

FREE SEWING + COSPLAY GUIDE

Sew the Seven Kingdoms

The Complete Dark Fantasy Costume Guide

Master the Melisandre-Inspired Gown, Ruby Necklace, Full Makeup Transformation & 5 Character Variations

Complete Red Gown Pattern Guide	Fabric selection, draping & construction for a flowing fantasy gown
Foam Ruby Necklace Tutorial	Step-by-step build for the iconic gem necklace — no jewelry skills needed
Full Makeup & Styling Guide	Head-to-toe transformation with product recommendations
5 Dark Fantasy Character Variations	Adapt the pattern for Cersei, Daenerys, sorceress & more
Budget Master Sheet	Full materials list with budget & premium options for every piece
Convention Survival Checklist	Keep your costume flawless from opening to closing ceremony

Intermediate Sewing Level · All Patterns Included · Budget-Friendly Options Throughout

I Welcome to the Dark Side of Sewing

The Art of Sewing Your Fantasy

There's a particular kind of magic that happens when you slip on something you made entirely with your own hands – and that magic is amplified tenfold when that something is a sweeping crimson gown that makes you look like you can see the future and command armies.

Lady Melisandre of Asshai is one of fantasy television's most visually iconic characters: the flowing blood-red robes, the impossible ruby necklace, the unsettling calm. Her look is simultaneously simple in concept and extraordinary in execution – which makes it the perfect cosplay for sewists who want to level up their craft.

This guide takes the original Melisandre-inspired cosplay tutorial from Instructables and expands it into a comprehensive, fully illustrated sewing companion. Whether you're building this costume for a convention, a Halloween party, a themed photoshoot, or simply because you've always wanted to be a mysterious red priestess – this guide has everything you need.

What This Guide Covers

Section	What You'll Learn	Skill Level
The Red Gown	Fabric choice, pattern prep, construction, draping	Intermediate
The Ruby Necklace	Foam casting, painting, gem setting, finishing	Beginner
Makeup & Hair	Foundation, contouring, lip colour, hair styling	Beginner
Character Variations	How to adapt the base pattern for 5 other characters	Intermediate
Budget Planner	Full materials list with cost ranges and alternatives	All Levels
Con Survival Guide	Repairs, comfort, photography, transport tips	All Levels

A NOTE ON SKILL LEVEL

This guide is written for intermediate sewists – you should be comfortable with a sewing machine, basic seams, and hems. However, each technique includes a 'beginner-friendly shortcut' so newer sewists can achieve a beautiful result with slightly simpler construction methods.

II Understanding the Melisandre Look

Anatomy of an Iconic Costume

Before you buy a single yard of fabric, it's worth understanding exactly what makes this costume so recognizable — and how each element contributes to the overall effect. The Melisandre look is built from five key components, each of which can be scaled to match your time, budget, and skill level.

01

The Floor-Length Red Gown

The foundation of the entire look. A flowing, high-necked gown in deep crimson or blood red. The silhouette is column-like — no dramatic flare, no structured boning — which is actually great news for sewists. It's a glorified shift dress with serious fabric drape.

02

The Dramatic Sleeves

Wide, full sleeves that taper or gather at the wrist. These create that otherworldly, priestess-like movement when you walk. They're cut from the same fabric as the gown and are structurally simple — just long rectangles, gathered or pleated at the attachment point.

03

The Ruby Necklace

The single most recognizable prop in the entire ensemble. A large, ornate necklace featuring a central oversized ruby (or deep red gemstone) surrounded by intricate metalwork. In this tutorial, it's built from EVA foam — lightweight, convention-safe, and surprisingly convincing.

04

The Layered Fabric Details

A subtle overlayer or collar piece that frames the neckline and chest, adding dimension to the gown. This can be as simple or as elaborate as you choose — from a basic drape to fully embroidered panels for advanced makers.

