Alpaca
ActiveWear

Alpaca Fleece

7 Little Known Reasons Why Alpaca Is Better Than Wool

What Is an Alpaca?

Alpacas are members of the Camelid family. They are a domesticated species from South American, more specifically Peru. They resemble a small Llama in appearance.

There are two varieties of Alpaca: Suri and Huacaya. The defining characteristics of each of these types are the Fibre that covers them.

Huacaya Alpaca

The Huacaya Breed often appear more like stuffed animals because of their fluffy wool, which up close displays a curled or crimped texture. Although Huacaya fleece naturally comes in more than 22 different shades, its course textures allow its fibres to hold dye well. Thanks to the curls of the fleece, this can be easily woven and there are many advantages to this. These qualities make Huacaya Alpacas more favourable for producing fleece that will be used for clothing and other Items.

Suri Alpaca

What Suri Alpaca fur lacks in commercial utility, it makes up for in lustre. These alpacas are far rarer and some estimates say that they make up the equivalent of five per cent of the total number of Huacaya's. However, their scarcity just makes their fur even more precious. Unlike the more coarse fibres of an Huacaya, Suri Alpacas exhibit a longer, smoother strand that is used less often for clothing and accessories because it is more challenging (and more expensive) to work with.
Often, this kind of Alpaca fur is blended with more durable Huacaya fur or sheets wool. However, the more Suri fleece an item contains the more expensive it is likely to be, placing Suri fleece near the top of the quality scale of natural fibres.

The highest quality fleece is usually found on the upper sides or "shoulders" of the animal and from the torso area. Many people refer to this part of the fleece as the "blanket." The best clothing is made out of fleece from the blanket, but the courser “skirt” parts are also utilised for things like scarves, hats, gloves and also for stuffing.

No.1

Strength & Resistance

Alpaca wool fibres are fine, lightweight and silky.
This luxury fibre has great strength and durability.
Alpaca has one of the highest tensile strengths of any natural fibres, Second only to silk and some bast fibres like hemp or linen.
Alpaca is Three times more resistant than any other natural wool and is therefore ideal for rough situations, rubbing and stretching.
Don't let the cute alpaca face fool you. These animals are tough and strong, surviving long, cold Andean winters. It's no wonder alpaca fibre lasts longer than most any luxury fibre, including other wools, cashmere and silk.
With proper care, high quality Alpaca knits and creations can be an heirloom passed down through the generations.

No.2

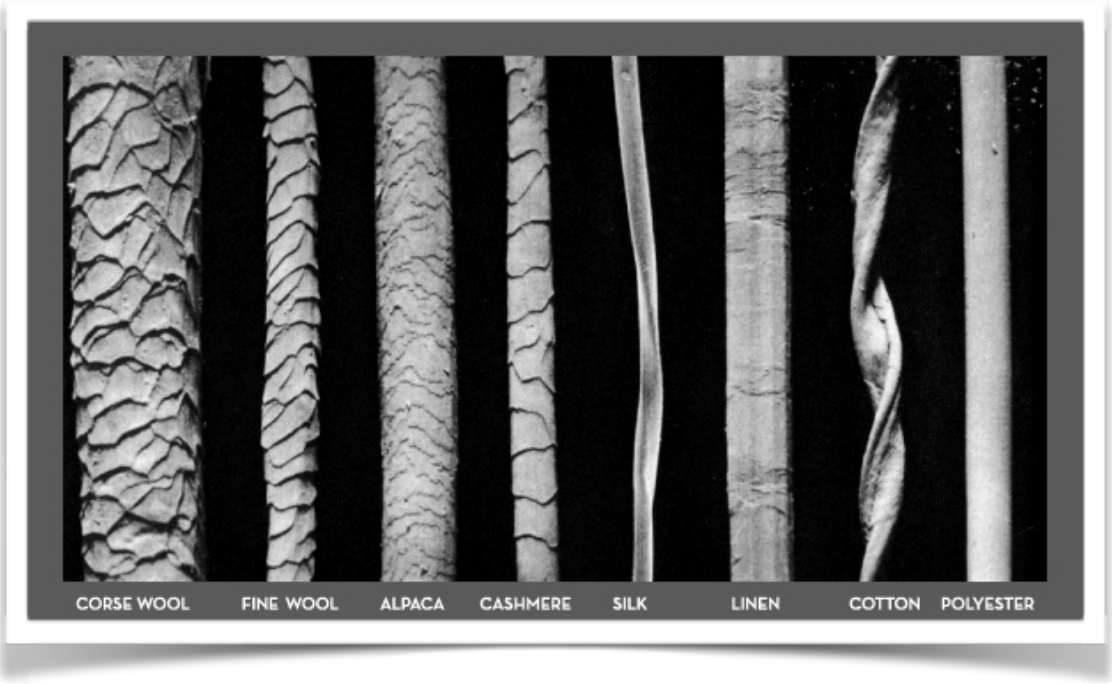
Softness & Smoothness

Alpaca, especially Royal or Baby Alpaca, has a special feel to it. Soft, luxurious, soothing, comforting, all of these adjectives apply. The feeling of a quality alpaca garment draped around you is truly magical. You know you're draped in pure luxury. Warm, lightweight, strong, with a cosy feel: Alpaca Fibres are truly some of nature's finest work. If you stop and think about it for a minute, it somewhat makes sense. Alpaca has evolved over thousands of years of life in the high Andean mountains. Winters can be cold and harsh, the summer sun can burn right through you, and at such a high altitude, you want to be carrying as little extra weight as possible. The Alpaca wool is simply a product of its environment and we're lucky enough to be able to share it with you!

