

A CEYLON
PRESS TINY
GUIDE

A CHECKLIST
OF THE 15
MAJOR
GEMSTONES
OF SRI
LANKA

GEMS



1 AGATE

A modestly priced (\$10 to \$100 per carat) semi-precious quartz, agate occurs in a wide range of colours including brown, white, red, grey, pink, black, and yellow. Sri Lanka specialises in blue-tinted agate, said to pacify inner anger, and anxiety.

2

ALEXANDRITE

In buying the semi-precious stone Alexandrite, purchasers gain two jewels for the price of one - for the stone's unusual light absorbing qualities give it the possibility of such different appearances that it is often known as an emerald by day and a ruby by night. Although relatively scarce on the island, Sri Lankan alexandrite's exceptional quality has made it much prized within the jewellery industry; and costs between \$3,000 - \$20,000 per carat.

3 AMETHYST

Sri Lanka is one of the world best sources of high-quality amethysts, a semi-precious gem (\$20-\$50 per carat) that occurs in transparent pastel roses to deep purples. Used in jewellery, as well as alternative healing, its supporters argue that it helps relieve stress and anxiety, fend off headaches, fatigues, and anxiety; and promote cell regeneration.

4 AQUAMARINE

The presence of iron within the crystal of this semi-precious stone is what gives it its cherished green-blue to blue colour variations. Abundant and comparatively affordable (\$130 - \$900 per carat), it is found in Rathnapura, Rakwana, Morawaka, Hatton, Nawalapitiya, Galle, Matara, Tissamaharama and Lunugamwehera.

5 CAT'S EYE

A semi-precious stone known to science as chrysoberyl, the colour of Cat's Eye differ from semi-transparent golden yellow to slightly greenish or brownish yellow. They exhibit a distinct, ever changing light band that glides across the surface, resembling the eye of a cat. They are found widely across Sri Lanka including Rakwana, Bulutota, Deniyaya, Morawaka, Elahera, Avissawella, Pelawatte, Horana, Panadura, Rathnapura, Aluthgama, Ambalantota, Kalapugama and Mestiya. Given their price range of \$3 to \$1700, there's an affordable eye for almost everyone.

6 CITRINE

Named from the Old French word for lemon, Citrine is a relatively rare semiprecious quartz gem mined in Sri Lanka in colours that vary from transparent and pale yellow to brownish orange. Selling for \$10 to \$50 per carat, it lives very happily at the affordable end of the bling world.

7 GARNET

There are many so-called garnet species, the reddish shades being the most popular, and the blues the rarest. The greater their ability to transmit light, the greater their value as a semi precious stone. They range in price from \$500 to \$7000 per carat. Sri Lankan garnets span a wide spectrum of colours, from deep reds to vibrant oranges, gentle pinks, and even green.

8

MOONSTONE

Sri Lanka's moonstones – sometimes known as Ceylon Opals - come in shades of white, blue, and grey. A semiprecious stone, it gets its name for its texture - and the artful way in which its colour resembles moonlight shining through clouds. With a quality typically higher than almost any other mined in the world, moonstones are broadly subdivided into blue, semi- blue, and white. They are most usually found in alluvial streams; and in particular in Meetiyagoda, near Ambalangoda in the south of the island. Smaller mines exist in places like Matale; amongst gravels in such rivers as the Mahaweli and Walawe; and in smaller quantities in Elipitiya, Pitigala, Horton Plains and Weligama.

9

ROSE QUARTZ

A delicate pink version of mineral quartz, Rose Quartz is mined in many shades from very light to medium-dark pink; and Sri Lanka has the happy role of being a leading source for high quality rocks. Beloved by alternative therapists, it is also called the "Heart Stone," and costs between \$100 to \$1000 per carat.

10 RUBY

Grey, hard, and brittle, known to scientists as Cr or No 24, the modest metal, chromium, is what gives rubies their red colour. Depending on the amount of chromium, the ruby shows every possible shade of red – but the pure, unmistakably fiery reds are the ones most cherished. Whilst the best of Sri Lanka's rubies show off just these qualities, they often also come in a varieties of pink, red with a dash of purple, a colour variant uniquely caused by the additional presence of iron.

11 SAPPHIRES

Sapphires are most typically blue – but can also pop up black, colourless, grey, or even pink, orange – a variant known as padparadscha – from Padmaraga. Sri Lanka also excels at producing Hot Pink Sapphires, a yellow sapphire that is apparently a good deterrent against witchcraft, orange, and white ones. The gem accounts for 85% of the precious stones mined in Sri Lanka – but the colour variant that gets the most acclaim is the Ceylon Blue Sapphire. Sri Lanka's sapphires are found in alluvial deposits across the country, the very best from Elahera and the Thammannawa, Kataragama area and sells for \$5,000 - 8,000 per carat.

