

MURANO GLASS

The History of Murano Glass

The making of glass beads and glass in general from Murano dates back to 1291 when the Venetian Government moved the glass makers out of the city to the island of Murano because of fire hazards associated with the glass making industry. To this day Murano remains the world leader in the hand manufacture of glass beads, jewellery and a wide range of glassware. The tradition of the Maestri Vetrai which has been handed down from father to son is still jealously preserved by the Venetian government and appreciated the world over.

What is the difference between Venetian Beads and Murano Glass?

There is no difference. The glass used to make the beads originates in Murano. However, Venetian Glass has been used to describe the glass coming from Murano for centuries since Venice is much more widely known than the island of Murano, people continue to refer to it as Venetian Glass and Venetian Jewellery. So beads and jewelry made from beads produced in Murano are sold in the stores as Venetian Glass.

What are the beads made from?

They are made of glass which is about 70% silica (sand). Murano Glass beads are made from a type of glass known as soda glass with a COE of 90 degrees which is a measurement of the expansion in heating and cooling. Glass is made from silica, soda ash, limestone and colouring salts. The raw materials are heated to 1400 degrees centigrade for several hours, and then worked into glass rods called murrine. The murrine are coloured with carefully dosed mixtures of copper, cobalt and gold salts to create the glowing colours that you can see. They are heated again and formed into gorgeous light reflecting glass beads and hearts.

Will it break easily?

Murano Glass beads are similar to marbles. The round beads are quite sturdy. The longer skinny beads and shapes which have points are more delicate. As with all jewellery it is best to treat it gently and since it is glass, it may break.

Why are Murano Glass beads more expensive?

Many factors enter into the price of an item. One is the cost of labour; another is the desirability and availability of an item. Beads made in Venice are handmade and only small quantities can be made in a single day. There are a limited number of people still working this ancient craft in Venice; so supply is also limited.

Why are the beads never exactly the same?

Murano Glass beads are made by hand and as a result each one will have slight variations. As with most articles made by hand, the sizes and shapes will vary. It depends on so many variables, they are all within a range, but no two will ever be exactly alike. This is simply not possible with handmade lampworked beads.

What gives the beads the sparkle?

A particular type of glass called Avventurina gives the beads their characteristic sparkle. It is a coloured glass containing iridescent particles, usually copper or chrome, crystallised from the colouring agent used in the glass. The crystallising process occurs during a lengthy cooling of the molten glass in a special glass vessel. The process was accidentally discovered on Murano about 1610-25 and the family acquired an exclusive arrangement to produce this decorative discovery.

What is used in gold foil and silver foil beads?

Small squares of thin 24ct gold foil and .925 sterling silver are used. The white gold foil is known in Venice as “Platino” and is an alloy of gold and other white metals. The bead is started on the mandrel and then quickly this molten small centre of the bead is rolled over the tissue thin foil. A final coat of clear molten translucent glass completes the bead. Because the gold is inside the bead, it will no peel or chip away.

How do you care for your Murano Glass Jewellery

Soap and water are all that is needed to make the beads sparkle and shine. Or you can use the Amante gentle jewellery solution. Polishing the gold or silver with a the Amante Jewelelry polishing cloth will revitalise your gold and silver jewellery