05

The Complete Transformation

Pale, flawless foundation. Dark, dramatic eye makeup. Deep burgundy or brown lip. Slicked-back or loosely pinned auburn/red hair. Makeup is arguably 40% of this costume's impact — and it's the most budget-friendly element of all.

"The costume is complete when you look in the mirror and briefly wonder if you can actually see through time."

III Fabric Selection & Materials Guide

Choosing Your Red: The Fabric Bible

Fabric choice will make or break this costume more than any other single decision. The goal is fabric that moves dramatically, photographs beautifully under convention lighting, and holds its deep crimson color – ideally without costing a fortune.

The Complete Fabric Comparison

Fabric	Why It Works	Best For	Cost/ Yard	Tip
Chiffon (Poly)	Incredible drape and flow. Photographs beautifully. Sheer overlay adds mystery.	Outer overlayer, sleeve panels	\$4-8	Layer 2 pieces for opacity
Crepe-Back Satin	Gorgeous crimson depth. Heavy enough to hang perfectly. Slight sheen catches light.	Main gown body	\$8-14	Pre-wash to prevent shrinkage
Velvet (Stretch)	Rich, deep color. Adds a luxurious, regal quality. Perfect for cold conventions.	Bodice, upper panels	\$12-18	Sew in direction of nap
Charmeuse Silk	Most authentic look. Liquid drape, exquisite movement. Premium choice.	Full gown (advanced)	\$18-35	Use fine needle, walking foot
ITY Knit (Budget)	Forgiving to sew, great drape, no hemming needed at edges. Beginner-friendly.	Full gown (beginner)	\$5-9	Perfect for first attempt

Burgundy Brocade	Adds textural richness and medieval authenticity. Heavier, structured.	Collar overlay, details	\$14–22	Use as accent, not full gown
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Complete Materials Shopping List

FOR THE GOWN	FOR THE NECKLACE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4–5 yards main gown fabric (crepe-back satin) • 2 yards chiffon for overlay/sleeves • 1 yard interfacing (light fusible) • Matching thread (at least 3 spools) • 22-inch invisible zipper • 1 yard boning (optional, for structure) • Hook and eye closures (set of 3) • Seam ripper, scissors, pins • Tailor's chalk or marking pen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2mm EVA foam sheets (2–3 sheets) • 6mm EVA foam (for raised details) • Craft knife + self-healing mat • Heat gun or hair dryer • Red acrylic gems (40–60mm center gem) • Gold/bronze metallic acrylic paint • Silver metallic paint (for highlights) • Plasti-Dip or sealer • Strong flexible glue (E6000) • Ribbon or elastic (for wearing)

IV Constructing the Red Gown

Step-by-Step Gown Construction

The gown is built in three main phases: body construction, sleeve attachment, and finishing. Follow these steps in order and you'll avoid the most common pitfalls that trip up first-time costume makers.

Phase 1: Pattern Preparation & Cutting

1

Take Your Measurements

Bust, waist, hips (at fullest point), shoulder to floor (standing in your convention shoes). Add 2 inches to bust and hips for ease. Write all measurements on a card you keep with your fabric.

2

Create Your Pattern Pieces

You'll need: front bodice, back bodice, front skirt, back skirt, sleeve (x2), collar band. Use a commercial pattern as your base (McCall's 6800 or Simplicity 8055 work beautifully) and modify the neckline to high/mandarin collar.

3

Mark Your Fabric

Always cut with fabric folded selvage-to-selvage, right sides together. Mark all pattern pieces with tailor's chalk. For satin-backed fabrics, pin and mark on the wrong side only – chalk marks on the right side can be permanent.

4

Cut Carefully

Use sharp fabric scissors only (never paper scissors). Cut one layer at a time for slippery fabrics. Keep at least $\frac{5}{8}$ inch seam allowance on all pieces. Cut the chiffon overlayer pieces 2 inches wider on each side – you'll gather them in.

