

Airplane Slippers to Make and Embroider

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Travel in style and comfort with Cynthia LeCount Samaké's lovely Airplane Slippers.

Editor's Note: Cynthia's companion article to this project, "The Amazing World of Vietnamese Silk Embroidery," is included in the November/December 2016 issue of *PieceWork*. She takes you along with her on her trip to Vietnam where she discovers exquisite Vietnamese embroidery, meets contemporary needleworkers, and begins her research into the long and rich history of embroidery in Vietnam.

A friend called me to say she had thousands of expiring miles from her frequent-flyer program and what did I think about making a trip to Vietnam? Naturally, I was thrilled with the offer. Not much later, she texted: “I regret to inform you that there are no more regular seats, so we have to go business class!”

A few weeks later, we were in the air. For the sixteen-hour-flight to Hanoi, we slept lying down in cozy pods, watched the latest movies, and ate real meals with real silverware. Cathay Pacific provided airplane socks, but at one point, when I ventured into the bathroom, it looked like someone had tried to take a splash-bath. I put down a layer of paper towels, but my socks and feet still got wet. Back in my pod, I peeled off the socks and vowed to find a better way!

These comfortable slippers will keep your feet dry in most airplane situations. The exquisite Vietnamese embroidery we saw everywhere during our trip inspired the designs, and butterflies seemed appropriate for flight slippers. A variety of embroidery flosses are suitable for stitching the butterflies.

MATERIALS

- ♦ Kreinik Silk Mori, 6-strand 100% spun silk thread, 2¾ yards (2.5 m)/skein, 2 skeins of #5202 Lightest Periwinkle and 1 skein each of #6127 Very Dark Dusty Lavender and #6116 Dark Wisteria; www.kreinik.com
- ♦ Kreinik Fine #8 Metallic Braid, 11 yards (10.0 m)/spool, 1 spool of #012 Purple; www.kreinik.com
- ♦ Taffeta or other fancy woven fabric, such as satin, brocade, or heavyweight silk, ⅓ yard (0.3 m), Navy
- ♦ Batik fabrics, 100% cotton, 1 piece 12 x 26 inches (30.5 x 66.0 cm) Dark Plum and 1 piece 12 x 14 inches (30.5 x 35.6 cm) Medium Plum
- ♦ Pellon Iron-on Fleece Interfacing #TP 971F, 45 inches (114.3 cm) wide, ⅓ yard (0.3 m)
- ♦ Naugahyde with cloth backing, 1 piece 6 x 26 inches (15.2 x 66.0 cm), Black
- ♦ John James Needles, embroidery sizes 6 or 7 and sharps size 5; www.colonialneedle.com
- ♦ Elastic, ¼ inch (6 mm) or ⅜ inch (9 mm) wide, 2 pieces, 6 inches (15.2 cm) long
- ♦ Sewing thread, 1 spool of Navy
- ♦ Buttonhole or carpet thread, 1 spool of Black
- ♦ Dritz Dressmaker's Marking Pencil, White
- ♦ Dr. Scholl's S-type foam innersoles (not gel type), 1 pair of largest size (will be cut to size)

Finished sizes: Large butterfly, ¾ inches (8.3 cm) wide x 2 ⅙ inches (7.5 cm) deep; small butterfly, 2 ⅙ inches (5.4 cm) wide x 2 inches (5.1 cm) deep; women's shoe sizes 5–6, 7–8, and 9–10

Notes: Naugahyde is by definition a form of waterproof vinyl with a fabric backing and usually with a 100 percent PVC face. Most fabric stores have many options, but select one that is rubbery, flexible, and strong, yet thin enough to stitch through with a standard sewing machine. When stitching the sole section, be sure to use pins only in the seam allowances to prevent tiny holes in the main sole area, allowing for possible leakage in damp situations. To pad the sole, you will be inserting the commercial foam innersole between the Naugahyde sole and the cotton lining. For the embroidery, use two strands of silk thread or one strand of the braid. Hold one hand inside the slipper while embroidering. Use the lightest tension on the threads. If the thread is pulled too tightly, the slipper will pucker and not fit correctly. Do not let the embroidery stitches penetrate the lining to avoid the buildup of silk threads rubbing against the foot. Use ⅜-inch (9-mm) seam allowances on all seams, unless otherwise noted. Backstitch all machine-stitched seams.

Slippers

Trace all patterns onto plain paper and determine the size needed. Alter the Front pattern piece, if necessary, by cutting it into two pieces on the line indicated and taping a piece of paper to bridge the two pieces. Add ¾ inch (1.9 cm) for size 7–8 or 1½ inches (3.8 cm) for size 9–10. Cut the Sole pattern to corresponding size.

Cut two Front pieces on the fold from the taffeta fabric. Cut two Front pieces on the fold from the Dark Plum fabric. Cut two Sole pieces from the Medium Plum fabric for the inside-sole lining. Cut two Front pieces on the fold and two Sole pieces from the interfacing. Cut two Sole pieces from the Naugahyde. Trim the Sole pattern piece ½ inch (1.3 cm) all around to make the pattern for the innersoles. Use this new pattern piece to trim the foam innersoles.

Using an iron set at cotton and with steam, fuse the interfacing pieces to the wrong sides of the Front and Sole lining pieces, following manufacturer's instructions. Flip unit over and iron again on the cotton side. Allow to cool and test to make sure the pieces are thoroughly fused; if not, repeat process with more steam and pressure.

