

Topaz

Talisman of wisdom, beauty and longevity.

Topaz served as a symbol of strength among the Greeks. Europeans at the time of the Renaissance believed in its power to destroy curses and dispel anger. "Topaz" comes from the Sanskrit word "tapas" that means "fire." For centuries, many people in India have believed that topaz worn above the heart assures long life, beauty and intelligence. In the past, a lot of people mistook any yellow colored gemstones for topaz. "Imperial Topaz," named in honor of the Russian monarchy, is the distinct pinkish orange hue discovered in the 19th century near the Ural Mountains in Russia.

Color

This gemstone features a variety of colors, from colorless, light blue, yellow, orange, pink, violet, brown and, very rarely, red. The element chromium causes natural pink, red and violet to purple colors in topaz. Imperfections at the atomic level in topaz crystal structure can cause yellow, brown and blue color. Colorless topaz is plentiful and often treated to give it a blue color. The rarest, and hence most prized color, is a vivid purplish pink.

The pinkish orange color called Imperial Topaz by the trade is highly valued and very rare.



Colorless topaz is available in the market and is sometimes irradiated and heat treated to create blue topaz.

Clarity

Faceted blue topaz is almost always free of eye-visible inclusions. Other more rare colors like orange and pink may show inclusions more often and still be valuable due to the color's rarity.

Sources

The largest topaz mines are in Brazil, Pakistan, Russia and Sri Lanka.

Treatments

The vast majority of blue topaz seen today is the permanent result of changing the color by irradiation and heating. "Mystic Topaz" has an extraordinary rainbow effect and is made by coating colorless topaz with a thin artificial film placed on the surface by vapor deposition.



Major Sources

Brazil, Madagascar, Mexico, Myanmar, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Sri Lanka, United States

Mineral

Topaz

Mohs Hardness

8

Toughness

Poor

Color

Yellow, orange, brown, pink to red, purple, blue, light green, colorless

Birthstone

November

Care and Cleaning

It's important to avoid steam or ultrasonic cleaners for topaz. Warm, soapy water works best.

Images courtesy: Bill Larson, Pala International; Edward Boehm, RareSource; Evan Caplan