No.3

Hypoallergenic & Non-irritating

Alpaca fibre is hypoallergenic!
Wool is warm, but can have a few disadvantages, not least, that wool products can be itchy and spiky feeling against the skin as mentioned.



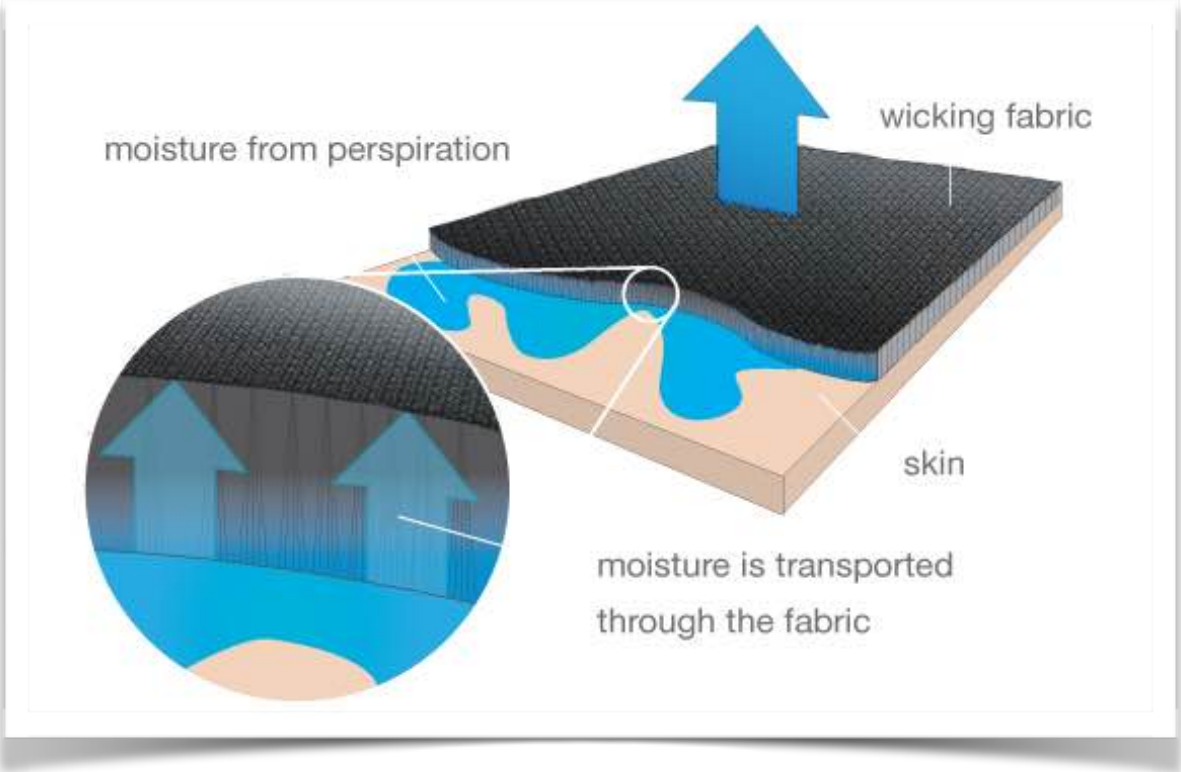
The reason Alpaca feels so soft, is that the scales on the fiber lay down close to the shaft. Looking at sheep's wool under the microscope you will see the scales curled and sticking out along the shaft of the fibre, thus creating the "itch factor."

Some people, including myself are allergic to lanolin; the greasy substance produced by animals such as sheep to waterproof their wool. Whereas sheep produce lanolin, animals such as the alpaca, do not, meaning that their wool is hypoallergenic and alpaca fiber products are therefore suitable for use in baby clothes and those with sensitive skin.

No.4

Awesome Wicking Properties

Alpaca fibre is much like wool in that it will wick perspiration away from the skin yet repels water when exposed to the elements. Wicking is when the fabric moves moisture away from its source to the outside of a fabric where it will evaporate. This is extremely important to me as a skier, hiker and an all round active person. Wicking fabrics are always a consideration for me as it means that no matter how much you sweat you always feel dry and comfortable.



No.5

Warmth & Temperature Regulation

Alpaca fibre garments are 7 times warmer than those made of wool, as the fibre is the perfect insulator.
Alpaca fibres contain microscopic air pockets, providing great insulation and keeping you warm during the winter. These same air pockets allow for outstanding breathability, thus also keeping you cool in summer.
Alpaca fibre absorbs heat and regulates the humidity of the environment and body temperature, thanks to its hygroscopic particles.
Alpaca is also therefore the perfect fibre to wear if you sufferer from night sweats, over heating or for those who get too cold in bed. The hollow fibres of the alpaca wool keep any moisture away from the skin, keeping you warm and comfortable all night!