Phase 2: Bodice Construction

5

Sew the Darts

Sew any bust darts first, pressing them downward. For a column silhouette, you may skip darts entirely and rely on side seam shaping — this is actually the easier approach for beginners.

6

Join Front and Back Bodice

Sew shoulder seams first. Press open. Then sew side seams, leaving the left side open for your zipper. Press all seams open — this is non-negotiable for a professional-looking costume.

7

Install the Collar

The high mandarin collar is the key detail that elevates this from 'red dress' to 'dark priestess.' Cut a 3-inch wide band, interface it, fold and sew to the neckline edge. Press well. The collar should stand up firmly — if it droops, add a second layer of interfacing.

8

Install the Zipper

Use an invisible zipper for a seamless back opening. Install before sewing the side seam fully closed. Use an invisible zipper foot and sew the zipper tape uncurled for the cleanest result. Watch one YouTube tutorial on invisible zippers before doing this step.

Phase 3: Skirt, Sleeves & Finishing

9

Attach the Skirt

Stay-stitch the waist seam of your skirt panels, then sew front and back skirt together at side seams. Pin to the bodice waist, right sides together, matching side seams exactly. Sew, clip seam allowance, press upward.

10

Construct the Sleeves

For the wide fantasy sleeve: sew sleeve seam (leave open for wrist). Gather the sleeve cap by running two rows of long basting stitches, then ease into the armhole with right sides together. This step requires patience — ease slowly, never force.

11

Add the Chiffon Overlayer

Cut chiffon panels that cover the front and back of the skirt. Gather the top edges to match the waist, then attach over the main skirt, hidden inside the waist seam. This creates the flowing, ethereal effect that photographs so dramatically.

12

Hem & Final Pressing

For a floor-length hem: hang the finished gown on a dress form or have someone help you mark the hem level while wearing your shoes. Use a double-fold 1/2-inch hem for satin. For chiffon, a tiny rolled hem (using a rolled hem presser foot) is the most elegant finish.

BEGINNER-FRIENDLY SHORTCUT

Can't face setting in sleeves? Make the gown fully sleeveless and add a separate wide-sleeved under-layer from stretch fabric. You get the dramatic sleeve look without the most technically challenging part of the construction. This approach is also cooler at long convention days.

V The Iconic Ruby Necklace

Building the Signature Gemstone Prop

The necklace is the soul of this costume. Without it, you're wearing a red dress. With it, you're Lady Melisandre. The good news: it's made almost entirely from EVA foam – the same craft foam used in everything from children's activities to professional cosplay – and it requires zero jewelry-making experience.

1

Design & Template

Sketch or print a reference image of the necklace. Scale it to fit YOUR chest/collar area – the necklace should span roughly from collarbone to mid-chest. Transfer the outline to paper and cut a template.

2

Cut the Base Layer

Trace the outer necklace shape onto 6mm EVA foam. Cut carefully with a sharp craft knife. This base layer provides the structure and weight. Cut slowly – EVA foam tears if you rush the cut.

3

Build Up Details

Cut smaller decorative elements from 2mm EVA foam: the filigree work, border details, raised geometric patterns. Glue these onto the base layer using E6000. Let each layer dry fully before adding the next (minimum 30 minutes per layer).

4

Shape with Heat

Use a heat gun (or hair dryer on high) to gently warm sections of the foam and curve them to follow your chest shape. Work in small areas and hold the shape until it cools. This step makes the finished necklace sit naturally on your body.

5

Prime the Surface

Apply a thin coat of Plasti-Dip to the entire front surface. This seals the foam and provides the perfect paint-adhesion base. Two thin coats are better than one thick coat. Let each coat dry fully.

6

Paint the Metalwork

Base coat: gold acrylic paint, applied generously. Let dry. Dry-brush silver over raised details to create highlights. Use dark brown to shade recesses and create an aged, antique metal appearance. Work in layers for depth.

