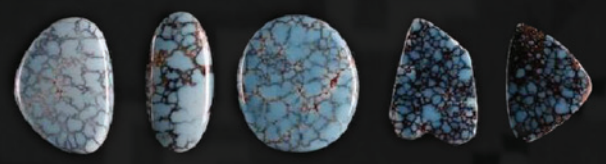
MINES



The value and price of turquoise is also determined by the reputation of the mine and the rarity of the turquoise. Many mines, such as Lone Mountain, #8, Lander Blue, and Bisbee mines, are highly regarded for the color, matrix, and history of the turquoise they contain. The most commonly marketed American turquoise is from the Sleeping Beauty and Kingman mines in Arizona.

BUYING TIPS

- When purchasing from a dealer, choose one with a good reputation.
- Examine the color, clarity, and matrix of the turquoise.
- Request a written receipt that includes all the vital information about your purchase, including:
  - name of artist and their Tribal affiliation
  - name of the mine from which the turquoise was extracted
  - whether the turquoise is natural, stabilized, or treated
  - where the stone was purchased
  - price of the turquoise piece
  - date of the purchase
  - business address where piece was purchased.
- Realize that authentic handmade pieces may be expensive…if a price seems too good to be true, be sure to ask more questions about the item and its maker.

The State of New Mexico's Indian Arts and Crafts Sales Act, unlike the federal Indian Arts and Crafts Act, requires the seller to disclose in writing the type of materials used. Under New Mexico law, a seller's failure to give the required written disclosure to a consumer violates the State law and may entitle the consumer to a repayment of the purchase price upon the return of the item. For more information, please consult www.nmag.gov or call 1-800-678-1508.

For a free brochure on the Indian Arts and Crafts Act, including how to file a complaint about the fraudulent marketing of Indian art and craftwork, contact:

INDIAN ARTS AND CRAFTS BOARD
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240
1-888-ART-FAKE WWW.IACB.DOI.GOV
IACB@IOS.DOI.GOV

TAKE HOME A TREASURE FROM INDIAN COUNTRY – BUY WORKS PRODUCED BY MEMBERS OF FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBES

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Single Strand Necklace:
John Shopteese, Potawatomi
Quadruple Strand Necklace:
James Del Coriz, Santo Domingo Pueblo.

Unraveling the Mystery of Turquoise

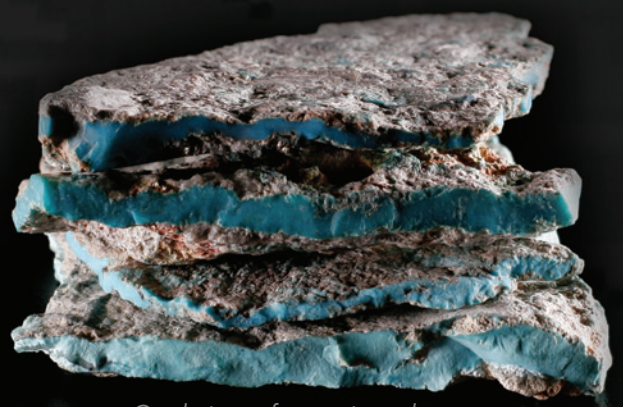
Indian Arts and Crafts Act
U.S. Department of the Interior

The federal Indian Arts and Crafts Act (Act) of 1990, Public Law 101-644, as amended, is a truth-in-marketing law administered by the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, U.S. Department of the Interior. Under the Act, it is illegal to offer or display for sale, or sell, any art or craft product in a manner that falsely suggests it is Indian produced, an Indian product, or the product of a particular Indian Tribe. Indian labor makes art or craftwork an Indian product.

Turquoise is one of the most widely used gemstones in Indian jewelry and ornamentation. While the use of materials, such as turquoise, in the production of Indian art or craftwork is not within the scope of the Act, turquoise is an important topic to many Indian arts and crafts consumers, particularly in the Southwest. Therefore, as a consumer education service, and in support of New Mexico's Indian Arts and Crafts Sales Act, which does include turquoise standards and disclosure requirements, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board has collaborated with Mr. Joe Dan Lowry, of the Turquoise Museum in Albuquerque, New Mexico, to provide you with the following information.

IS IT NATURAL?

Most consumers will ask if the turquoise is "real," but the question to ask is if it is "natural" turquoise.



Gradations of turquoise color

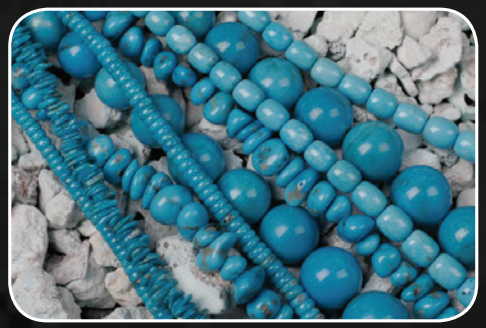
Natural turquoise is the stone that comes directly from the earth without any treatments or enhancements. This picture shows a polished natural stone on top of a natural rough stone.

Approximately 15% of the world's turquoise supply is natural turquoise. The value of natural turquoise is derived from its rarity of color, clarity/matrix, and mine source.

When retrieved from the earth, approximately 85% of the turquoise is too soft to cut or polish. It can, however, be processed to enhance the color and increase the hardness of the stone.

DENSITY AND COLOR

Density and/or hardness add to the depth of color. Natural blue and green turquoise stones are the most sought after and have many color variations. However, neither of these two colors is more valuable than the other. The most common turquoise color is white. White turquoise, referred to as "chalk," is generally too soft to cut or polish and is not typically graded as a gemstone. Chalk and low grade turquoise have open pores within their structures and can only be used when "treated" to enhance hardness, density, color, clarity, or matrix.



Chalk turquoise and treated turquoise beads

Stabilized turquoise white to blue and green (before and after treatment)

Turquoise is considered treated* when it has been -

Oiled or waxed – soaked or cooked in oil or wax to darken the color

Enhanced – a patented process to darken the color of low or medium grade turquoise to imitate a higher grade color

Stabilized – turquoise combined with colorless resins (plastics) under a vacuum or pressure to harden the stone and darken the color

Blocked – chips and fragments are mixed with epoxy to form blocks for cutting

Dyed – a pigment is added to deepen the stone's color or create a "matrix" design within a treated stone

**New Mexico law provides more detailed definitions for materials.*

CLARITY AND MATRIX

Uniformity of color, clarity and matrix determines the value of turquoise. The higher grade turquoise has greater clarity and deeper color. If a matrix is present, it will appear as tiny veins or dots of other rock within the turquoise, which can be golden, brown, black, white, or sienna in color. An evenly distributed matrix is desired. The rarest matrix, "spider web" turquoise, has a natural and uniform matrix that is evenly laced throughout the gemstone.