



T O P A Z

First draft

November 2006

- Origin** Topaz forms at high temperatures, often in association with quartz, in igneous rocks such as granite and volcanic lavas. The name may come from the Sanskrit word 'tapas' meaning fire.
- Composition** Aluminium fluorohydroxysilicate $Al_2SiO_4(FOH)_2$
- Structure** Orthorhombic. Mohs scale 8 (although very hard, it should be protected from hard knocks).
- Colour** Colourless, pale blue, pale pink, pale green or a yellow to golden brown, called imperial topaz.
Transparent or slightly translucent if streaked/veiled or containing tear shaped gas or liquid bubbles.
- Sources** Blue topaz is found world wide although orange imperial topaz is unique to Brazil.
- Crystals Story** Crystals imperial topaz from Brazil comes from the Ouro Preto area and some vintage photos (from 1994) exist showing the company founders amongst the diggings and miners near Mariana. The photos fortunately do not reveal how we paid FAR TOO MUCH for the treasured specimens triumphantly returned to our modest lodgings (Chico Rey!). Life moves on and Ray has just returned clutching some more imperial topaz specimens (11/06) some of which show a beautiful pink colour. Blue topaz is widely found in boulder and crystal form and is heat treated to produce a very deep blue colour. Recently a near black blue colour has emerged. This is always treated. However, as the Natural History Museum topaz display makes clear there is no 'test' for heat treated topaz and it is therefore sold as 'natural'. We prefer the lighter blue colours.
- Also** The largest topaz specimen ever discovered (in Madagascar) weighed over 2.5 tonnes! The ancient Egyptians associated golden topaz with the glow of their mighty sun god Ra. Likewise, Romans linked topaz with their sun god, Jupiter.

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