7

Set the Central Gem

The hero element. A red acrylic gem (available on Amazon, Etsy, or craft stores) should be 40–60mm for screen-accurate scale. Press into a pre-shaped depression in the foam, or glue onto a raised platform. Surround with small gold-painted foam accents.

8

Seal & Attach

Seal the entire piece with Mod Podge or clear acrylic sealer to protect the paint. Add 2 small D-rings or loops at the back of the collar area to attach a ribbon tie or elastic band for wearing.

GEM SOURCING TIP

Search 'large acrylic rhinestones red 50mm' on Amazon or AliExpress. For premium results, search 'glass cabochon red oval' on Etsy. The difference between a plastic gem and a glass one is immediately visible in photos – worth the upgrade if your budget allows.

PAINT DEPTH SECRET

Apply a thin wash of dark red-brown acrylic paint diluted 50% with water over your gold base, then immediately wipe most of it away with a cloth. The dark wash settles into recesses and creates instant antique depth that would take hours to achieve by other methods.

VI Head-to-Toe Transformation

The Makeup & Styling Guide

Melisandre's look is about extremes: impossibly pale, flawless skin against dramatically dark eyes and deep wine-colored lips. The contrast is what creates that otherworldly, timeless quality. This is achievable with drugstore products – no professional kit required.

The Signature Face

SKIN & FOUNDATION	EYES
<p>Step 1 – Base: Choose a foundation 1-2 shades lighter than your natural skin tone. Set with translucent powder for a matte, almost masklike finish. This is the most important makeup step – the paleness is what makes everything else land.</p> <p>Step 2 – Contour: Use cool-toned contour (not bronzer) under cheekbones, at temples, and along the sides of the nose. Melisandre's face has architectural definition, not warmth.</p> <p>Step 3 – Highlight: Apply a subtle cool-white highlight only to the very tops of cheekbones and center of nose. No shimmer on the forehead.</p>	<p>Step 1 – Eye Primer: Prime lids fully. Use a dark burgundy or plum eyeshadow as a base across the lid and into the crease.</p> <p>Step 2 – Smoke it Out: Blend black or very dark brown eyeshadow into the outer corner and crease. The eye should appear hollowed and dramatic – extend slightly beyond the outer corner.</p> <p>Step 3 – Liner & Lashes: Black kohl liner along the waterline. Smudge the lower lash line with the dark shadow. False lashes add significant impact – full, dramatic styles work best for photography.</p>

Lips, Brows & Hair

THE LIP	BROWS	HAIR
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<p>Deep burgundy, dark wine, or blackened red. Line slightly outside natural lip line for fullness. Fill with a matching liquid lipstick for long wear. Matte finish is essential – no gloss. Top products: NYX Liquid Suede in Spiked, MAC Diva lipstick.</p>	<p>Defined, slightly arched, and slightly darker than natural brow color. Use a brow pomade for longevity. Keep them neat and architectural – impeccable brows read as otherworldly discipline on camera.</p>	<p>Auburn/copper red wig OR style natural hair in a sleek, pulled-back look. Option A: Straight, slightly loose, middle part, framing the face. Option B: Slicked fully back into a severe low bun. Both are screen-accurate. A \$25-40 synthetic wig is a fully acceptable solution.</p>
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PHOTOGRAPHY TIP

For the most striking photos: find a location with fire (fireplace, candles, fire pits). The warm flickering light against the crimson gown creates genuinely cinematic images. Alternatively, find a stone wall or archway – architectural backgrounds photograph beautifully with dramatic costumes and require zero Photoshop work.

VII 5 Dark Fantasy Character Variations

Adapt the Base Pattern for Different Characters

The beauty of this gown pattern is its versatility. With fabric color swaps and a few construction modifications, the same basic silhouette becomes five completely different iconic dark fantasy characters. Each variation takes the same base pattern you've already made and transforms it.

Cersei Lannister

The Queen Regent

Rich black or midnight navy brocade or velvet. Add gold embroidery trim along neckline and sleeves. Replace the ruby necklace with a gold-toned collar piece. Hair: elaborate pinned updo with a small crown accessory.

