

*A passion for texture and technique drives this  
British Columbia shop to new frontiers.*

WRITTEN BY JUDITH STERN FRIEDMAN  
PHOTOGRAPHS GREG SCHEIDEMANN

# aHead





# (Katja's Quilt Shoppe) full steam

THE WHISTLE BLOWS ON A STEAM TRAIN AS IT COMES TO A HALT IN KAMLOOPS, BRITISH COLUMBIA, a bustling city of 80,000 people. This sunny city about four hours northeast of Vancouver stretches over hilly terrain at the junction of two rivers. And on the east end of town, just off the highway, Katja's Quilt Shoppe is on its own track—transporting quilters to beautiful places.

"We're in the business to sell ideas. If I can show you what to do with the fabric, the fabric will sell itself," shop owner Katja Sayewich says. Inspiration comes in many forms. Embroidered cushions on a cast-iron bed, rug-hooked revelries, and flannel fascinations lure visitors into a textural landscape. Countless traditional and reproduction fabrics, basic blenders, and Asian accents add to the rainbow. With as many as 150 patterns, people can literally see the range of possibilities to make stunning fabric creations.

**RIGHT:** From floor to ceiling, there are notions, tools, samples, patterns, and fabrics—all meant to entice.





**RIGHT:** A pair of retro aprons, both from patterns by Vanilla House Designs, are displayed atop a jelly-roll-friendly quilt sample, *Shangri-la Jelly*. **OPPOSITE:** Pillows in several shapes and sizes, made with myriad techniques and many with embroidered embellishments, take over a bedroom display in one corner of the shop.



**KATJA SAYEWICH**  
shop owner

inside scoop

"My mother still comes in the store and helps me every Friday. We've had many offers to adopt her out, but although I'll shave her, I won't give her up."

ESTABLISHED: 1999  
SIZE: 2,600 square feet  
FABRIC BOLTS: 3,500

Though Katja will tell you she's a folk art girl, the goods in her shop appeal to all. Customers can pore over novelty fabrics tucked among antique tins and bottles. Others deliberate over the newest releases at an old fabric counter that came from a Hudson Bay Co. store. The shop also carries works of local designers and reflections of the great Northwest. Applepatch Designs offers small wall hangings with three-dimensional effects. Pine Needle patterns render images of wildlife, while the Bigfork Bay Cotton Co. rides high on horse designs.

"I like to bring in that feeling of country," Katja says. She and her staff are reigniting a passion for the 1800s art of English paper piecing—and many have become addicted. Using basic shapes, such as triangles and hexagons, basted over paper, the one-patch whipstitch method is appealing for its ease and portability. In fact, when the shop put on a show of paper-pieced items created by customers and staff (many self-proclaimed hexaholics), nearly 1,000 admirers came, and 500 demo kits were given away quickly. "It's about people wanting to learn and be





*Try a new-to-you technique, such as English paper piecing.*

inspired by what we show them.”

Katja encourages her staff to work on projects that inspire customers. Her mom, Sonja Marek, comes Fridays just to stitch, and many people stop to look over her shoulder. Classes range from basic and free-motion quilting to fusible appliqué and rug hooking. Three-hour workshops might teach participants how to assemble a table runner or techniques for a specific tool. “Every customer deserves attention,” Katja says, adding that staff is available for individual quilting advice.

In addition, stitching clubs are

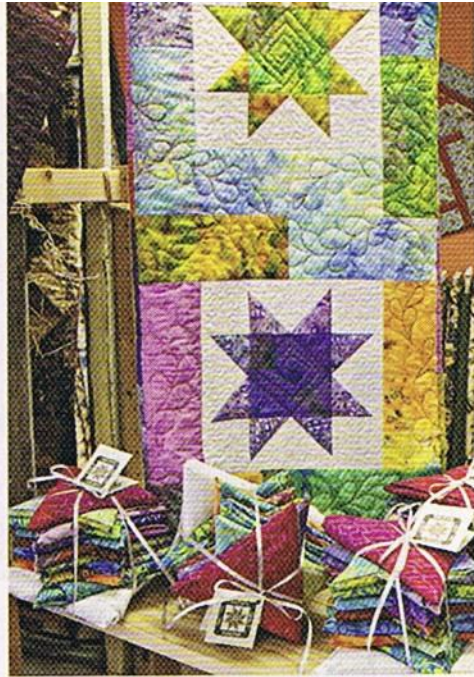
always in motion. One Saturday a month, Bits and Pieces offers quilters ideas for using their scraps. The Traditional Club explores reproduction fabrics, while Block of the Month brings something new, from a British Columbia scene to a beginner’s sampler. The shop also hosted an Alaska quilt cruise that had participants stitching while sailing on the Inside Passage.

