

Turquoise

Ancient Egyptians called turquoise “mekkat,” which also means “joy” and “delight.”

Turquoise is one of the world’s most ancient gems. Archaeological excavations revealed that the rulers of ancient Egypt adorned themselves with turquoise jewelry, and Chinese artisans carved it more than 3,000 years ago. Turquoise is the national gem of Tibet, and has long been considered a stone that guarantees health, good fortune and protection from evil. The gem’s name comes from the French expression “pierre turquoise,” or “Turkish stone.” The name, which originated in the 13th century, reflects the fact that the material probably first arrived in Europe from Turkish sources.

Color

Turquoise ranges from blue to green in color. The most prized color is an even, intense medium blue. Generally pure saturated blue shades are the most valuable.

Clarity

Turquoise is semi-translucent to opaque. It might have veins of matrix running through it (matrix is a remnant



Turquoise was a favorite gemstone in Victorian jewelry as it was thought to signify true love.

Robin’s egg blue, or “Persian blue,” is considered the purest color of turquoise.



Spiderweb turquoise contains matrix in thin, delicate, web-like patterns across the face of the gemstone.

of its surrounding rock). The most valuable turquoise is an even medium blue with no matrix and the ability to take a polish.

Sources

Turquoise is found in only a few places on Earth: dry and barren regions where acidic, copper-rich ground water seeps downward and reacts with minerals. The traditional source for the top color, sometimes described as robin’s egg blue or sky blue, is the Nishapur district of Iran, the country formerly known as Persia. So, quite often, you’ll hear people in the trade call turquoise of this beautiful color “Persian blue,” whether or not it was actually mined in Iran. Another famous producer of high-quality turquoise that rivals the famous Persian material comes from the Sleeping Beauty mine in New Mexico, U.S.

Treatments

Some turquoise is treated to improve its durability, appearance and polish. Turquoise can be dyed or chemically treated by adding an epoxy or acrylic resin for increased hardness and enhanced color.



Major Sources

China, Egypt, Iran, Mexico, United States

Mineral

Turquoise

Mohs Hardness

5 to 6

Toughness

Fair to Good

Color

Blue to green

Birthstone

December

Care and Cleaning

It’s safe to clean turquoise jewelry with warm, soapy water, but it should never be cleaned with steam or ultrasonic cleaners. Some turquoise is treated to improve its surface appearance. Heat, chemicals, cosmetics and even skin oils or perspiration can discolor or damage turquoise.