



ESSENTIALS OF COLOURED STONES



SAPPHIRE

The 'gem of the heavens', the name is derived from the Greek *sappheiros* meaning blue.

General Information

It is the birthstone for September and the anniversary gemstone for the 5th and 45th years of marriage. Sapphires are available in a wide range of colour except red. Sapphire in colours other than blue are called fancy sapphires. Colours variations include white, pink, yellow, peach, orange, brown, violet and green. The most valuable sapphires have a medium intense, vivid blue, few visible inclusions and hold their brightness of colour under all different types of lighting. Any black, green or grey overtones will reduce a stone's value.

The most valuable are genuine Kashmir stones, Burmese sapphires are valued almost as highly and then we have Ceylon sapphires.





Photograph courtesy of International Coloured Stone Association www.gemstone.org & Photograph courtesy of Kevin Hulsey Illustration, Inc.

Legend and Lore

Sapphire has been cherished for thousands of years. The ancient Persians believed that the earth rested on a giant sapphire and its reflection coloured the sky. It has long symbolized faith, remembrance and enduring commitment.

According to tradition, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments on tablets of sapphire, making it the most sacred stone. This is why sapphires often were the gem of choice for kings and high priests throughout history.

History

The oldest sapphire finds are in Sri Lanka, and Burma, where stones were mined in ancient times. The magnificent stones from Kashmir were discovered in 1880 after a landslide at an altitude of 16,000 feet and mined intensively over a period of eight years. Today Kashmir and Burma produce very small quantities of sapphires and most fine sapphires on the market today are from Sri Lanka.

Location

Sapphires are found in India, Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Australia, Brazil, Africa, the United States, China and Madagascar.

Photograph courtesy of Kevin Hulsey Illustration, Inc.



Physical Properties

- A variety of the mineral **corundum**
- **Hexagonal** crystal system
- Colour is caused by traces of iron and titanium oxide.
- Refractive Index **1.76 -1.77**
- Specific Gravity **4.00**

All sapphires have natural imperfections – rutile needles known as ‘silk’ and feathers are the most common inclusions. Sapphires from Kashmir have a milky appearance due to a veil-like formation of these feathers. Sri-Lankan stones often have characteristic zircon crystal inclusions which are surrounded by a halo.



Photograph courtesy of Multi Colour Gems