

How to make a Mei Tai (Asian Baby Carrier)

Materials:

½ yard of decorative fabric (silk, decorator fabric, etc.)
2 ¼ yards of medium weight cotton
1 1" foam cushion
Cotton quilt batting
¼ yard of heavy interfacing (hat brim interfacing)
Upholstery thread in color of the cotton
Cording to match the cotton

Cut:

Out of the decorative fabric
– one piece 21" x 18" (long side along the grain)

Out of the cotton fabric (long sides along the grain)

- 2 pieces 10" wide x 80" long
- 1 piece 12" wide x 70" long
- 2 pieces 21" x 18"
- 1 piece 20" x 18"
- 1 piece 5" x 24"

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Let's begin, shall we?

First take the three pieces that are 21" x 18" and fold in half. Cut a slight curve on one piece that angles to about 3" at the end. Then lay it on top of the other two pieces and cut the same curve. You can do this with a piece of paper first and use that as a guide. This is the top of the carrier.

Next, cut your interfacing and quilt batting. The quilt batting I usually triple up. Cut both the interfacing and quilt batting at 6" x 14". Next cut the same curve as above. Place these two pieces on one of the cotton body pieces as so:



Notice that I have placed the interfacing underneath the batting. The reason for this is that the interfacing will be facing out, giving the head support, while the batting will be facing inward to cushion little babes head.

Next, sew it like so:



I sewed along the edges, plus went straight across where the curve begins. This allows the wearer to turn down the top curve easily, if wanted.

Next step...the top straps!

Take the two pieces that are 80' long and make them into long tubes. Next, turn them right sides out and finish one end by turning the seam under $\frac{1}{2}$ " and put the long seam in the middle, like so:



The reason why you want the long seam in the middle of the tube is that it provides a guideline when you are sewing the foam to the straps. Next you need to measure 22" in from the open end of the straps. Place a large safety pin at that spot. Take your foam cushion and cut 2 pieces that are 4.5" wide.



Next, turn the tube inside out up to a few inches from where the safety pin is located. Stick the foam piece in up to the pin and hold on tightly to the foam through the fabric. Gently pull the fabric tube over the foam piece (while holding tightly!). Make sure the seam is keeping in the center and pull the fabric taught. This can be a little challenging so just take your time.

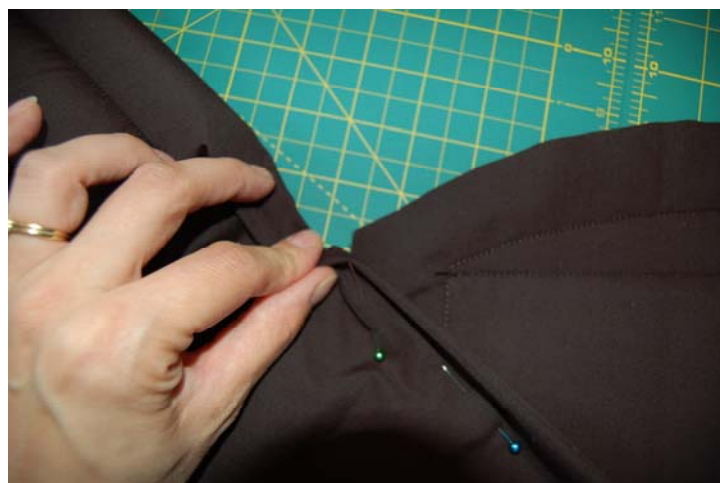


Next it is time to sew the foam onto the fabric, so it will look similar to backpack straps. Important tip: sew the lines toward the open end. BOTH lines, as in don't sew one toward the end, flip it around and sew the other one in the opposite direction. The fabric will bunch up and look crappy.

Also it is important to pull the fabric and the foam while you are sewing, since it won't be flat. Sew in about 1" from the side.



Once both are done, it is time to lay them out on the interior piece for sewing. Lay them at an angle on the side that does not contain the batting and interfacing. Place the straps seam side down. Put the top of the strap at the corner, and make sure they are laid out exactly the same.



Next, sew them on and don't be stingy with the sewing. These are holding up a baby, you know! Make sure that you sew at least an inch from the edge and then I usually sew a triangle and then cross through the triangle a few more times.

Now you will lay out the pieces. Put the piece with the straps, quilted side towards the table, place the decorative fabric, right side towards you, then the cotton piece with the right sides together. Pin in place and sew along the edges, but DO NOT sew where the straps are sticking out. That is unless you want the straps to be inside, but that wouldn't be very functional now would it?



I usually leave an inch before the opening on the bottom, but sew right up to where the curve meets the straps.



Now clip the curve with little triangles before you turn it inside out, so it will lay better:



Now turn it inside out and pull the straps through. You will have the interior piece with the straps attached on the inside so make sure you are pulling the right pieces to be on the outside. Next, fold the seams under where the top straps are pulled through and then top stitch the entire piece. I usually go over and top stitch the armholes one more time.



Now it is time for the bottom strap. Find the center and place it over the top of the body piece. Go in 1" from each side and down 1". Then mark a button-hole, and sew them on each side.



Now turn it and place the right sides together and sew up the ends and up to 2" from the button holes on each side. Turn it inside out and you will have a pouch to place the body piece inside. Make sure it is centered and turn the seams under. Pin the bottom strap to the body and top stitch.





Now you should have a seam that hits the top of the buttonhole. We want a few more seams on this piece...remember, this is carrying a baby so we need lots of seams! Next sew the bottom strap coming straight down from the top stitch seam on the body. Now sew another seam hitting the bottom of the buttonhole straight across. See below:



Now we have a nice channel for our cording. The cording will need to have big knots at the ends so it does not pull through. If your cording is made out of synthetic materials, you should be able to heat seal the end by using a lighter to melt it and then just pat it all together so the ends are together. Use a large pin to pull the cording through the channel.





DONE!

Now for the bag. It is just a simple drawstring bag. Sew the straps into a tube. Turn right side out, turn the ends under and sew. Pin onto the bag and sew in a square around the ends to give a nice sturdy seam. Sew the bag right sides together. Turn out. Sew a button hole 1" from the edge and 1" long. Turn the edges under and sew a channel for the cording to go through. Put the cording through and knot. Done! I usually add a bit of the decorative material to the bag, too. Either a patch or a long strip.



Now you have a stylin' Mei Tai!