Materials: Black velvet \$12–18/yd · Gold trim tape \$8–15 · Crown headpiece \$15–30

Daenerys Targaryen

The Mother of Dragons

White or pale grey chiffon and crepe. Looser, more flowing silhouette. Add a silver dragon-scale belt at the waist. Platinum blonde wig. Replace the necklace with a silver pendant. The three-braid Khaleesi hairstyle.

Materials: White chiffon \$5–9/yd · Silver belt \$20–35 · Platinum wig \$25–45

Dark Sorceress / OC

Your Original Character

Deep purple, midnight blue, or forest green. Add a dramatic pointed hood. Embellish with silver moon/star motifs. Use gemstone buttons and dark velvet trim. The most creatively free variation – make it entirely your own.

Materials: Deep purple velvet \$12–18/yd · Hood pattern: free online · Embellishments \$10–25

The White Witch

Ice & Snow Fantasy

Ice white, pale silver, or frost blue fabric. Add a dramatic faux fur collar and cuffs. Silver and crystal necklace instead of ruby. Pale blue or silver eyeshadow, very pale lips. Ice queen energy from crown to floor.

Materials: White satin \$7–12/yd · Faux fur \$15–22/yd · Crystal necklace kit \$12–20

Morgause / Morgan le Fay

Arthurian Dark Witch

Deep charcoal, forest green, or rich brown. Add long pointed sleeves and a dramatic floor-sweeping train. Celtic knotwork embroidery along edges. Bronze and amber jewelry. Dark green or black wig with slight wave.

Materials: Dark fabric \$8–14/yd · Celtic trim \$12–18 · Bronze accessories \$15–25

VIII The Complete Budget Planner

Build Your Costume at Any Price Point

One of the best things about this costume is that it scales beautifully across a wide budget range. A well-made \$45 version looks genuinely impressive, while a \$150+ premium version could pass for a film production. Here's exactly how to spend your money wisely at every level.

TIER 1: THE BUDGET BUILD

\$40–60 total

Achieves a convincing, convention-worthy result using budget-friendly fabrics and smart shortcuts.

Item	Est. Cost	Notes
Main Gown Fabric (ITY knit, 4 yds @ \$6/yd)	\$24	Best drape for the price. No hemming needed at edges.
Chiffon for overlayer (2 yds @ \$5/yd)	\$10	Creates the floating effect on a minimal budget.
Thread, zipper, notions	\$8	Buy quality thread – cheap thread breaks and wastes time.
EVA foam, paint, craft supplies	\$12	Everything for the necklace. Dollar stores are fine here.
Makeup (drugstore)	\$15–20	NYX, e.l.f., and Wet n Wild all perform beautifully.

TIER 2: THE MID-RANGE BUILD

\$90–120 total

Significant visible upgrade in fabric quality and detail. This is the sweet spot for most cosplayers.

Item	Est. Cost	Notes
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Crepe-back satin (4 yds @ \$10/yd)	\$40	Richer color, better drape, photographs beautifully.
Poly chiffon overlayer (2 yds @ \$7/yd)	\$14	Upgraded quality – more even, better hand feel.
Collar interfacing + boning	\$12	Makes the neckline stand correctly, worth every penny.
Premium EVA foam + glass gem	\$20	A glass center gem dramatically elevates the necklace.
Makeup (mid-range + false lashes)	\$25–35	Add a quality lip product and single false lash set.

TIER 3: THE PREMIUM BUILD

\$150–200 total

Investment-level costume with heirloom quality. Suitable for competition cosplay, professional photography, or special events.

