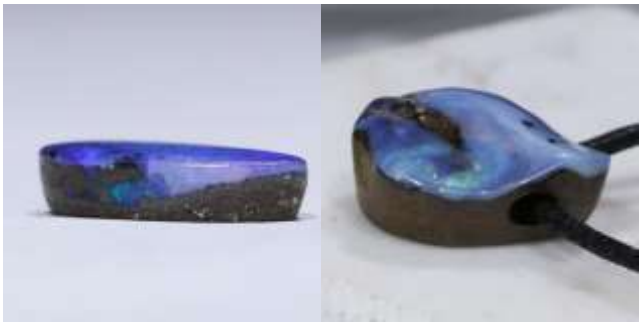
TYPES OF OPALS

Australian Boulder Opal

Boulder Opal is uniquely found in small pockets of ground in western Queensland, Australia. Boulder Opal is a combination of either an Ironstone or sandstone Boulder and a seam of Opal which formed in the crevices inside the Boulder.

Example of Opal found in an Ironstone Boulder



Boulder Opal is normally cut and polished with the Opal still attached to the boulder rock on which the Opal formed. Above is a side view of a Boulder Opal polished, notice the uneven way the opal and Iron stone has formed.

One of the famous Opal mining fields in Australian is the near the Town of Opalton in Western Queensland

Boulder Opal Bracelet, an example of the many beautiful ways Boulder Opal can be shaped and polished.

Example of the many colours found in Boulder Opal.

Boulder Opal Matrix

Are boulders where the brown Iron stone or sandstone has mixed with the Opal, and where no opal seam has formed.

Example of Boulder Opal Matrix from western Queensland

Koroit Opal Matrix set in Gold and Diamond Pendant

Australian Black Opal

Has a black or very dark grey body tone or background to its appearance.

The darker the body tone means the Opal colours and pattern will stand out enriching the beauty of the stone.

Any Opal with a graded body tone from N1-N4 is a Black Opal.

Australian Black Opal Earring and Pendant

Australian Dark Opal

Dark Opal has a body tone between N5 – N7, And can be found in any of the Australia Opal Fields

Australian Dark Opal Pendant and Ring

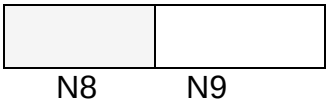
Crystal Opal

When Opal is fully transparent or translucent, it might have a similar appearance as if looking through glass. Crystal Opal can either have a Black, Dark or White Body tone.

Australian White Opal

Has a white body tone appearance. The Opal colours and patterns presenting themselves in a white opal base.

Any opal with a body tone of N8 or N9 is a white Opal.



Crystal Opal Ring and White Opal Pendant

Australian Sandstone Opal Matrix

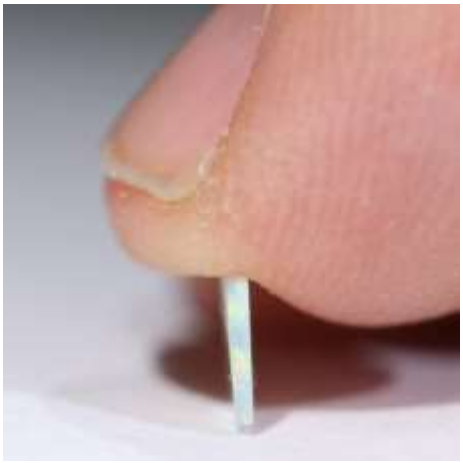
In certain areas of Queensland, Opal formed inside Sandstone. To enhance the Opal colours, the Sandstone containing Opal, is cooked in cooking oil, resulting in the sandstone turning grey or black in colour. Cooking the Sandstone Opal Matrix in this way will make the Opal colours more vibrant and make any patterns formed by the Opal layers more visible.

Natural Sandstone Opal Matrix Beads

Cooked Sandstone Opal Matrix Beads, with beautiful blue and green Opal speckles.

Doublet Opals

Is composite of two layers, a top layer of thin Crystal Opal glued to a bottom layer of dark stone.



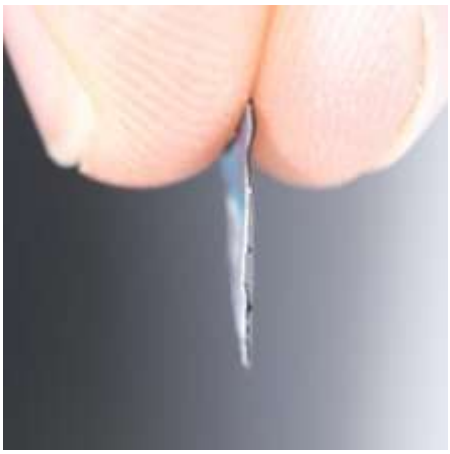
A slice of Opal ready to be glued and made into an Opal Doublet

The join between the Opal slice and the base rock is very flat and smooth. This is to make it easier to glue the two pieces together. A solid natural Boulder Opal (see page 1) the join between Opal and host rock will be uneven.

Opal Doublet that has been chipped, once damaged an Opal Doublet will be hard to repair, as any heat from reshaping can damage the glue bonding the Opal and base together.

Triplet Opals

A paper-thin slice of Opal, glued on a black stone backing, and a clear crystal dome on top. Triplet Opals can display bright colours, but can be ruined easily by getting wet regularly, eventually the glue bonding the Triplet Opal together will become cloudy and any Opal colours will disappear



The thickness of the Opal in an Opal triplet can be as little as 0.18mm

Opal triplet side view - 3 layers -

(1. Top - glass dome, 2. middle - opal slice,3. bottom-- thin black backing)

Example of an Opal Triplet that has lost is colour and beauty

Hydrophane Opal (sometimes called Water Opal)

Are Opals that have a large percentage of water content in their crystal structure normally around 17%. One of the characteristics of Hydrophane Opals are that when submerged in liquid, its appearance can change.

If Hydrophane Opal is soaked in water, the water is absorbed into the Opal. As a result, any play of colour(fire) will seem to have disappeared. Colour will normally return once the Opals dries out. Direct contact to the skin should be avoid when wearing Hydrophane Opal, as the body's natural moisture will be absorbed into the Opal, and colour lost.

Left photo is a Natural Ethiopian Hydrophane Opal, and the right photo is the same Opal after been submerged in tap water for 30 minutes.

Notice the Hydrophane Opal has become transparent after contact with water, and the Opal colours appears less.

Most Black Hydrophane Opal has been treated.

Natural Ethiopian Hydrophane Opal polished beads

Treated Ethiopian Hydrophane Opal polished beads

Synthetic and laboratory Opal

Manmade resin made to look like natural Opal.

Examples of Synthetic and laboratory Opal imitations,

Differences between similar looking types of Opal

Opal Type	Opal Value comparison	Benefits and Disadvantages
Solid Australian Opal (Natural)	100%	Is hard to find. Durable; Suitable to be worn every day. Value will increase over time.
Opal Doublet (Man Made)	10% Value of Solid Opal	Cheap to buy compared to Solid Opal Opal layer can chip easily. Hard to repair if damaged.
Opal Triplet (Man Made)	5% Value of Solid Opal	Very cheap to buy. Should not get wet as colour can fade or turn cloudy.

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