Free-form peyote twists and swirls around art-glass beads, pearls, and gemstones

designed by Jewels

The seed bead waves in Jewels’ Tidepool Shallows flow around art-glass beads by Sheila Comstock.
step by step

[1] Divide the 22 mm and 10 x 15 mm art beads into two groups, and add a roughly equal number of larger accent beads to each group. These beads will form part of the core strands on each side of the necklace.

[2] On a comfortable length of Fireline, leave a 12-in. (30 cm) tail, attach a stop bead (How-Tos), and string the first side of the necklace: Starting with the clasp end, pick up 1/2–1-in. (1.3–2.5 cm) lengths of 110 seed beads in groups of three to 10 of each color, separated by two or three accent beads and art beads from one of the groups in step 1 (photo a). When the necklace is approximately half the desired length, pick up the 35 mm focal bead and 15 110s. If the focal bead slides over the 110s, add a small accent bead before and after the focal. Skip the last 110, and sew back through the other 110s and the focal bead.

[3] Work in peyote stitch (How-Tos) back along the strand, sewing through clusters of larger beads as though they were one bead, and following the established color pattern (photo b).

[4] Work an increase row of peyote stitch by picking up two 110s for each stitch, following the established color pattern and sewing through larger beads. The beadwork will begin to twist and curl (photo c). If you cannot sew through the larger beads again, pick up enough 110s to create a bridge past the larger beads (photo d), and continue in peyote stitch on the other side of the bridge. In future rows, stitch along the bridges, adding increases and decreases as desired.

[5] Continue working in peyote stitch, increasing or sewing through large
beads and 11’s as desired, ending and adding thread (How-Tos) as needed. When you reach the focal bead, sew through the bead, and add another fringe with or without an accent bead (photo e), as in step 2. Stitch back along the row, picking up dangles and accent beads instead of 11’s as desired. Once your strand has reached the desired fullness, end the working thread, but leave the tail for attaching the clasp.

[6] Work as in steps 2–5 to make the second strand of the necklace the same length as the first.

[7] With one thread or tail, sew through the loop of half of the clasp and back into the beadwork. Retrace the thread path several times, and end the thread. Repeat on the other end of the necklace with the other tail.

[8] If desired, work a strip of peyote stitch over the focal bead: Add a comfortable length of Fireline to the beadwork, and exit the focal bead. Pick up enough 11’s to curve along the outside of the focal bead, and sew through the bead again. Work along the curve of 11’s in peyote stitch, adding increases and accent beads as desired to shape the peyote stitch strip, and end the thread.

Jewelry designer

Jewels (also known as Karen East) has been beading for more than 20 years, and has been creating elaborate neck pieces using off-loom weaving techniques since the 1990s. In 2000, she moved to the thriving arts community of Homer, Alaska, in the U.S., and became involved in the local artists cooperative-run gallery, eventually buying the business in 2003. Since then, she’s enjoyed balancing her practical bookkeeping side with her creative beading side. She credits living in a beautiful and inspiring place for helping her keep all things in life in perspective.

Bead artist

Sheila Comstock has always needed a creative outlet in her life, and beads, glass, and gemstones have been a part of her journey. After college, she opened a part-time semiprecious beaded jewelry business with her best friend, and more recently found a lampworking class at a local craft center. Sheila was in love with lampworking from that very first class! Since that time, she’s studied with several well-known glass artists from all over the U.S. and recently began teaching at the very same craft center where she first discovered her passion. She finds inspiration in nature and the cosmos, and enjoys working texture and metals into her pieces. She loves the challenge of keeping the balance between heat and gravity while coaxing the glass toward its final form. She sells her beads and a limited line of ready-to-wear jewelry at Bead Fiesta shows in the New England area. Past exhibitions of her work include Sentiments in Glass, Worcester Center for Crafts (2005), Out of the Fire: Glass Meets Metal, Lexington Arts and Crafts Society (2006), and Currents: Merging Culture and Creativity at Bead Inspirations, Alameda, Calif., held in conjunction with the 2008 Gathering in Oakland, Calif.