Item	Est. Cost	Notes
Charmeuse silk or silk crepe (4 yds @ \$28/yd)	\$112	The real thing. Liquid drape, depth of color, unmistakable.
Silk chiffon (2 yds @ \$22/yd)	\$44	Weight and movement that synthetic can't replicate.
Professional notions, quality boning	\$20	Worth upgrading everything at this tier.
Glass gem + professional-grade foam + UV resin	\$35	UV resin over the necklace creates a glassy, real-gemstone look.
Professional makeup + high-end lashes	\$45–60	Invest in a setting spray – silk moves and so will your face.

IX The Convention Survival Guide

Keep Your Costume Flawless All Day

Building the costume is only half the battle. Conventions are long, hot, crowded, and physically demanding on both you and your costume. These are the hard-won lessons from cosplayers who've worn elaborate handmade costumes at major events.

Emergency Kit Essentials

- ▣ Safety pins (at least 20 – all sizes)
- ▣ Travel sewing kit with matching red thread
- ▣ Double-sided fashion tape for gap emergencies
- ▣ Hot glue sticks + mini travel gun
- ▣ Fabric hem tape (iron-on – works without an iron if pressed firmly)
- ▣ Extra ribbon for necklace replacement
- ▣ Superglue for necklace repairs

Comfort & Wearability

- ▣ Wear the costume for at least 2 full hours at home before the event
- ▣ Test walking, sitting, kneeling – conventions require all three
- ▣ Bring flat shoes as backup – even one hour in heels on concrete is brutal
- ▣ Sew small weights into hem corners to prevent the gown riding up
- ▣ Wear seamless nude shorts under the gown for any breezy moments
- ▣ A long satin gown attracts floors – wear it slightly above the floor edge

Photography Tips

- ❑ The 'walking away turn' shot is THE money shot for this costume – practice it
- ❑ Find archways, stone walls, or dark hallways for the most dramatic images
- ❑ Ask photographers to shoot from slightly below eye level – makes the gown look longer
- ❑ Candle or firelight = cinematic gold for this character's aesthetic
- ❑ The necklace is the focal prop – make sure it's always well-lit in staged shots

Care During the Event

- ❑ Carry a tide-to-go pen – satin shows food and drink stains immediately
- ❑ Sit on a scarf or cloth rather than directly on unknown surfaces
- ❑ Remove the necklace when eating – it's the piece most likely to get damaged
- ❑ Keep a small spray bottle of water for heat-wrinkle emergencies
- ❑ Hang the gown (never fold) during any break times

THE MOST IMPORTANT TIP

Wear the FULL costume, including shoes, necklace, and makeup, at home for a full dress rehearsal before the event. Walk, sit, pose, and eat in it. You will discover every comfort problem and every costume problem BEFORE the day you need it to be perfect. This single step prevents 90% of convention costume disasters.

X You Are Now Ready to Command the Night

Go Forth and Sew Something Magnificent

You now have everything you need to build one of the most iconic costumes in dark fantasy television – from the first yard of crimson fabric all the way to the final coat of sealer on your ruby necklace. This project will push your sewing skills, test your patience at a few key moments, and reward you with a finished costume that stops people in their tracks.

Remember: the best cosplay is the one you wear with complete confidence. The costume can be \$45 ITY knit or \$200 charmeuse silk – the character comes from how you carry it.

Quick-Reference Checklist

MATERIALS	Fabric purchased and pre-washed All notions (thread, zipper, interfacing) gathered EVA foam and craft supplies ready Makeup products acquired
CONSTRUCTION	Measurements taken and recorded Pattern pieces cut Bodice assembled and zipper installed Skirt attached and pressed Sleeves set and chiffon overlayer attached Hem marked and finished
ACCESSORIES	Necklace base cut and shaped Details layered and glued Paint applied – gold base, highlights, shadows Central gem set and sealed Wearing mechanism attached
FINAL PREP	Full dress rehearsal completed Emergency kit packed Photography plan made Comfortable shoes identified Makeup technique practiced

◆

Share your finished costume with our community! Tag us and use #SewTheSevenKingdoms to show off your Melisandre.

Join Our Free Community Patterns, Tutorials & Fellow Makers Waiting for You