No.6

Anti-Fungal/Anti-Bacterial & Flame Resistant

Clothing made from Alpaca is light and durable. Unlike other forms of wool, Alpaca doesn't become dirty easily. It is resistant to fungus and microorganism attacks. Due to the absence of lanolin from alpaca fibre, pure alpaca clothing repels dust mites and other organic matter.

Alpaca is a natural breathable, antibacterial fibre which naturally repels bacteria and odour. This means that you can wear a garment like socks for a week and they remain odourless and soft (a fact that I have personally tested and found to be true!) Perfect for the person travelling light or unable to change underwear/socks easily.

Alpaca does not have to be treated to become flame retardant. Whilst it can catch alight, it will not support a flame and so will not melt or stick to the skin which may cause serious burns. Did you know that you can clean and deodorise it effectively, by simply placing it in sunlight?

unlike synthetic fibres.

No.7

Eco-friendly / "Green"

As new awareness about our health and the health of our planet has developed, many of us have begun to pay a premium for select organic foods when we shop. Similarly, we are becoming ever more aware of the consequences of our heavy dependency on petroleum-based products.

Our current socio-economic conscience rings with dozens of "buzz words:" natural, organic, eco-friendly, carbon-neutral, no kill clothing, conservation, and green, to name a few. This social consciousness presents a unique opportunity for Alpaca producers and for the marketing of Alpaca fibre in these newly evolving markets. In a nutshell, Alpaca fibre hits the bull's eye in its ability to help meet the growing demand for environmentally responsible textiles.

1. **Sustainable**. An ever-growing Worldwide herd provides a continuous source of fibre for textiles and other eco-friendly byproducts. Alpaca can be efficiently and effectively grown on thousands of small independent family farms across the World. Alpaca is both sustainable and fashion-ready!

2. **Natural**. Alpaca fibre is not synthetic or petroleum-based like polyesters, acetates, acrylics, nylon, rayon (a wood pulp product which requires dry-cleaning!), or Gore-Tex. Cotton, while a natural fibre, uses 25% of all insecticides applied to crops worldwide.

3. **Animal-Friendly**. Unlike mink or baby seal, which are killed to harvest their pelts, alpacas are not harmed when their fleece is harvested. Alpacas are shorn once a year and shearing not only provides producers with wonderful fibre, it benefits the alpaca by removing fleece that would otherwise render them susceptible to unhealthy heat stress during the warm summer months.

4. **Durable**. Alpaca fibre is one of the strongest (tensile strength) natural fibres in existence. This translates into durability and the ability to spin fabric that is very lightweight, yet strong. Archeologists have found remnants of Peruvian Inca Alpaca textiles from centuries ago. No forced obsolescence here.

5. **Environmentally-Friendly** – "Going Green" Alpacas are the most environmentally friendly of agricultural grazing animals – they live lightly on the earth.

    a.) Alpacas have soft, padded feet that do not cut into the topsoil.

    b.) Alpacas are generally kinder to pasture than sheep, preferring to browse on a variety of plants and grasses, without disrupting root systems.

    d.) Alpacas do not pull up grass by the roots and compress the soil, they use their front incisor teeth to cut grasses off while grazing.

    e.) Alpacas, as browser-grazers, enjoy eating brush, fallen leaves, and other vegetation that is often undesirable to other species.

f.) Alpacas fur, referred to as fleece, grows quickly and is lighter, warmer (meaning it takes fewer strands than wool to insulate), and softer than most sheep wool.

g.) Alpacas consume lower amounts of both water and forage relative to other livestock, and their efficient three-stomach digestive system metabolises most of what they eat.

h.) Alpaca pellet-like droppings are pH-balanced and are an excellent, natural, slow-release, low odour fertiliser, that may also be used as bio-fuel.

6. Sheep fleece contains lanolin. As a result, a multi-step detergent wash is needed to remove most of the lanolin prior to processing. Although Alpaca also needs to go through a fiber-scouring phase, the chemicals required are fewer and less harsh. Ultimately, Alpaca fleeces are relatively easy to process due to this absence of lanolin. The lack of lanolin also gives alpaca a higher yield of end-product by weight, often yielding twice the finished weight of sheep wool when comparing equal pre-processing fleece weights.

7. Alpacas come in wide array of natural colours, offering far more choices for naturally coloured yarn and products, as opposed to colours produced using chemical dyes.

8. Manufacturing synthetic fibers is energy-intensive and can release lung-damaging pollutants such as nitrogen and sulphur oxides, particulates, carbon monoxide, and heavy metals into the air, as well as climate-warming carbon dioxide.

9. All parts of the Alpaca fleece are useful; the higher micron or “hairier” portions (lower legs, etc) may be used as natural weed mats around trees, heavy felt for boot liners, or for indoors rugs, to cite just a few examples.

The Suri and Huacaya Alpaca

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