

Tanzanite

Gems from the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro

The world's only known source of tanzanite occurs beneath the sweeping grasslands in the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro in northern Tanzania, East Africa. When we wrote the first edition of this article in 2007 the Tanzanite Foundation, a non-profit industry supported organization, projected that tanzanite deposits were expected to be depleted in the next decade or so. Fortunately the demise of tanzanite was, as they say, "greatly exaggerated" We are now looking at the situation ten years later, and the latest projections are for mining to continue for another thirty years.

Tanzania is a country rich in folklore and legend. According to the Tanzanite Foundation, at the time of tanzanite's discovery, local Maasai communities wove bold and colorful stories around the creation of this exceptional stone. They told how the land was set ablaze by a bolt of lightning, and that the heat from this magic 'fire from the sky' transformed crystals on the ground into shimmering blue-violet gems. While it is possible to have tanzanite come out of the ground blue, it is much more likely to be brown. Low temperature heating of the stones converts the brown to blue but does not increase the level of saturation. Since the temperature required is so low, it does not leave any traces in the gem, making it impossible to determine whether a particular tanzanite was blue when discovered, or if it has been heated after mining to convert the color.

The actual discovery of tanzanite remains something of a mystery. Although there are numerous versions, it is not known for certain who found the first crystal. The most widely accredited narrative suggests that in July

2.93ct tanzanite with 3/4ctw diamonds in white gold \$4600

2.67ctw tanzanite and 0.22ctw diamonds in two tone gold earrings. \$2700

0.62ct tanzanite in two tone gold ring \$700

1.33ct tanzanite and 0.11ct diamond with pietersite and lavender jasper in two tone gold \$3200

of 1967, Ali Juuyawatu, a local Maasai tribesman, found a piece of translucent crystal near Mount Kilimanjaro. Fascinated by its blue-violet hue, he shared his find with Manuel D'Souza, a tailor by profession and prospector by passion, who was looking for rubies in the region.

Word about the remarkable discovery in Tanzania soon reached celebrated

New York jewelers, Tiffany & Co., gemological pioneers since the late 19th century. At that time, Henry B. Platt, great grandson of Louis Comfort Tiffany, and later president and chairman, was working with Tiffany's President, Walter Hoving, shaping and directing jewelry collections.

Awed by the stone's exquisite beauty, Platt named it 'tanzanite' after its country of origin, and launched it at Tiffany's in October 1968, remarking that it was undoubtedly 'the most beautiful blue stone discovered in over 2 000 years'. Tiffany's initiated the first tanzanite advertising campaign, declaring that tanzanite could be found in only two places on earth - Tanzania and Tiffany's.

Over the last fifteen years, the Tanzanian government has gradually exerted more control over the mining and processing of tanzanite in an effort to develop jobs in the region. It is now illegal to export rough over one gram in size. In 2010, the largest mine owner, Richland Resources, was required to turn over 50% of its mining license to the Tanzanian State Mining Company,

A nonprofit organization funded by some of the larger miners, the Tanzanite Foundation strives to standardize methods of practice and conduct. The Foundation also aims to uphold an ethical route to market, and invests in meaningful and sustainable self-improvement projects developed in harmony with the indigenous communities in Tanzania.

Tanzanite is similar to amethyst in hardness and is not recommended for an everyday ring. The beauty of tanzanite is best appreciated in pendants, earrings and special occasion rings. At Veberod Gem Gallery, we have an extensive selection of tanzanite priced from under \$100 to over \$4000. We always enjoy making custom pieces for our customers, creating heirloom jewelry for the next generation.



Winter Bead Sale!

February 22-25

All strands of beads and pearls will be

50% OFF

the single strand price regardless of quantity!

Buy 5 strands at once, anytime before the sale and get 40% OFF!



New Cabs!

Peruvian Opaline

We purchased four kilos of beautiful blue opaline rough from Peru so there will be lots of new cabs cut from this stunning material.

Found in the same mines as blue opal from Peru, opaline is a mix of opal and chalcedony.

Featured Jewelry

Zircon Ring

1.46ct Cinnamon Zircon and
0.43ct blue spinel - \$1855



Larimar Ring

Larimar cab set in hammered
Sterling Silver - \$350



Crystal Pendant

Quartz crystal and cab ruby set
in 14KT gold - \$800