

## THE LURE OF TURQUOISE

Man has been fascinated by the stone turquoise for centuries and with good reason. This beautiful natural stone comes in colors ranging from sky blue to greenish yellow and has been used in jewelry as well as for its healing properties for centuries.

Turquoise is mined in China, Iran, Turkey, Egypt, and Persia. In North America, it is found in Arizona and New Mexico. The stone can be rather porous and chalky and is usually treated before it is suitable for use in jewelry. The stones are treated with a resinous substance to "stabilize" them. This treatment hardens the stone making it less susceptible to chipping and keeps the color from changing due to contact with the oils in your body.

Turquoise is also reputed to heal all kinds of ailments. New age healers use it for the skeletal, digestive and respiratory systems. It is said to help remove toxins from smoking and other pollutants from the body. The stone is also said to help improve your attitude as well as enhance creativity. It is reputed to bring you inner awareness and help strengthen friendships. Turquoise is reputed to help those who have trouble speaking in public, improve empathy and honesty.

One of the most beautiful types of turquoise is mined from the Sleeping Beauty Mine in Arizona. Called sleeping beauty turquoise after the name of the mine, these stones are a vivid sky blue color with no matrix to speak of. These beads and stones are well sought after for jewelry making and a favorite of the Zuni Pueblo silver makers who incorporate it into their traditional inlay jewelry.

Another popular turquoise is White Buffalo Turquoise which is mined from the Dry Creek Mine in Nevada and is a beautiful stone used in jewelry. Highly prized as the White Buffalo vein has only been found in one spot and once it's gone there may never be new stones in this coloration again. The stones are a light turquoise with white colorations and dark veins. Not to be confused with howlite, White buffalo turquoise is not solid white in color.

Persian turquoise has been used in jewelry since ancient times and there are many mines in Iran that produce this beautiful stone. This turquoise can have a wide variety of color from sky blue to pale green. Ancient Persian carvings using turquoise have been found and it is evident that ancient jewelry was made with stones from these mines.

If you have turquoise jewelry or stones, you need to take special care to clean them since it is porous. Some people feel that there is an added value in vintage turquoise which has had years to develop a patina and excessive cleaning can destroy that value. The preferred means to cleaning native turquoise is to gently wipe it with a soft cloth but there are instances where you may require more intense cleaning and our advice is to use warm soapy water. If the turquoise is set in a piece of jewelry you should avoid submerging it in anything liquid as it can seep into the fissures of the jewelry and cause deterioration years down the road. One gentle method for cleaning turquoise is to dunk a Q-tip in warm soapy water and swab the jewelry with that - make sure you remove any soapy residue by swabbing again with a clean Q-tip dipped in clean water. Never clean your turquoise in ultrasonic or steam cleaners or use any type of chemical.

by Lee Dobbins