

# GREEN GROTTO



# NICHOLAS BALL



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This block is my interpretation of the shimmering waters of Capri's coast, with the teals and aquas of the sea reflecting the grey of the stone caves. I hope you're as inspired as I was by the grottos of Capri and enjoy making this block.



This is a technique based bloc that utilises a freehand curve, meaning that whilst the same fundamental instructions will be followed by different sewers, each resulting block will be unique and truly individual. For those of you that have never sewn in this improvised way before, my advice to you is to embrace it. Take your time with your first few curves to get comfortable with the technique and you'll soon discover how liberating this style of patchwork can be!

# BEFORE YOU START

The improvised nature of this block makes it difficult to give exact fabric measurements. The quantities listed below should be more than enough to create a block that finishes at 12", and you should find yourselves with some small pieces left over, perfect for adding to your scrap stash!



When sewing the curves, I find it helpful to reduce my stitch length. Also, if your machine has the option of stopping with the needle in the down position, make sure you set it to do so.

Cutting the curves doesn't involve a ruler, so take care and keep your fingers well out of the way of your rotary cutter. A new blade will help cut through the fabric layers more easily.

A little spray starch can help deeper curves lay flat.

RST – right sides together.

## YOU WILL NEED

- 1 fat quarter of teal fabric
- 2-3 fat eighths of co-ordinating fabric. I used 2 other shades of green and a grey linen-cotton blend
- 50wt Aurifil thread

## TO MAKE THE BLOCK

1) Cut a piece approximately 15" x 22" from the fat quarter. This is your main background piece, and the extra height will allow you to piece several curves into it. Cut 2 -3 strips from the fat eighths measuring approximately 2" – 2.5" wide. Cut parallel to the longest edge.

2) Lay a strip across the fat quarter, from long edge to long edge, approximately 3" up from the shorter bottom edge. Using a rotary cutter, cut a free hand curve through both layers, keeping close to the bottom of the strip. Discard the lower, thinner part of the strip, then place the other part RST onto of the lower background piece, aligning the top cut edge.

3) Sew the freehand curve. Aim to sew in one smooth motion, but stop if you need too. I'm right handed, so I use my right hand to keep the bottom fabric aligned to my seam guide, and my left hand to keep the top fabric piece aligned with the bottom piece. Only focus on the first few inches of fabric in front of the needle, and stop to make adjustments as necessary. I don't pin, as I like to be able to make slight corrections quickly and easily.

4) Press the seam using a little steam. I use the tip of my iron to get right up to the seam line, then as it starts to fall to one side, press with the full iron. The deeper you've cut the curve, the more you'll have to work at it. Be persistent and it will eventually lay flat.

5) Repeat this process by next overlapping the edge of this sewn strip with either another strip, or the other half of the background fabric. When making your cuts, make some curves shallower than others. You can also cut into a previously pieced strip to create little isolated areas. Use the photograph of my block as guide, though remember the aim is not to replicate it entirely. After your first few freehand curves, you'll gain more confidence. Add as many or as few inserts as you like. I finished the top of my block with a wider strip of the leftover grey linen to represent the grotto walls.

6) Press the block well and trim to 12.5" square.



I'd love to see your version of this block. If you post on Instagram, please tag me using @quiltsfromtheattic.