



The Golden Bear Nugget

Georgia Hills mine, Jim

This famous gold specimen is a crystallized nugget that is 2 1/4 inches high and 1 5/16 inches wide.

It weighs a little over 1 troy ounce. It was discovered by a 14 year old girl in 1857. When she died, her brother took care of the nugget. It was eventually sold to the California Federation of Mineralogical Societies. It is now in the Los Angeles Museum of Natural History.
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Benitoite

New Idria, San Benito Co.

In 1907 a man named J.M. Couch was camping near the town of New Idria. When he woke up, the morning sunlight was bouncing off of thousands of sparkling blue crystals. He had them studied by a mineral expert who discovered that this was a mineral that had not been known before. He named the mineral "Benitoite" because the crystals were found in San Benito County. It is California's official state gemstone.

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Tourmaline

Himalaya mine,
San Diego Co.

The name "tourmaline" refers not to one mineral species, but to an entire group of minerals. For over 100 years a number of different gem-quality tourmaline crystals have been mined from the Himalaya mine in San Diego County. The mine has over 5 miles of tunnels. It first opened in 1898 and since that time has produced about 250 thousand pounds of pink and green tourmaline crystals!

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Garnet

Idria region

Garnet is found in both metamorphic and igneous rocks in California. Pictured here are light green andradite garnet crystals.

They sit in a light bluish-green matrix. They are "dodecahedral" crystals. A dodecahedral crystal is one that has 12 faces and each face has four sides.

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Neptunite

New Idria, San Benito Co.

In San Benito County, neptunite is found with the beautiful gemstone, benitoite. Neptunite is deep red. It is so dark that at first look, you may think that it is black. But if you were to see a small chip of neptunite, the light would shine through it and the deep red color would be easy to see.

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Tourmaline

in Lepidolite

Stewart mine, Pala District,
San Diego Co.

Lepidolite is a mica mineral that is rich in the element lithium. Lithium gives it its delicate lavender-purple color. The lepidolite is a mass of very small flakes. Though the crystals are not gem-quality and are even full of small cracks, they are beautiful as they sit in the lepidolite matrix.

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Agate

Hauser Geode Beds, near
Blythe, Riverside County

Chalcedony is a variety of the mineral *quartz*. There are different types of chalcedony, one of which is agate. Pictured here is banded agate. Each band is a different color. Sometimes the bands in banded agate are different shades of gray and grayish-blue. Other types of chalcedony are jasper, chrysoprase, onyx, and flint.

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Gypsum

"Ram's Horn Selenite"
Del Mar, San Diego Co.

Gypsum is mined in a number of places in California such as at the Mojave Desert and Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.

This interesting cave growth formed as gypsum-bearing water slowly oozed out of a cave wall. As the water evaporated, the gypsum solidified, adding a little at a time and creating this attractive "Ram's Horn" shape.

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Orthoclase Feldspar
Water Canyon, near Cinco,
Kern County

Here are two "Twinned Crystals" of orthoclase feldspar. This particular twin form is called a Carlsbad Twin. Twin crystals form when two individual crystals grow together in a definite formation. Other minerals that form crystal twins are quartz, rutile, staurolite, gypsum, and chrysoberyl, to name a few.

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