

# Knitting With Suri Alpaca

What is Suri alpaca and Why knit with Suri alpaca yarn

# Suri Alpaca

Suri alpacas are raised for their soft, lustrous, silky and luxurious fleece.

Suri alpaca fleece is considered a "specialty" fiber due to its limited availability and exquisite characteristics.

Suri fiber can be turned into a wide array of products from next to skin apparel, to beautiful carpets.



# What is Suri Fiber

- A Suri's fleece hangs in long, lustrous, silky, twisted locks that drape from its frame.
- Suri alpacas have fleeces in a variety of natural colors from white to black, which appeals to those who prefer all natural products.
- Suri fiber takes dye well, creating an infinite color palette for the fiber artist.
- Suri's unique cool-to-the-touch feel, lovely drape, and luster make it ideal for knitting, crocheting, weaving, felting, and hand spinning. These features also make it a wonderful fiber for blending- elevating other natural fibers.

# Why Knit with Suri? What can I expect?

- Fine Suri yarn is a beautiful, soft, lustrous yarn
- Like cashmere in its softness and silky feel, drape and luster
- It takes color as beautifully as silk or mohair

# What are the properties of Suri Yarn?

- Its drape and weight make it perfect for garments that drape.
- Fine and open work finished product is warm
- Not as elastic as wool but more than silk, mohair and bamboo
- Suri blocks and holds its shape, that is, it is resilient if not made of heavy yarn or if it is not knit loosely.

# What does Fine (or Fineness mean)

- Fineness equates to softness of the fiber and its ultimate use
- Fineness is measured in micron, the lower the micron, the more fine.
- Lower micron fineness (less than 24 micron) can be worn next to skin.
- Higher micron fineness (over 25 micron) is better for outer wear.
- High micron fineness over 30 micron is best for rugs and housewares.

# Fineness Measurements

- The United States, along with the Australians, the Canadians, and Peruvians class fibers as follows:
  - Grade #1, Suri Ultimate, <20 microns ( $\mu\text{m}$ ),
  - Grade #2, Suri Superfine, 20 -22.9  $\mu\text{m}$ ,
  - Grade #3, Suri Classic, 23-25.9 $\mu\text{m}$ ,
  - Grade # 4, 26-28.9 $\mu\text{m}$ .
  - Grade #5, 29-31.9 $\mu\text{m}$ , G6 32-35 $\mu\text{m}$ .
- The fibers' micron grade will determine how the yarn is used as well as its price.
  - Fine Suri, Grades #1 or #2 can be worn next to the skin, a Grade #3 also, if it is carefully sorted.
  - Fibers over 30, can make a comfortable outer garment—coarser fiber is best used for rugs or felting.

# How do I use Fine Suri Yarn and where do I find patterns?

- This yarn is ideally suited to shawls and scarves but also lace sweaters, christening bonnets and dresses, and wedding veils.
- Whether spun in a fine lace weight (250 yds/oz) or a light fingering (75–100 yds/oz) it should adapt easily to patterns for such garments. Attention to needle size is important.
- Go down a needle size or two from a pattern created for wool. Always check gauge.
- Patterns for silk and fine cotton should behave much the same as Suri as these yarns do not have the elasticity of wool. Patterns for huacaya fall somewhere in between—not as elastic as wool, not as silky as Suri or silk. So again, check the gauge.



# How do I use Less Fine (or Courser) Suri Yarn?

- Heavier garments of stronger (coarser) fiber do not work well when made of 100% Suri. Should be blended for best results.
- Suri can be blended with wool, preferably a wool of similar staple length and micron count and one with some luster. This makes the yarn lighter, more resilient, suitable for outerwear.
- Patterns for this weight are most likely to be for wool so checking gauge and needle size is important.

# What needles should I choose?

- For knitting Suri yarn, smooth wooden or bamboo needles are good; for lace projects addi lace needles work well.
- As Suri is a slippery yarn, the addi lace needles have just enough drag to hold the yarn on the needle and are still fast and addi lace needles now come in a full range of sizes.
- The size needle can vary according to the project. The finer the needle the more stable the finished piece.

# Suri Fiber Tips to Remember

- As a straight fiber, Suri yarn has less loft, making it perfect for projects where you want distinctive stitches to show and less thickness of the resulting textile.
- The straightness of Suri makes knitted or crocheted projects made from it more drapey and less bulky.
- The longer staple length makes fingering and lace weight yarns stronger than those made with other animal fibers.
- The lower scale height and longer scales make the fibers less "grippy" so they often require a little more twist to spin into yarn.
- Suri's longer fiber makes spinning easier and worsted yarn strong and lustrous

# Suri Fiber Tips To Remember (cont.)

- Suri not only takes dye well, but its lustrous sheen enhances the effects of dyes.
- The luster and silky hand are wonderful in woven products
- Suri fiber has been proven in testing to be stronger than other animal fibers of the same micron.
- Suri is water resistant, making spills easy to clean up before water saturates the fiber.
- Suri is free of lanolin, which reduces the need for higher water temperatures or harsh chemicals.

# Suri Fiber Tips to Remember (cont.)

- Suri has a high natural thermal conductivity, but can also “breathe” due to its lighter weight by volume.
- Suri can slowly wick away perspiration making it feel lighter than wool, but warmer than cotton, in cool, damp conditions.
- Suri offers a high degree of luster when compared with other natural fibers.

# More Information Available

More information about Suri Alpaca and its fiber is available at The Suri Network, a national association of Suri alpaca breeders dedicated to protect, preserve and promote the Suri Alpaca.

Website at: [www.surinetwork.org](http://www.surinetwork.org)

Suri yarn made in Oregon can be purchased at local Suri farm stores or online. Our Big Timber Alpacas farm store is online at:

[bigtimberalpacas.com/store/](http://bigtimberalpacas.com/store/)

For farm visits by appointment only: contact Sue King at [sue@bigtimberalpacas.com](mailto:sue@bigtimberalpacas.com). Visitors are always welcome!

Questions?