12 SPINEL

Often mistaken for rubies or sapphires, spinels come in red, pink, and blue colours and are widely available in Sri Lanka. They make up a major part of its gem exports to the rest of the world. The value of this semi precious stone has increased over time, and a carat will now put you back between \$300 to \$3000.

13 TOPAZ

From colourless to pink or blue, the higher value topaz stones are typically red or peach orange, sometimes called Sherry Topaz. They cost from \$100 to \$1000 per carat. Open pit mining for this semi precious gem is carried out in many places in Sri Lanka, including Matale, Sigiriya, Balangoda and Nawalapitiya. Recent advances in industrial techniques for inducing colour into colourless topaz by irradiation have created something of a topaz bonanza for Sri Lanka as its topaz is especially susceptible to this treatment and produces the best shades of blue.

14 TOURMALINE

Although available in almost every possible colour, Sri Lankan Tourmaline tends to be restricted to yellowish-green & bright green colour ranges. This semi precious gem is found right across the island, especially in Uva, Ratnapura and Tissamaharama. It came into global prominence when the Dutch East India Company imported large quantities of it from Sri Lanka to the west. There it was called the "Ceylonese Magnet" because it could attract and then repel hot ashes due to its pyroelectric properties. It sells today for between \$100 \$400 per carat.

15 ZIRCON

Mined in Matara and known locally as Matara Diamonds, zircon has long been a popular substitute for diamonds around the world, its price ranging from \$30 to over \$3,000 per carat, depending on quality. Although typically found in colours from brown and red to blue and purple, it is mostly cherished in its colourless and purest form which most closely resembles diamonds. The colourless zircon found in Sri Lanka is noted for its brilliance and fiery flashes of multicoloured light.

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Contrary & creative, Sri Lanka built a tropical Versailles as the West constructed in wattle & daub. When the Cold War ebbed, its own began. The Ceylon Press *History of Sri Lanka* - in eBook and Podcast - unpicks its serpentine history.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Swarbrick is a publisher, planter, hotelier, hermit, and writer.

He was born in Colombo and raised, with few concessions to modernity, in India, Singapore, and the Middle East. Cornish, he gained his degrees on the Celtic fringe: at the Universities of Wales, and Stirling, prolonging an introduction to accepted working hours for as long as was decently possible.

Having worked at News Corp's HarperCollins UK as board director for various otherwise homeless departments including sales, art and marketing; and HarperCollins India, he ran Hachette's consumer learning division. Prior to this, he launched Oxford University Press's first commercial online business, Oxford Reference Online.

When the doubtful charms of boardroom bawls, bottom lines, and divas diminished, he returned to Sri Lanka, the land of his birth hundreds of years earlier, to rescue a spice plantation and set of art deco buildings that had gone feral in the jungle.

Today, as The Flame Tree Estate & Hotel, it has become one of the country's top ten boutique hotels, run by the kindest and most professional of hospitality teams; and overseen by several small schnauzers.

It also helps fund The Ceylon Press, set up to make Sri Lanka's rich and complicated story, a mystery to many, and a secret to most, more accessible. The Press' books, companions, podcasts, blogs, and guides are freely available at theceylonpress.com. The Press also publishes Poetry from the Jungle, a podcast that recasts the orthodox view of the world's best poets and poems.

ABOUT THE FLAME TREE ESTATE & HOTEL

"It's absolute paradise," wrote one guest recently; "I would fly back to Sri Lanka simply to stay in this place for a couple more days."

Centered on a 25-acre organic spice and timber plantation, The Flame Tree Estate & Hotel has been renovated and furnished with art & antiques; its healthy menus fusing street food with fine dining.

Its 1,000 high rocky hills stalled the Dutch army in 1765; and until the civil war the estate stretched over 100 acres with 3 working elephants.

Today its restored plantations grow cardamom, turmeric, ginger, cloves, pepper, cocoa; rubber, coffee, vanilla; cinnamon, coconuts - and scores of trees from ebony to sapu – best enjoyed from the vantage point of the hotel's infinity pool. Visit www.flametreeestate.com.

It also houses and funds The Ceylon Press whose books, companions, podcasts, blogs, and guides are freely available at theceylonpress.com.

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