With right sides together, stitch the center back seams for both the Front lining and top pieces. Pin these two pieces, right sides together, around the top opening and baste by hand, matching the back



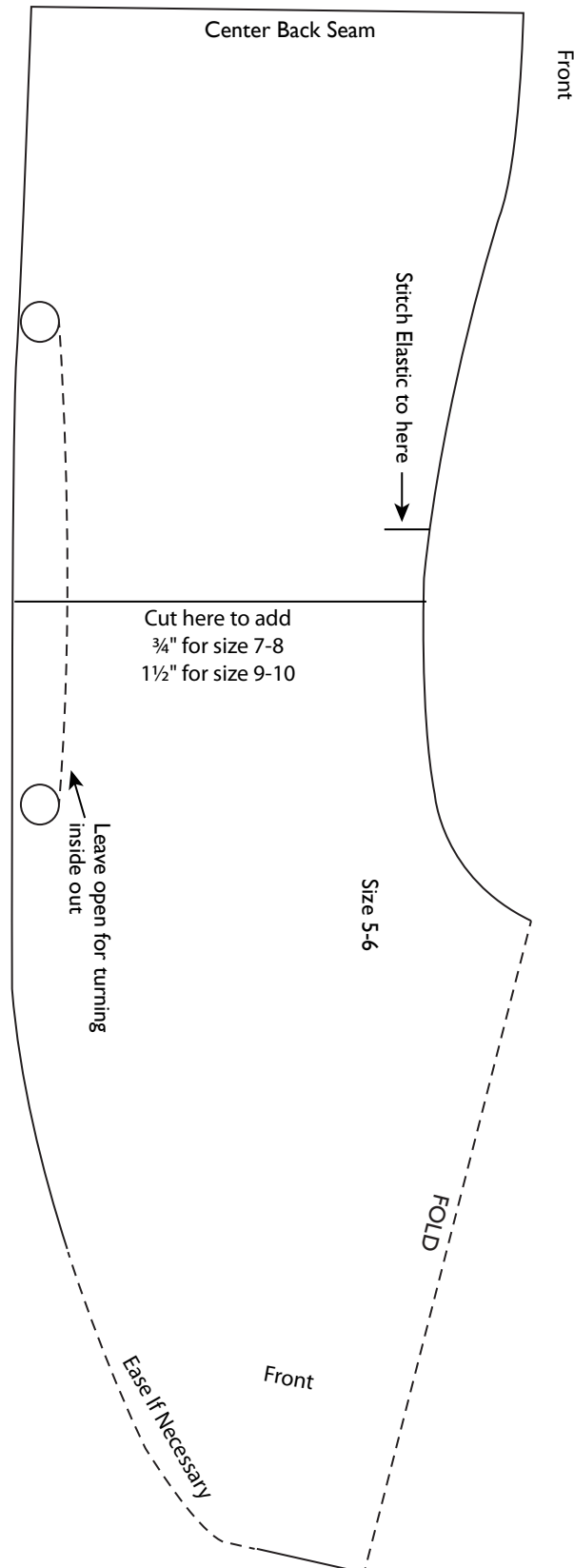
The Naugahyde sole on the slippers will keep your feet dry in most airplane situations.

seams and center front at fold line (this may be marked with a straight pin). Stitch this seam again with machine, proceeding carefully around the front curve area. Trim and clip this seam around the curve. Flip the lining to the inside and iron. Carefully trim center back seam on both the lining and top to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (6 mm). Trim upper edge seam to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch (6 mm) on both sides of the center back; this makes the channel for the elastic easier to gather later. Open the upper seam and topstitch only on the lining side $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3 mm) from seam and from the side mark around front curve to the other side mark (not around the back). This topstitching helps the lining stay neatly inside the slipper. Measure 4 inches (10.2 cm) toward the toe from center back seam and make a mark on each side with the pencil at the top seam edge. This indicates the end points of the channel for the elastic.

To form the channel, stitch $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.3 cm) down from top edge, from side mark to side mark, around the back. Thread the elastic into the channel, using a bodkin or safety pin. Extend each elastic end $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.3 cm) beyond the marks. Stitch one end back and forth several times through all layers. Pull other end to gather around the heel and temporarily safety pin in place. Try on slipper to check that it feels snug on the foot. Make any corrections needed by adjusting the length of the elastic. Position gathers evenly and stitch elastic end through all layers of the slipper. Trim away extra elastic.

With right sides together, pin and stitch the sole lining to lining front, easing around the front curve. Stitch again close to first row of stitching. Remove pins. Fold slipper front inward toward center and pin it to sole lining to keep it out of the way for the next step.

Front
Enlarge pattern by 129 percent.



Sole
Enlarge sole pattern by 129 percent.

Butterflies
Patterns may be photocopied for personal use.



With right sides together, pin and stitch the Naugahyde sole (remember only in the seam allowance) to slipper front, leaving an opening between marks. Starting at one mark, stitch $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch (6-mm) seam allowance around sole to other mark, easing stitching around the toe and back. Try on and then restitch a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch (9-mm) seam around the slipper, leaving the opening. Trim the seam allowance at the heel and toe and carefully turn slipper inside out.

Trim the foam innersoles slightly smaller than the pattern. Roll the foam innersole lengthwise and slide it into the space between the sole and the lining. Finger press it flat. It may be necessary to pull it out and trim slightly to make it fit well.

Thread the larger needle with the buttonhole thread. Fold in the seam allowance of the opening and pin it in place. Whipstitch the opening closed.

Because the sole is a bit difficult to pierce, a thimble or pliers might help in this process. Secure thread by burying it inside the slipper for 2 to 3 inches (5.1 to 7.6 cm) and trim close to fabric surface. Repeat all sewing procedures to complete remaining slipper.

Embroidery

Use the pencil to center and trace the butterflies onto the toes of the slippers; center large butterfly onto toe of left slipper and the two small butterflies on the right slipper, positioning these small butterflies facing each other. Embroider butterflies: outline wings using stem stitch, fill in wings with satin stitch, and work the body and antenna in stem stitch. See photograph for color placement.