the left of the 1/4” foot guide and stitch just inside the 1/4” line, or set the needle one position to the right). Just remember:

pressing your seams open may limit your quilting options, as open seams do not allow for stitch-in-the-ditch quilting. Stick to one option throughout the project, and you shouldn't have issues when putting the final blocks together.



4. **“Sharp Sharp!”** Use a sharp blade for your rotary cutter for accurate fabric cutting, and a new sharp needle in your machine before each project for accurate piecing.
5. **“Kokkerotte” – Lubi Koorts** (Leaders and Enders – Bonnie Hunter) My aunt introduced me to the technique of using folded pieces of scraps to sew on and off at the beginning and ending of chain piecing blocks. This allows for smooth stitches at the beginning of each row of chain piecing and minimizes unwanted long threads to be trimmed and collected later, saving thread and time. Simply start sewing with a piece of scrap fabric, followed by chain piecing your blocks and finishing off with another piece of scrap fabric, cutting the thread behind the “kokkerot”. This leaves the “kokkerot” in place to start a new chain of piecing.



6. **“New dog, old tricks”** I am a permanent quilting student of the internet. And I love learning new tricks – especially if it helps me improve my quilting techniques. This pattern is a “mix-tape” of my favourite quilting tips, techniques and shortcuts compiled over the past few years from tutorials and patterns from masters in the quilting world. I hope by sharing this, you will also learn something new, although these tips may be old news to most of you. Please do share your tips on certain blocks with us. Sharing experiences and learning from each other is what makes a quilt-a-long so great! And of course, this pattern is only a guide to completing the quilt. Feel free to make the blocks in any way you please – there are many ways to navigate the journey around the stormy Cape of Good Hope, as long as you enjoy completing the Spice Route.

Homework

Since this is a pattern for machine piecing, it would be an oversight to not turn our attention to the technology that helps us make our projects. A little bit of TLC goes a long way. All play and no work is sadly not compatible with sewing. Taking care of your machine will ensure many happy sewing years. This is a quick general guide in sewing machine cleaning. Please refer to the instruction manual of your specific machine for detailed instructions. Let's begin 2023 with happy healthy sewing buddies.

It is advisable to clean your machine at least once a month, but if you sew very frequently, you may want to clean it more often. I cleaned my machine about a month ago and was shocked to see how much lint collected in my machine during my last project. I am ashamed to share these pictures, but I'll take one for the team and hopefully encourage you to peep inside the underbelly of your devoted quilting companion. Do not use any chemical solvents when cleaning your machine.

Turn the power switch off and unplug the machine before cleaning. Remove the presser foot, needle, and needle plate. Take out the bobbin and bobbin holder. Clean the bobbin holder with a lint brush (usually provided with your machine) and wipe the bobbin holder inside and out with a soft cloth. Clean your feed dog with a soft cloth.



Remove any lint in the machine with the lint brush. Thin forceps could be useful in hard to reach areas, but be careful not to damage the machine. Gently blowing can also help to get lint out of hard-to-reach areas.



Re-assemble your machine and give the external surface a good wipe with a soft cloth. And that's it: Happy sewing days await!

And one more surprise...

The Spice Route Recipes

I couldn't imagine spending time on the Spice Route without celebrating the spice trade, an enterprise of ancient origins and great cultural and economic significance. I love cooking, especially using spices in cooking and I will include one recipe each week to celebrate the richness spices bring to our lives. I'll be sharing some of my favourite recipes and a few traditional recipes to pay tribute to the cultural richness of spices in the Cape of Good Hope which was hugely impacted and shaped by the Spice Trade.

Enjoy the journey and do things at your own pace. Remember, this is supposed to be an easy relaxed start to your new quilting year. Invite friends to join us, share the mystery quilt-a-long with friends abroad, arrange meeting sewing friends weekly to enjoy social quilting and maybe even prepare some of the recipes to enjoy at your meetings.

And don't worry if you fall behind at some point. Some weeks won't keep you busy for more than an hour, so there will be more than enough time to catch up. So, start planning and see you next week when the fun begins!

Please share your progress pics on the sew-cial networks
tag @ghqg_south_africa and @compiond
Post with the hashtags #GHQGMysteryQuilt #thespiceroutequilt #thespicerouterecipes
on Instagram and Facebook

You are welcome to contact me if you have any questions: dlcompion@gmail.com