Beyond indulgences, Katja’s offers jelly roll or charm pack instructions that customers can purchase for a \$2 donation to the Crohn’s & Colitis Foundation of Canada, The Multiple

Sclerosis Bike Tour, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and World Vision. Another block-of-the-week stash-buster pattern supports the local cancer clinic. The shop has also offered warmth to wildfire victims by supplying quilts from stitchers throughout Canada. “We try to foster a small-shop, community atmosphere of sharing and caring,” Katja says.

Katja, who grew up under her mother’s sewing machine and recalls spending money on fabric instead of makeup, spent many years in the banking industry but always dreamed of owning a quilt shop.





**ABOVE LEFT:** Many of the samples incorporate a mix of cottons, wools, and stitchery. **ABOVE MIDDLE:** A Cathedral Window miniature quilt sample made by Katja's mother, Sonja Marek, has pieces as small as  $\frac{3}{8}$ " finished. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Atkinson Designs' *Lucky Stars* pattern showcases many of the shop's bright batiks.

She remembers admiring the quilts on the beds of the resort camp her family owned and trying to replicate the Grandmother's Fan pattern she found there.

Then, after she and her family (husband Doug, daughter Sonja, and son Nicholas) had moved to Kamloops, Katja saw a notice for the local quilt guild while searching for Christmas stocking fabric. She joined the group and boarded the quilting train. In 1995, when the local fabric shop closed, Katja took the loss to heart. Four years later, she used her banking savvy to open her shop. "It still amazes me that it all came together," she says. She knows she's headed in the right direction: With continued inspiration and growing customer demand, her shop is rolling forward, full steam ahead. 🌱

Visit Katja's Quilt Shoppe at 101-1967 Trans Canada Highway E, Kamloops, BC, Canada V2C 4A4; 250/851-0324 or toll-free (U.S. and Canada) 866/852-8527. Shop hours: Monday through Saturday 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

## out & about

While you're in the area, check out these hot spots around town.

- 1. ADAMS RIVER SALMON RUN,** Roderick Haig-Brown Provincial Park, 2300 Squilax Anglemont Hwy.; Lee Creek, BC, Canada V0E 1M0; 250/955-0861; [salmonsociety.com](http://salmonsociety.com). One hour north of Kamloops, witness the upstream migration of millions of spawning sockeye salmon.
- 2. BC WILDLIFE PARK,** 9077 Dallas Dr., Kamloops, BC, Canada V2C 6V1; 250/573-3242, ext. 223 or toll-free 866/872-2066; [bczoo.org](http://bczoo.org). A 123-acre park including grizzly bears, wolves, and moose.
- 3. BROWNSTONE RESTAURANT,** 118 Victoria St., Kamloops, BC, Canada V2C 1Z7; 250/851-9939; [brownstone-restaurant.com](http://brownstone-restaurant.com).
- 4. KAMLOOPS HERITAGE RAILWAY,** #6-510 Lome St., Kamloops, BC, Canada V2C 1W3; 250/374-2141; [kamrail.com](http://kamrail.com). Relive western drama as you ride on a historic steam train.
- 5. PLAZA**

- HERITAGE HOTEL,** 405 Victoria St., Kamloops, BC, Canada V2C 2A9; 250/377-8075 or 877/977-5292; [plazaheritagehotel.com](http://plazaheritagehotel.com). Downtown boutique hotel restored to its 1928 grandeur.
- 6. ROCKY MOUNTAINEER RAILWAY,** Head Office, 101-369 Terminal Ave., Vancouver, BC, Canada V6A 4C4; 604/606-7200 or toll-free (U.S. and Canada) 877/460-3200; [rockymountaineer.com](http://rockymountaineer.com). See the scenic Canadian Rockies landscape on this award-winning train, which stops in Kamloops.
- 7. SUN PEAKS RESORT,** 1280 Alpine Rd., Sun Peaks, BC, Canada V0E 5N0; 250/578-7222 or toll-free 800/807-3257; [sunpeaksresort.com](http://sunpeaksresort.com). Year-round outdoor sports, spa, dining, and entertainment on one of British Columbia's largest ski hills.

See more! Visit [AllPeopleQuilt.com/sampler](http://AllPeopleQuilt.com/sampler) to see the shop's staff photo and even more photos of this great shop.